

Quick! Don't miss the business-boosting benefits of putting your customers first

 By [Leigh Andrews](#)

25 Jun 2019

There's no denying that the 'content is king' model has taken a more retail-related slate of late, in that the customer - particularly the customer experience - is fast becoming a top business priority. Read on for key insight's shared at Kantar's recent 'innovation for growth' workshop...



The speakers at Kantar's Innovating for Growth workshop: Mark Molenaar, Ansie Lombaard, Adhil Patel, Bernd Grosserohde and Philip Collier.

The customer experience dilemma is most accurately understood by taking off your marketing hat and stepping into your customer's shoes for a moment.

Ever phoned your local pizza place, given just your cell number and had them ask if you'd like to place your usual order? Or how about hiring a car – chances are you use the same service each time, but need to list all your basic information to start the process from scratch each time.



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That's all part of the overall customer experience, related to how customers feel about your brand after 'doing business' with you.

If most of their feedback is on the satisfactory and below scale rather than exceeding expectation, chances are you aren't making good use of all the customer data already at your fingertips. Here's how doing so can lead to innovation for true business growth...

Tapping into the digital, sharing economy

Kantar's recent 'Innovation for growth' workshop features insights from five of the most clued-up members of the Kantar team.

First, Bernd Grosserohde, global director of portfolio management, spoke of how to inspire and accelerate growth through innovation, especially in today's sharing economy, where consumers value availability without ownership, and the digital economy creates new opportunities to use services spontaneously anytime, anywhere.



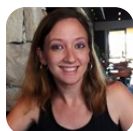
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Offering a global perspective on the new complexities for business as a result of these changing consumer needs, Grosserohde spoke of the role of artificial intelligence as well as the internet of things (IoT) and how they're changing our lives. You can park your smart car with your smartphone if you're so inclined.

He added that the average US adult now uses their mobile phone for 3.5 hours per day, which is up from just 90 minutes five years ago. That's a big change, and urban youth are likely spending even more time than that clicking and scrolling each day.



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Grosserohde added that the digital platform economy has been fast to respond to this change, touching on Alibaba founder Jack Ma's phrase that this is the "new world" business model, where changes come from consumer side.

“ In a world where anyone can log onto the Lego website, and design or vote for their own custom-built set, it's clearer than ever that brands need to understand what it's like to be the customer first and foremost. ”

Put the customer at the centre if you're using inside-out thinking to design your business model.

Take personalisation to a new level

Philip Collier, global director of innovation at Kantar, also explained how to harness experiences to unlock growth, especially in a world where people are more spoilt for choice than ever before and competitors emerge from all corners.

Winning in this environment requires a clear focus on the consumer, in understanding their dynamic in the interconnected world and finding new ways to innovate, beyond products and services to unlock growth by delivering memorable and

differentiating experiences in moments that matter.



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Collier spoke of brands realising the new economy is borderless and the need to take a wide view beyond just your brand, beyond just your category.

Think of opportunities to help the consumer beyond the actual need they're presenting you with. The following personalisation work for Heineken is a classic example of harnessing the power of experience to elevate the brand:

Collier points out that in this case, the brand was part of a happy experience – it didn't need to be there for the trip to Amsterdam to be a happy experience, but the brand elevated it, making it more memorable by personalising it.

This speaks to the importance of understanding what people would value. For example, when approached to help secure the best home loan deal, bond originators can also help with identifying moving companies and schools in the area – these 'little extras' are a way to move beyond the superfluous or expected service.

Brand borderless-ness, sticking to brand promise

Explaining **brand borderless-ness**, Collier said to collaborate with other brands to both personalise and humanise tech by making it softer, thinking about what it means to engage with tech.

Your brand can either wrap an experience around an existing product or service or create something completely disruptive. He spoke of how down jacket manufacturer Canada Goose put a fridge in the store so consumers could experience the jacket in the conditions it's made for, at -25' C, rather than just in-store conditions.

Explaining how to then innovate around experience, Collier said to **stick to your brand promise**.

For Nivea, their brand promise is to protect your loved ones from the sun, so they designed a bracelet app to help parents track their kids on the beach.

This is effectively a brand-building campaign, as it didn't change the sunscreen itself, but rather understood customers' world at the beach and became part of that experience, while also looking for future opportunities for growth.

Collier pointed out that these opportunities range from the basic to the transformative, but he added, "If you forget all else, remember that experiences endure as they are baked into our memory. To leverage the power of experience you need to have a wide view, with the customer/consumer/human at the centre."

