

# Marketers are the new CEOs

 By [Farren Roper](#)

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There is a new role being assigned to top marketers in business: the role of the Chief Experience Officer (CEO).



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As the custodians of customer experience, marketers need to embrace the new level of importance, along with the accountability and new professional proficiencies that come with it.

Whether you are running an in-person event, a digital campaign or doing your social community management, customer experience will be what differentiates a brand from the competition.

## Customer experience is the new battlefield

According to Gartner, customer experience is the new battlefield. Gartner predicts that 89% of businesses will compete mainly on this front. Customers are also predicted to manage their relationship without interacting with a human. So if customers are expecting the relationship to be managed by you and you do not have the scale to do it, how then does it get done?

To be a CEO, you need to be adept with technology and how it can set your company brand and professional brand apart.

You need to understand how technology can help you deliver on your 'new' role as CEO.

Technology can help to give you a singular view of your customer. Suddenly, your customer goes from being just "Farren Roper" to "Farren Roper, a marketer, who plays tennis and has a passion for education". Big data has been a buzz word for a long time and there is certainly no lack of information about your customers, but the challenge for marketers is where to find the data and when you find it, understanding what to do with it.

## The role of social and digital in customer experience

The opportunities to differentiate yourself with customer experience can be found in different sources in your integrated marketing campaigns, but more so on digital and social platforms. Digital and social is also where you will generate your biggest ROI. Social media is an amazing hunting ground for you to create experiences for existing and prospective customers and for you to win market share from your competitors who might not be doing it in the right way.

The impact of a delightful experience on social media could be the customer evangelising your brand or your product to their community and circle of influence. And in order to earn a mention in that community, you have to be different.

## A customer experience is based on an insight

As a CEO, how much insight do you have into your audience? Tools like CRM can help you bring a customer into focus before an event or in person engagement. Social media insights can (and should) also inform the organic messaging you are sending out to your audience. As the CMO lead for Microsoft South Africa, all of our social media messages are crafted according to the recipient and the result has been that South Africa is a subsidiary with one of the most engaged audiences across our global brand. All of our digital marketing is programmatic and based on user interest. The result of this level of personalisation is a higher probability that the message landed will resonate and deliver an experience.

But marketers should be cautioned that even though customer data is going to get more personal than ever, there is a line between doing good and bad business. Privacy approval is important, as customers become more sensitive and guarded about their data and how it is being used. In many markets such as South Africa, privacy is also a customer legal entitlement.

## Customer experience is how you act when something goes wrong

One of the biggest risks and opportunities for customer experience is how you act when something goes wrong. A dissatisfied customer will tell between 9 and 15 people about their experience. Depending on the product and service you offer, customers are not always likely to rave to their circles of influence about your product working properly, but customers have become accustomed to taking to their mobile devices (always in eyesight) about a negative experience. If you can turn that experience around, you have a chance of turning a complainant into an advocate.

But customer experience could also be created from a positive occurrence. How many companies leverage the value of the positive customer experiences to build loyalty? I recently read an article of a bank called First Direct, which is leveraging the positive sentiment of their influencers by inviting them to events and then having custom branding made for those influencers. Or the Microsoft UK example, where a user tweeted about the irrelevance of cricket on an outdoor bush shelter, only to have the shelter branding changed, incorporating his tweet.

“ thought it was a photoshop effort from [@MicrosoftUK](#) turns out it's not. It's the real deal. Outstanding I salute you [pic.twitter.com/00tPrLdlbi](https://pic.twitter.com/00tPrLdlbi) - Chris (@Chris72600702) [June 17, 2015](#) ”

### Where to from here?

CEOs need to get it together (literally), by pulling all your data together and also pulling all your campaigns together in an integrated manner. We need to start obsessing about the customer and the experience that the customer will have across

our marketing touchpoints. Digital and social are the most cost-efficient means to create amazing customer experiences with a demonstrable ROI. But in the end, any customer interaction is an opportunity to deliver an experience. Campaigns may run their course, but experiences stick.

It's time that we as marketers step into the role that will deliver impact. It's time to assume the position of the CEO.

## ABOUT FARREN ROPER

Microsoft global engagement lead for collaboration. Farren is also a divisional director for the Schools Division of the Advtech group appointed for his expertise on innovation and technology. Farren has his roots in technology and applications, having formerly founded his own businesses, run a dynamic internet service provider and taken to market Apps which have topped the South African App stores.

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