



Customers Expect Magic

Jason Chau, Managing Director at Accenture Interactive, talks to Criticleye about how digital is changing how customers interact with businesses

Are customer expectations changing?

Consumers want to be enchanted — they expect magic. We have all heard it before: rapid adoption of technology has resulted in connected, smarter consumers who have choices literally at their fingertips, and they are creating new kinds of behaviours in the process.

It has raised expectations about how businesses interact with consumers and each other. These changes are also the result of companies' increasing ability to harness the power of consumer connectivity and the intelligent use of data. This both improves business results and helps meet the needs of consumers.

What is different about the relationship between vendor and buyer?

Immediacy, consumers want it now!

And if they don't get 'it' fast, they are quicker to complain, as evidenced by increasing levels of complaints >



and customer satisfaction dropping across the board. More importantly, if companies don't get it right, others will be quick to know.

You have to think about connectivity. Social media and customer forums have huge potential to both build and destroy brands.

Customers are led by the opinions of their friends or followers, which are corroborated by 'likes' and testimonials. The reputation of the company is shaken or strengthened accordingly.

Through digital technology the consumers' knowledge of products and services has been enhanced. A company no longer has the monopoly on product knowledge: information and opinions on which to base decisions are a click away.

There is also the problem of marketing numbness. Consumers are tired of being talked to. There is widespread distrust of mainstream information channels, and now consumers possess the ability to choose what messages to receive and when.

It's no longer about a promotion, it's about how to engage the consumer to the point of participation.

If a business is to communicate properly, it needs to connect channels and be efficiently omnipotent. Customers — not businesses — decide which communication methods will be used.

So, whether it's at home, work, in the stores, or on the go, businesses need to refine their communications and understand what to say.

“While it is important to have a strategy, don't hide behind it”

How can corporates get a better understanding of what their customers want?

There are a range of analytical tools that allow us to better understand consumers. There is a certain amount of predictability, as well as data from multiple channels, platforms and technologies. That's basic.

Spending time to translate that into insights is the magic that delivers the right products and services.

The following are important:

- Listen and learn continuously
- Systematically comb multiple channels for data (social, devices, web, etc.) to form a hypothesis and understand consumer challenges/issues and sentiment
- Invest in the right technologies and people
- Test and optimise hypotheses. While it is important to have a strategy, don't hide behind it — put things into action, learn and improve. Talk and engage with customers to feed learning as this will help to be more relevant and shape the best actions.

What do you see as the next stage of digital?

It's when digital is truly pervasive. As companies and consumers assume digital instead of marvelling at it, it will disappear as a reference point and just become part of life. This 'Post-Digital Era' will happen sooner than we think.

For those large organisations that have been slow to respond to digital, what questions should boards be asking themselves?

1. How fast is our brand deteriorating?
2. Where have our customers gone?
3. Should we be worried about the value of our stock?

The ultimate question should be: Do we have the right structure and people to be a modern consumer-focused organisation? ■

Find out more about the 2015 Criticleye Asia Leadership Retreat [here](#)



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Jason has spent 20 years in the digital space and the last 12 were focused on client solutions and reshaping digital ecosystems and models in Greater China. He is currently based in Hong Kong and has also held leadership roles in New York, Singapore and China. He leads a team of digital experts who have a track record of transforming and growing client businesses across the region.

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