Amplify empathy and attitude

Touching on the importance of empathy and attitude in customer experience, Kantar's director of customer experience in the insights division [Mark Molenaar](#) pointed out that as customers have access to more information, are more informed and have a voice like never before, businesses are being pushed to not only be more customer-centric but also more ethical, socially responsible and community focused.

This requires a change in the way organisations think and operate, engage their employees and their customers.



It's good to talk even in a high-tech world

Roger Woodend 19 Jun 2019



He, therefore, spoke of how to help clients become more customer-centric through what's formerly been seen as 'soft skills' – empathy and attitude. This is the ability to understand or share others' feelings without them needing to tell you in words.

Molenaar said having a true connection with the customer makes this possible. It's essential when designing experiences to keep the customer part of the process, as most are delivered by people, so those people – your staff and brand ambassadors – need to have the right attitude, be onboard with company values, be excited about what they offer and deliver on it.

Molenaar said that Shell petrol attendant Nkosikho Mbele had that innate ability to be empathetic and went above and beyond when he topped up Monet van Deventer's tank with R100 of petrol from his own pocket as he didn't want her to be stranded on the N2 highway.

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Brendan Seery 11 Jun 2019





He put himself into the customer's situation. Unfortunately, in many businesses, the customers are often just not seen as crucial to the business success.

Molenaar added that from a corporate point of view, some businesses are even designed as anti-empathetic and won't budge when faced with a situation where they can help a client.

Is your brand so rule-driven that it's anti-empathetic?

Think of the banks that add penalty fees when you make a withdrawal, or hotels charging for the water stocked in the fridge, or restaurants charging a corkage fee – it's everywhere, in the way businesses are treating customers.

Take a step back and consider the examples we're setting in the way we treat customers.

He recommends watching [Simon Sinek's video](#) on the snowball effect of how CEOs treat their employees, and how those employees then treat their customers:

That's the essence of why a wonderful hotel is not just about the fancy bed, but about the people that work there and share a sense of caring about the hotel and its guests.

Molenaar says it's also about asking how you can help your employees do the job better, rather than constantly checking for what they may have done wrong.

Creating an employee-centric culture, which rolls into customer-centric culture

Making the shift toward being customer-centric ultimately starts with leadership and the culture they create.

One way to do so is to get rid of rigid rules and rather translate them into principles or values, and trust and empower your

employees to do the right thing, going above and beyond where they can – all based on that trust.



What does it mean to be 'cool' and 'relevant' in brand building?

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Explaining how technology ties in with this, Molenaar said tech is often a wonderful solution to make processes more efficient and seamless, but when technology fails, there's often a lack of empathy from the employees to the customers affected.

On the other end of the scale, when the technology works so well that there's no human interaction required, brands need to see where there's room to create memorable moments. Humans need to be part of the process to create that connection.



Customer experience and employee engagement: 'Mind the gap'

Lynn Baker 7 Jun 2019



Balancing standardisation with personalisation

Molenaar said it's both an opportunity and a challenge, especially in tech-centric environments where we focus on standardisation more than on individualisation or personalisation.

We need to take the best bits of the human connection and the best bits of the tech to create a seamless solution, which is especially powerful when you need to scale out solutions and help your employees help your customers.



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To measure this, Molenaar said a swift mind shift is all it takes. All two questions to your customer service ratings – an emotional scale of how your customers feel after their interaction with your brand rather than a numeric rating, as well as why they felt that way.

When you focus on the people who feel delighted about their interaction with your brand, the human connection comes through. That's the difference between ensuring your customers are satisfied and making them truly delighted.

Molenaar ended with the famous Maya Angelou quote:

“ I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel. ”

Customer journeys and the zero moment of truth

The fourth speaker of the morning was Adhil Patel, Kantar's global director of brand. He expanded on consumer-centric, dynamic journeys, pointing out that marketers are under increasing pressure to deliver in the short term while continuing to build their brands over the longer term.

As a result, today's market research industry is split into silos of brand, shopper, customer experience and innovation, which proves an obstacle to marketers looking to fully understand the ecosystem in which consumers encounter your brand.

Patel said that Procter and Gamble (P&G) uses the 'moment of truth' well in their brand journey.

Often, the customer first faces your brand in store, and again when using the product.



#ShopperInsights: Zero moment of truth - future of marketing

Alistair Duff 19 Oct 2018



Google added the 'zero moment of truth' to this, as connected consumers have more opportunity to do research and even watch reviews before they encounter your product.

