

# Customer experience: you're most probably doing it wrong

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19 Jun 2018

Gone are the days of customer service consisting of treating buyers with common courtesy. Customer service has been disrupted by an expectation of a total customer experience that is dictated by the customer, not company policies.



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The disruption to the age-old practice of keeping customers happy resulted from a combination of technological advancements and societal changes. These collided into a perfect storm that is leaving companies breathless as they try to balance what customers want with what they can reasonably offer.

## Omni-channel

Customers shape their own experiences by combining several methods of gathering information on a company and its products or services. It's not strange to find someone standing in front of a shelf in a retail store, checking the reviews and price of the same product online, and even purchasing the product from a competitor's online platform... all while in the store.

Companies offering services rather than products have also not been spared in the digitisation of the customer experience. Customers expect the same offering – or at least something very similar – whether they interact with a brand via online platforms or in a physical space.

In addition to customer service training companies now need to invest in understanding how customers use online platforms to shape their total experience.

## Omni-hours

The always on nature of the omni-channel customer experience has brought with it several challenges. Companies that have traditionally been used to having some time to regroup, restock, and rest now have to create procedures that have to adapt to a customer habit of instant gratification.

An auto-responder with an estimated timeline for feedback might generate some patience. Chatbots powered by artificial intelligence are however quickly rising to the rescue of brands struggling to deliver to their desired level of excellence at all hours. These tools can help to answer basic queries and might even be very effective in resolving complete matters.

## **Omni-advice**

Customer experience is shaped by touchpoints with a brand across multiple channels and over a longer timeline than just the actual buying decision. The total experience is also shaped by what their circle of influence – friends, family, and an extended online network – has shared about their own experience with a brand and its products or services.

Buying decisions are therefore made with much more than product specifications or service delivery promises in mind.

Customer service representative these days have to be able to do more than solve product or service related issues. They also have to be able to win the trust of a customer whose mind might have been made up by a spread of user-based comments posted online.

## **Omni-cycle**

Customers shaping their own experiences with channels and inputs that are not dictated by brands have also had a significant impact on the traditional sales funnel.

Instead of linear thinking that develops an opportunity into a lead and eventually into a sale, customer experience agents have to adopt a matrix thinking approach. This approach allows for fluidly moving back and forth between the phases of the customer journey based on the preferences of each customer.

The age of industrialisation has allowed for the creation of many standardised policies and procedures focused on increasing profits and reducing expense by keeping customers happy. The age of information now demands that brands allow for the flexibility that is required as the customer truly becomes the king.

## **ABOUT JUANITA VORSTER**

Juanita Vorster connects the dots between the next and the now. Drawing from her knowledge that earned her the designations of Certified Director, Certified Ethics Officer, and Chartered Public Relations Practitioner, Juanita helps organisations build the bridge between disruptive innovation and future success. Her keynote presentation on Disruptology moves away from merely highlighting the technological advances driving disruption to explore how anyone can develop their own solutions to turn their unique challenges into exciting opportunities.

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