

CX predictions for the future, action to take TODAY

 By Leigh Andrews

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Customer experience or CX is undoubtedly a hot topic for your brand, but if all you do is talk about it in your silos, chances are you'll be left in the dust by your competitors who are taking those insights into what consumers want and making a change. Here's why you need to cut the red tape and take the plunge yourself, from the opening panel of CEM Africa 2017.

The sixth annual Customer Experience Management or CEM Africa Summit took place at the Century City Conference Centre on 16 and 17 August 2017 and attendees were encouraged to move to the front to keep things interactive. We were off to a flying start with MCs Leeanda Reddy and Louise van der Hoven, founding director of Customer Experience Consultancy, sharing a recap of the CXA Award winners from the previous night, where MultiChoice was a top winner.



MultiChoice dominates first-ever CXA Awards

Juanita Pienaar 16 Aug 2017



Reddy said the two most elusive things to achieve in life are inspiration and making good use of your time, and we were presented with excellent examples of both over the day. First on the agenda was a panel discussion on predictions for CX going forward with Professor Adré Schreuder, CEO of Consulta; Ian Golding, certified customer experience professional from the UK; Iain Meaker, executive manager of commercial distribution at Comair; and Ica van Eeden, managing executive of customer insight and loyalty at Vodacom. Van der Hoven asked the panel to share **what we need to do today to improve client experience in the future**.



Simply put? Cut the red tape and empower your staff. Scott Griessel © – 123RF.com

Schreuder began with an overview of the local market compared to overseas. He pointed out that we often hear of the need for better measurement but **measurement alone isn't going to change anything**, we need to act on those specific insights gleaned from customers. With CX out of the infancy stage, it's no longer about the glitz and glamour of the tools, it's the basics of getting your employees to change their hearts and minds and deliver a great customer experience. That's because the expectations of the average SA customer and consumer are increasing every year, especially as they become more socially active and see what's happening in the rest of the world, often sharing their unhappiness on social media first.

Golding added that while there's undoubtedly a huge focus on CX in this part of the world, we're moving into a definitive phase of complacency. The biggest challenge to all organisations is thus to sustain focus on CX, being committed to CX in the long-term and aiming for consistent delivery, not just talking about it. We also need cross-functional collaboration across organisations to break down those silos and work together to deliver on CX across the brand. Golding pointed out that **all customers really want is a smile and a greeting** before they interact with your brand. Getting that right will already place you on a firmer path towards CX success

CX success = empowered staff

Meaker mentioned another crucial aspect of getting CX right: The need to understand what's important to your specific customers and to ingrain this in everything you do, using those customer insights to discuss the specific pain points and the emotions your customers go through when dealing with your brand. You also need to be brave and **empower your staff to make decisions on a case-by-case basis**, as a one-size-fits-all approach isn't necessarily the best. A single gentleman flying business class for work will have different expectations of his flight than would a family with young children flying economy class for a holiday. Understand that each customer will have a different experience of your brand.



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Van Eeden elaborated on what's stopping companies from taking action and empowering their staff - structure is a huge problem, especially if you have to cut through red-tape admin and lobby to convince the rest of the organisation of a specific decision. **Traditionally, organisations had marketing, sales and service divisions working separately but the CX of today means cutting across all of those** and singing from the same hymn sheet.

“ Traditional company silos hinder #CX implementation says @icavane at @CEMAfricaSummit
pic.twitter.com/ISwB7gm1dd— WNS Africa (@WNSAfrica) [August 16, 2017](#) ”

Many years ago, the term customer relationship management or CRM was driven by technology. Now, we have so many CRM tools at our disposal that we've lost sight of the basics - identifying the required action and implementing it. Simple.

Schreuder concluded with the following advice for anyone involved in CRM:

“ Have your say, say it consistently and don't ever shut up. ”

ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

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