

Leading experts warn the world about the dangers ahead

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Fight for your share of **CUSTOMER ATTENTION**

Does your customer expect a response to a query at 10 pm on a Sunday night? He or she very well might, as today's consumers have higher expectations and shorter attention spans.

Less patience, short attention span

When fighting for your share of consumer attention, it might be tempting to simply deliver a better experience than your immediate competitors, but the reality is that consumer expectations are shifting, based on exposure to a variety of industries and experiences. The basis on which we judge service quality, product delivery or relationships with brands is not constrained to that specific context but is constantly shaped by multiple daily interactions.

Exceptional service delivered by a waiter at a top eatery may influence our expectation of service from a financial institution. The record delivery time and returns policy of an online retailer may equally influence our expectation for speed and flexibility in all industries. Instant access to information online, could frustrate consumers when the same instant gratification does not play out in the real world.

This, in conjunction with the ever-increasing onslaught of information and marketing messages, means that today's consumers have less patience and shorter attention spans.

Customer engagement journey

Customer engagement requires a thorough understanding of the customer journey in any given sales cycle. Understanding the actual and desired customer behaviours, experiences and expectations through

this journey is the first step in developing a customer engagement strategy. This involves mapping out the entire process the customer goes through, from purchase consideration to post-purchase servicing, and the resultant ongoing relationship.

Understanding the pain points along this journey, as well as the opportunities for capitalising on these positive experiences, becomes the basis for identifying the possibilities for better customer engagement.

Customers may have different experiences or needs, and a segmented approach to engagement can assist in better serving these unique needs. They may have specific requirements for engagement along their customer journey, or preferences for how they are interacted and communicated with, how often, and on which platforms.

Another consideration is organisational resources to service customers efficiently, while still meeting or exceeding customer expectations. Based on your customers' values and communication preferences, you may choose to employ differing levels of personalisation and human interaction.

A 'high touch' approach may be reserved for key customer segments, with more automated engagements servicing other segments. The 'tech touch' may be suitable for many organisations where consumers can be effectively engaged with at a mass level, augmented with human interactions based on predefined triggers.

Strive to improve your service

To remain relevant in the eyes of your customers, the way in which you interact with them needs to fit seamlessly into their

daily routine. This might mean implementing regular, up-to-date, and expected engagements to ensure that you are supporting them through the process. Or perhaps a more effective approach will be to create unexpected or ad-hoc engagements that look to leave a more lasting impression.

To determine what the best engagement strategy is for your business, you must first understand the customer journey, their desires and the opportunities available to you. In turn, this can help you adopt a proactive approach to engaging with your customers and managing negative customer experiences as you strive to improve your service.

This is not to say that there is no room for reactive engagement. Providing customers with a platform to voice their concerns, and then responding in a timely manner, ultimately serves the same objective: improving customer satisfaction, interaction and, ultimately, retention.

Customer engagement needs to add value, and be seen to add value, to the consumer in a world where you are competing for their attention on a global scale. Rather than being a transparent punt for a new sale or business objective, customer engagement should be relevant, impactful and focus on making life easier for consumers, whether they are seeking information, service or advice.



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