

Journeying to your best customer experience

 By Leigh Andrews

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I've attended many, many conferences over the past year, and quite literally hundreds if I think back over my decade in the online marketing and media space. Funny then that the event messaging that's stuck with me most has been from a few of the most recent workshops I've attended, with a handful of insights set to impact the year ahead.

Key among those have been the 'small workshop'. You know the type. They start off with an initial fear-inducing ice-breaker where you stand, smile, gulp, introduce yourself to the group and share something personal about yourself. Time-and-again I've done the shaky intro, only to become keen acquaintances with the brave souls also enrolled on the journey with me. We've kept in touch through WhatsApp groups that didn't fizzle out quite as fast as expected, as well as via individual chats and playing email tag.



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I say 'brave souls' because let's face it: **Change is scary**. But change is also the only way we grow. And with the rate of technology snowballing faster than we can ever hope to track, adopting a 'learning mind-set' and stretching your limits is one of the best ways to do so.

Take BrandLove's Customer Experience Journey Mapping workshop for example. Authorised as a training and resources provider by the CXPA (that's the Customer Experience Professionals Association in the US of A), the team aims to continue to support and grow skills and capabilities for CX professionals in South Africa, Africa and internationally in 2017, and they definitely have their (Lego)-heads screwed on straight. We spent two intensive days engaged in [Lego Serious Play](#), roleplaying and mapping out fake-but-sometimes-real customer experience scenarios.

The reason? BrandLove's customer experience strategist Chantel Botha quotes Lou Carbone, customer experience author of [Clued In: How to keep customers coming back again and again](#), who says: "Your organisation cannot NOT deliver an experience." Carbone's promo video, from 2011, still offers many insights businesses are yet to touch on in 2017. See below:

Customer experience: The way you make me feel

The reason for his insights' longevity is simple, just switch your business-man fedora for your cool customer cap and you'll find yourself nodding in agreement: As a customer, it's never just about emailing for a quote, calling to update your address or breezing through the '5 items or less' check-out counter. It's about the way your interaction with the brand makes you feel. Were you treated to a smile, addressed by name and situation sympathised with or did it feel like the retailer was simply reading from a script?

Good customer experience hinges on so many touchpoints that something as simple as not having clearly displayed contact details on your website or sending out invoices without personalisation could make or break your brand in 2017.

The key outtake? If you've not completed a customer journey mapping course, at the very least you should anonymously call your own call centre or help desk for a very basic surface-level experience of the service you provide. You may be delighted, but [chances are you'll be horrified](#).



Pay special attention to how many times you get transferred, put on hold, or asked to repeat details you've already provided and that should be logged in the system, quite frankly. These are likely just the tip of the rapidly melting iceberg of minor frustrations your customers are dealing with daily, and they're just a seemingly innocent 'please hold, my screen is frozen' or 'I'll have to ask the powers that be, I can't authorise that myself' (AKA "[Computer says 'No'](#)") away from hanging up and avalanching that frustration through a complaint on social media.

That's the crux of what makes customer experience a top trend for 2017, no matter the industry. It was a key focus for much of 2016, with the [#CEMAfrica conference](#) that took place mid-August highlighting the importance of the topic for business on the continent going forward. While not as intimate a setting as the BrandLove workshop, the message was the same – start focusing on your customers' experience with your brand, or else.

Here's to better customer experience all round this 2017 by focusing on internal processes, communications and more...

ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

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