

Those 'idiots' are your brand ambassadors!

 By [Mareli Smit](#)

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Marketing as we know it is changing. We all know the 4Ps of the marketing mix: Product, place, promotion and price. But I want to challenge this and ask where does 'why are we in business other than to make money' fit into this equation and with that, why are employees and customers left out of the loop to help create customer experiences in many instances?



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Now I probably have the attention of the marketers in the room, who might try to justify this by telling me they create amazing marketing strategies and plans of action that will impact customers positively and that employees and customers are told to 'buy into' these strategies. I know, I used to be a marketer, too! But let me counter by asking, how many of the marketing strategies created are based on real feedback from customers (not solely based on the Voice of the Customer) and how many employees (other than line managers) had a chance to give input into the process so that ideas are born at the frontline of businesses?

The latest buzzword in the business world is Customer Experience (CX). Many businesses are realising this is the key to success and are employing CX officers, getting consultants in to draw up amazing Customer Journey maps and attending all possible workshops and conferences on the subject. But what saddens me is the fact that once all the money has been spent and implementation is needed, most companies are stumped. It looks great on paper, it feels amazing to put lipstick on the pig, but most companies do not know the next steps. The problem is that CX is not just one thing, it is not one big project that needs to be implemented over a 6-month period and then it is done. It's a thousand little things. It is a never-ending process of real-time design. When done properly it becomes part of a company's DNA, infused into every part of the business and its employees. Once companies realise and embrace this, magic starts to happen!

To make this possible, there will have to be a mind shift, starting in the boardroom. I've sat in many boardrooms where wonderful strategies have been built by the companies' leadership. But when challenged with the question of whether their frontline employees will be able to come up with similar (or even better) strategies, the conclusion is usually that this is not possible. What a sad day when companies and their leadership do not trust their own people to come up with solutions and innovations! Those 'idiots' are after all your brand ambassadors, aren't they?

So, where do the customer and employee fit into the picture?

Customers and employees have changed over the past century. Loyalty is now built through collaboration, having a voice

and a say, co-creating, feeling valued and having a real purpose. We all have the same innate human needs as described by Tony Robbins, namely:

1. Certainty
2. Uncertainty
3. Significance
4. Love and connection
5. Growth
6. Contribution beyond ourselves.

How many of these needs do you help fulfil for your employees and customers alike?

Businesses have to be realistic about the changes in customers and employees. Gone are the days that a business can bury its head in the sand and ignore these changes.

Why should companies care about customer loyalty?

- The costs of serving loyal customers are less.
- Loyal customers are less price sensitive.
- Loyal customers spend more time with the company.
- Loyal customers pass on positive recommendations about their favourite brands or suppliers.

What drove customers in the past and what drives them now?

Past	Present
Good quality products and service	Quality and service are a given
Price	Service
Loyalty programmes	Real value add
Enough stock	Make it easy
Instant gratification	Choice

Why employee loyalty is important for CX

1. Companies spend a lot of money every time an employee leaves.
2. Re-hiring and training new employees cost money.
3. Knowledge transfer does not always take place.
4. But most importantly, employees are your brand ambassadors and play a pivotal role in creating amazing customer experiences!

The past and present of employee loyalty and engagement

Past	Present
Salary	Input
Leave days	Flexibility
Added perks	Feeling valued
Advancement opportunities	Growth and purpose

I'll end with the wise words of Simon Sinek: "The responsibility of leadership is not to come up with all the ideas, but to create an environment in which great ideas can thrive." Let's start creating amazing innovation working environments for employees to find their voice, and see how magic starts to happen – those 'idiots' might just surprise you!

ABOUT MARELI SMIT

Creative, focused, goal driven, loyal and a team player with a passion for relationship building through targeted communication and networking - with a knack for organising almost anything under the sun!

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