

## Be wary of customer engagement gap

Today, customers cross channels often, making marketing more complicated. They can be on the web one moment, then move to social media and then pick up the phone - all the while expecting a company's service and experience to be a continuous flow. This radical shift in balance of information between businesses and their customers means the customer is now in the driver's seat from buying decisions to service.



Quinton Pienaar - CEO of Agilitude

Companies from retail to consumer goods to utilities to financial services are working out how this seismic change affects them and how they can possibly respond.

Quinton Pienaar the CEO of Agilitude, a Salesforce Marketing Cloud reseller, says, "The gap between organisations and their customers has grown too wide and this has had a direct impact on customer engagement or the lack thereof. There are new technologies that close the gap quite significantly, making for a much closer customer engagement."

He says that paradoxically this same technology empowers the customer equally. "This makes it easy for them to share brand disappointments and stories of service that were below par with ease. Of course, they can also share positive stories."

According to a Salesforce sponsored research project, conducted by The Economist Research Unit, this phenomenon is known as the customer-led economy, an emerging world of bewildering strategic options.

To make the challenge harder, customers are changing their channel choices and sporadically too. "There is a move away from the predictable channel that made the customer at ease, to an interchangeable approach, possibly using more than one channel and they expect the experience to flow."

Very few organisations can deliver that kind of consistent experience. They do not often have a holistic view of the customer and their channels are poorly connected. They need a solid CRM solution.

"Companies that cannot realign their channels to emerging customer preferences will suffer. These customers are not only better informed and connected; they expect the companies with which they interact to be as plugged in to this new world as they are. This is not possible without the help of technology.

"It is simple, while complicated too. Customers require their service providers to know them, to understand what they want and to be able to respond to that very quickly and if they don't, they will move on to the next organisation and seek that same from them," he concludes.

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