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MURDER ON THE ~~dance~~ high street shop floor

Why customer experience stakes have never been higher for retailers and consumer goods companies.

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It's a bloodbath out there.



It might have sounded alien ten years ago, but today we communicate anywhere at any time on any device through chatbots, apps and in emojis without having to leave our sofa. We are up to date with the latest news through social media and can order anything in a few clicks using our phones. In fact, in their global Total Retail survey, PwC reports 'mobile commerce' to be firmly on the march toward becoming the online shopping tool of choice.

Killing the groove.

Actually, we don't call them phones anymore. No, these super computer, 'swiss army knives' in our pockets, have become symbiotic to our existence. We have artificially intelligent systems at our beck and call that understands our voice, checks our spelling, calculates the fastest route to work by different means of transport and it could even drive us there.

And although this technology is amazing, I hear no jaws dropping. In fact, we've become blasè about technology. We expect it, we want it and we get frustrated when it doesn't act the way we want it to. In the same way customer experience is almost unrecognisable to that of even just one decade ago. We expect to have seamless customer experiences when we need assistance, and we want to be able to find the answers quickly and through a contact channel of our choice.

With yet another headline predicting a 'bloodbath' on the High Street, are we really shocked when businesses that were too slow to adapt to the pressures of customer expectations, struggle to keep afloat? The stakes have never been higher for retailers and consumer goods companies. With Amazon apparently out to eat everyone's dinner, how can traditional outlets compete?

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Steal the moves - Changing behaviours that will drive the next retail revolution.

In April 2016, Millennials surpassed Baby Boomers as the world's largest living generation. Over sixteen million strong in the UK alone, Millennials are disrupting and challenging the corporate world with their technological preferences, whether we like it or not, and they now dominate the largest wallet share of any generation in history. Why is then that customer service continues to be boomer-focused?

Millennials have high service expectations - after all, they grew up with omnipresent connectivity as a fact of life - and low patience of slow and old fashioned analog systems that still saturate the customer service industry. Millennials require a different customer service model where digitising the customer experience is more important than ever. Adjust or die, simple as that.

Burn the house down - Re-imagining the next generation of customer service.

Customer experience in one industry sets the bar and shapes expectations for all experiences. Online and instore. Customer experience is THE differentiator to get the competitive advantage over competitors.



Hey hey ...



A study by telecommunications giant O2 revealed that “telephone” apps on smartphones - used to make actual phone calls - are only the fifth-most-used app among the general public.

Millennials are the subject of many stereotypes, but there are some habits that are empirically evident. **Speaking generation Y actually requires ‘not speaking’.**

Millennials are accustomed to having on-demand services from streaming movies through Netflix, booking an Uber, ordering from Amazon or Deliveroo without any further human assistance. They grew up with the steady introduction of texting, email, instant messaging, and other forms of non-verbal communication. These channels are popular because of their instantaneity, but also because it allows users to correspond at their leisure.

It's no surprise then that digital support channels have become the preferred choice for customer support, however what is shocking, is the number of organisations that still struggle to implement a robust platform that can facilitate automated, multi-channel communication.

And so and so and so and so and so and so and so and so.

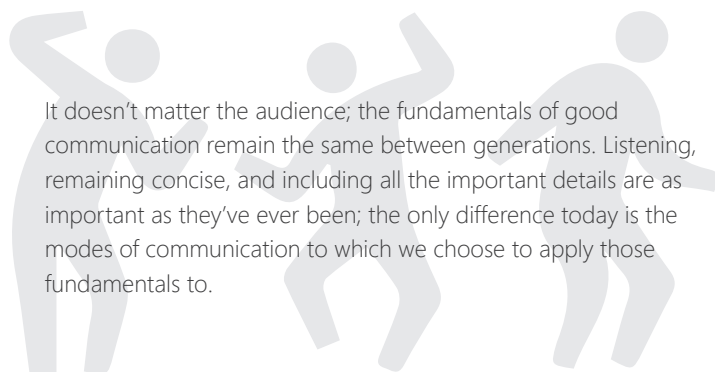
Time has become a pricey commodity. No-one likes waiting. Customers of all ages, now expect speedier service, partly because successful brands, both start-ups and established players, have shown it's possible to speed up service without sacrificing quality, but Millennials are speed freaks.

If an app or website takes too long to load, they'll abandon it and use another. Their diet of on-demand services has made them superb multi-taskers who expect convenience and they don't mind paying more for it. Convenience creates loyalty.

The challenge with convenience though is not 'the what', but typically 'the how'. Making transactions and interactions frictionless is important, however convenience should be key focus throughout a customer journey, especially so when they need support. Untimely responses to customer queries are one of the hallmarks of poor customer service and precious time wasted. Customer response-rates, product shipments, service offers, and return policies all need to be as smooth as possible. Digital support channels can offer convenient, 24/7, instant real-time support with little customer effort.

Keeping it real – No ‘dad dancing’.

As a society we've become less formal and Millennials in particular, have a different vocabulary to boomers, constantly changing dependant to their communication channel. Some brands have caught on to this, however when it's not on brand or authentic sounding, retailers trying to be 'cool' ('dad dancing'), will result in Gen Y feeling like they are part of some underhanded marketing ploy, rather than addressing their specific issues, which could alienate them.



It doesn't matter the audience; the fundamentals of good communication remain the same between generations. Listening, remaining concise, and including all the important details are as important as they've ever been; the only difference today is the modes of communication to which we choose to apply those fundamentals to.

Add value, do it differently, more bravely, and with ever more insight.

Millennials are tech-savvy and adapt quickly to the latest digital trends. Retailers will need to do the same if they want to deliver a multi-channel, frictionless, personalised customer experience.

As the online world of retail expands into our physical shopping habits - driven by our desire to access information on products and services and to compare prices – retailers will need to adapt to keep customers engaged with instant access to the information through integrated Natural Language Search FAQs, live chat, intelligent chatbots, visual IVRs, across the contact centre and social platforms too.

Store traffic doesn't matter as much as overall customer conversion across channels. Customers are voting with their feet as they shop more online, and for multi-channel retailers that means the need for an increasingly focused, curated and engaging brick-and-mortar store experience that creates maximum conversion—no matter what channel ultimately records the purchase. As all of Gen Y's parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles are about to find out, it's about being proficient in the new normal.