This means it is now a moment of influence, meaningful to marketers as it's where strong, positive memories are created.

To do so effectively, Patel said you need to introduce emotion.

He said to watch the TedTalk by Daniel Kahneman, where he said most of the moments of our lives are fleeting and don't leave a trace.

It's the riddle of experience vs memory:

Also, remember that customers follow different journeys for different experiences. Just compare the process of ordering a drink at a bar with ordering a meal online through Uber Eats. Brands need to be able to influence the customer in each of these moments.

To do so, Patel says to start with a simple framework of understanding what your consumers do along the way through journey mapping – but note that it's all interconnected and not necessarily isolated steps that are followed in a specific order each time.

Digital behaviour data, decoded

[Ansie Lombaard](#), senior global innovation director at Kantar was the final speaker of the morning. She explained how to harness the power of digital behavioural data.

Lombaard pointed out that many forget that thinking about digital behaviour is not about the tech – it actually means thinking about people and how they engage in the current tech-driven world.



It's time to embrace Customer Support Chatbot 2.0

Ryan Falkenberg 11 Jun 2019



There's no denying that technology has effectively rewritten the rules of engagement, with people no longer passive consumers but rather empowered as publishers, editors and commentators.



Use data to constantly innovate

Leigh Andrews 30 Sep 2016



This means that conversations are no longer necessarily initiated or controlled by brands, but rather multi-directional – all the more reason to harness the power of digital behavioural data for deeper insights.

Lombaard said this matters, even more, when we consider the “messiness of modern life” through the fragmentation of digital activity, as well as the proliferation of media and touchpoints.

Granularity of individual experiences

By moving beyond what people can remember about the brand, behavioural data makes more accurate media planning possible, as well as touchpoint activation strategies that unlock brand growth where it matters most.

To put this in an easier-to-understand light, Lombaard explained the use of non-survey ads, in understanding what your consumers think and feel, especially in the purchase decision moment.



Mind(set)

Lara-Anne Derbyshire 27 Mar 2019



You still need to look at the ecosystem for the holistic view, so you can step into the consumer's world and have empathy, then drill down to the granularity of individual experiences to build better growth strategies.

Remember that people are no longer passive consumers and engage with brands in multiple ways.

This involves seeing the consumer as more than just a flat profile on the page and capturing their complete digital footprint in a non-creepy way.

Five factors to better see and understand your customer

Lombaard said to consider the following five aspects...

1. Who is the core audience to reach?
2. What messages would help those customers break through barriers?
3. Where should you engage with them?
4. When should you engage with them, for the interaction to matter?
5. How would you show you appreciate the client beyond the brand?



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Dali Tembo 15 Jan 2019



Lombaard spoke of two ways of getting to digital behavioural data:

The first is to ask consumers to install a device or app to track – they need to then keep and use the app. The second is to ask them to complete a survey and fuse that with a third-party data source, but GDPR has complicated this process.

As a result, there's now a browser plugin option that's permission-based and simply grabs the user's past three months' history then uninstalls itself.

Buying triggers and online purchase barriers

This is proving enormously helpful in understanding the specific buying trigger, as well as three main barriers of online purchasing:

1. The first is **quality**, especially buying something online that you haven't seen or felt offline.
2. Second is feeling confident with the **security of the online payment platform**.
3. Third is whether there's a **clear return or exchange policy**.

Lombaard said this is all based on survey data, which is then used as the context to interpret the complexity of the behavioural data and determine the most likely pathway to the domain.

Ease consumers' e-commerce fears

One way to ease customer's e-commerce fears is to include user testimonials on the ease of exchanging products, as this helps them make that purchase decision online.

Lombaard added that “neurons that fire together, wire together,” and it's the same with purchase habits. Each spark builds a stronger bridge between the two so you need to factor in what else matters to your consumers, to build out the customers' experience with your brand.

Leverage alternative data sources for a more holistic view of your customer and what matters to them.



Mastering the art of giving people what they want in 2019

Teresa Richardson 13 Dec 2018



In this age of experience, the ultimate difference is the way we treat our customers. Empathy and attitude can take your brand a long way to ensure customers feel great when interacting with you, so brands need to make more effort to be part of the memorable moments from a consumer perspective.

As Amy Dickinson said, "Attraction happens when you feel important, valued, appreciated and wanted."

Your brand needs to ensure customers feel all of the above to keep up that attraction.

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ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

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