

Servicing the customer of the future

 By John Sanei

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Throughout the world we're seeing established and long-standing institutions under scrutiny for unethical practice or abusing their power of authority. Take Prince Harry and his wife, Meghan, for example, speaking out against the long-established British monarchy. The #MeToo global movement took on people in powerful positions and exposed them as abusers, while individuals are taking on governments, religions and corporates around the world. The everyday consumer is no exception to this kind of shift.



Source: www.unsplash.com

Traditionally, the customer/business interaction is more about value exchange. Now for the first time in our recent history, Covid-19 has forced corporates to shift their attention from the bottom line to retaining customers. Without a customer who trusts you, as many companies discovered, you struggle to stay relevant. As a result of the pandemic, leading conglomerates suddenly found themselves competing for spend with a far more digitally savvy, conscious and selective consumer - often with uncertain and restricted resources.

The consumer shift

The consumer shift has been towards buying into what companies stand for rather than simply buying from them. Brand, purpose and reputation has taken on new impetus and carried weight to safety, security and convenience.

Companies that act with empathy and compassion gain more trust and consumers. Through networks and digital access, companies can connect with their customers and hold more power in dictating the shape of products and services than ever before.

The trust conundrum

How do businesses retain the trust of customers who've bought into their ethos? It has become increasingly clear that what used to be tried and trusted tactics no longer hold water with the new consumer shift. The dynamics of experience delivery has been challenged.

My advice to clients grappling with this is to look away from the 'sales' pitch and find other ways to connect meaningfully with the consumer. PR authentic content your customer can connect with, 'thought leadership pieces' and discussion platforms are all possibilities to try and test. These are all ways to encourage your customer to reach out and seek advice from you.

Interacting with your customer while they are in a comfortable, casual space is another way to connect with them meaningfully. Give them the opportunity to interact with you while going through a newspaper, watching an interview, scrolling through LinkedIn, Facebook or Instagram, or reading a magazine.

When they're at ease and you're talking about the new wave and the new way the world markets are going, you become more of a voice of reason. In this way, you shift the dynamic of becoming a push salesman to a relatable one. This shift allows you to create pull with your customer.

When you create a pull and your customer reaches out to you, then you're in a position where you can gain trust. In turn, this allows an opportunity for expediting long term sales or services. This takes longer than usual, but it's worth it in the long run. Most people don't want to be sold to, they want to be advised, and they don't want to be sought out, they want to seek out the people who can help them.



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The customer has become more digitally savvy, expecting effortless interactions. Customers of all ages have made behavioural changes by harnessing the internet to make their daily lives easier. Not only that, but they have a voice which they can use to share their experiences across vast networks. A recent KPMG report indicates that 41% of customers say it's important to be assured that a company's employees are treated well in their jobs. This means leaders have to recognise they require a similar approach of empathy and understanding towards their customers, clients and their employees.

Customers want an experience tailor-made to their needs. A coffee shop or photocopy shop may be on a dying trajectory, but if you focus on bringing coffee to the home office or providing an online photocopy delivery service, you'll be providing a dispersive flow.

With the world and business racing towards adaptive business tactics, the consumer has become empowered with networks and devices, demanding a more personalised service.

Engage with your consumer in an open and transparent way, and this gap between traditional business strategy and consumer expectation will narrow over time.

ABOUT JOHN SANEI

Futures Strategist John Sanei makes sense of future trends and merges them so individuals and organisations can forge forward with confidence, elevating their leadership vision to exponential heights. At the intersection of human science, neuroscience, quantum technology, futurism and business strategy, John has a knack for sharing his knowledge and creating meaningful connections. He ignites platforms, connects with crowds and leaves an empowering perspective that lasts long after the lights have switched off.

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