

# "Nothing unites people like a sense of belonging", One Custom's Paul Geary

 By [Jessica Tennant](#)

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Paul Geary, co-founder of customer experience and marketing intelligence agency One Custom tells us about their work with Laureus Sport For Good South Africa on the recently launched Laureus Supporters' Club and from a customer experience marketing perspective, why it's important that brands nurture relationships with existing customers and harness customer relations to build customer loyalty and goodwill during these uncertain times...



Paul Geary, co-founder of One Custom

## ■ **Tell us more about the Supporters' Club.**

This is something we've been working on for a good few months with Laureus.

Where many people are feeling quite disconnected and isolated at the moment and are seeking ways that fill that need for significance and human connection, we believe that this type of initiative offers a little bit of that – a contribution, a sense of belonging and connection to something important. Part of the plan for our Supporters' Club members is to deliver this sense of team and connected community ongoing.

So, in 2020, by joining the Laureus Supporters' Club team members will be joining the likes of Bryan Habana, Natalie du Toit, Maps Maponyane, Shaun Pollock and others who are also backing and actively involved in supporting the Laureus cause.

And as a sweetener, there is that chance members can win a Mercedes-Benz A-Class! A prize very generously sponsored by Mercedes-Benz who are really keen to help support and grow the initiative. If all goes well and life emerges back to some sort of normal, in 2021 we'll add in the chance at those once-in-a-lifetime sporting experiences for members – these will hopefully include things like going to the US Masters, the Abu Dhabi Grand Prix, the Tour de France and the Laureus Sports Awards... No promises yet, there is obviously a fair amount of uncertainty, but watch this space!

## ■ **Where does One Custom come in?**

As One Custom, we have seen how the e-commerce space has matured in South Africa and the ability to deliver paid subscription/membership platforms well is something that we're really excited about and have put a fair amount of R&D into.

So conceptualising, architecting, building and servicing these fan-centric (or customer-centric) platforms is what we love doing. But importantly, these are platforms that support and drive business.

For us, the solutions are made up of tech, data and good old relationship management strategy which are all part of our core offering and as experienced digital marketers, we also quite like getting involved with helping to get the word out.

So, we have done quite a bit to help Laureus get this thing up and running and we will stay actively involved in driving and supporting it and servicing members.

“ Exciting news - we have launched our Laureus Supporters' Club [pic.twitter.com/SlzfBACZTA](https://pic.twitter.com/SlzfBACZTA)— Laureus South Africa (@Laureus\_sa) [June 25, 2020](#) ”

**■ In the launch release you said that nothing unites people like a sense of belonging, and supporters' clubs offer us the chance to become part of something we love and that initiatives like the Laureus Supporters' Club are about supporting, not simply giving. Joining a supporters' club offers the chance to become part of a team, working towards a common goal – and sharing in that sense of achievement when you achieve the shared aim. Please elaborate on the importance of unity and why we need to come together as an industry and a nation during this time especially, and comment on the power of sport in this regard.**

We run another Supporters' Club for one of our national sporting teams and – over-and-above the real value it delivers members – we've seen how these fans really get a kick out of being a part of something that unites them. They are excited and happy when the team is doing well, and disappointed when things aren't so good because they are deeply invested. As much as this is true for many sports fans, we have noticed a much more significant level of buy-in and ownership for those who belong to and are our superfans, and much of that relationship can be created and fostered.

There are few things that unite us as South Africans as well as sport does. Many of us seek out ways to feel more connected to our sports heroes because that is a part of what defines our identity as South Africans and our social connections within our communities.

Then, in the case of an organisation like Laureus, we layer on significant social need and being part of something that is designed to serve, we believe – for the people with means – that it is something worth getting behind and supporting ongoing.

And Laureus has a whole lot of actively involved ambassadors across a varied repertoire of sports. Many of these are sporting greats that are now using their voice and platform to give back. This Supporters' Club also offers members a connection to those ambassadors as they're joining the same team.

We believe that this approach is relevant for various businesses and organisations, beyond just sports teams and non-profits. The model has application for many other businesses that have the ability to deliver and monetise real value for their fans, communities or customers.

**■ Lastly, comment on the importance of brands nurturing relationships with existing customers and harnessing**

**customer relations to build customer loyalty and goodwill during these uncertain times.**

As a business focused exclusively on customer relationships, we believe this is paramount. Especially when the basics of doing business and customers transacting is challenging or impossible. Businesses that attempt to establish real direct relationships with their customers and are able to offer them value over-and-above the purchase will always be the ones that are able to build real affinity with their customers, and this will be rewarded when the world re-opens properly.

Obviously it would be naïve to pretend that this approach can work for all businesses – there are some industries that it may be impossible to build in this approach – but the ones that are able to innovate with respect to their customer service and the delivery of value are the ones that are best placed to initially weather the storm and, beyond that, to really thrive.

For more info, visit [OneCustom.co.za](https://www.onecustom.co.za) and the [Laureus Supporters' Club](#).

## ABOUT JESSICA TENNANT

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