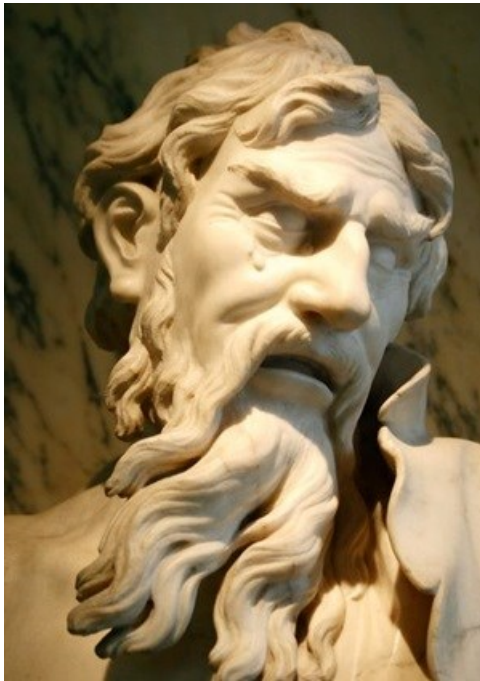


Digital Marketing - What it means to be a #DigitalDreamer

 By [Terence Rei](#)

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When the Greek philosopher Heraclitus said that the only thing that is constant is change - he may very well have been writing the 1st commandment for digital. Just because you have learned something about digital today does not mean that it will be true a year or even a month from today. Instead each learning is one that you adopt, action and iterate in an effort to improve because if there is one thing that is true about digital, it is that digital is constant improvement.



Heraclitus, ancient Greek philosopher © Anthony Baggett - [12RF.com](#)

In the beginning there was the customer

So, where is the best place to start when you look to create or improve a digital product? Let me ask you this, what is the core purpose of your product? Each individual I have ever asked this question has had a different answer but there is always one central point that their answer boils down to... The customer.

Pretty simple, right? Put the customer at the centre of every decision you make and you cannot go wrong because you are not building products, you are building solutions. With the explosion of big data there are too many smart people staring at data thinking – how can we use this data to improve our product for the customer? When they should be looking at the data and asking themselves – What is it that the customer wants or needs from us and how can we build products that cater to those wants or needs. It all starts with listening, collecting insight into what it is that the customer wants and then building a product **around** that.

Start with identifying the most basic reason that customers use your product and once you have a grasp of what that is it is time to take to the data.

Listen to what it is that customers really want out of the product being offered by your industry, social media and Google search are a good place to start. Use your own data to flesh out the conversations but don't miss out on the opportunity to learn from your competitors as well, the closer you get to the data the better you will know your customer.

Once you have done this you will be closer to your customer and will have a better indication of what they are looking for. Now comes the difficult pill to swallow, is your product truly meeting those needs? There is no definite answer here, there are likely to be some aspects that you are doing well but be honest with yourself in your short fallings. At this point you should have a good indication of what your customers are looking for and change may be in the air. The trick here is to use the data to drive change, then measure your change and be sure to report to the powers that be of the performance.

Are we there yet?

Once you have built a product that is truly centred around the customer then surely you have the winning formula, right? Wrong! The follow up to that would be to track performance and iterate, ensuring that the product or service that you have centred around the customer is measured and improved over time. Just because your product meets customer needs does not mean that it cannot be improved upon to better meet the needs of tomorrow.

We should allow data to drive customer centricity, taking the learnings of the data and applying these to the next version. A customer's needs and wants are ever changing and evolving and so your product should be flexible enough to change with

these needs while ensuring that the core benefit is fully functional and still meets the basic requirements.

Consider the Pareto principle, 80% of the value a product or service offers is acquired from only 20% of its core functions. That is not to say that the remaining 80% of the functionality is not important but rather that you should understand what the core benefit is for the customer, the “why”, and then focus on the “what” and the “how.” A truly digital product looks to solve a problem, want or need (the why) but analytics and measurement will tell you that there is always room for iteration, opportunity and improvement (the what and the how).

The dream team

Just as products should be the result of a continuously evolving process centred around the customer, so too should the teams that are responsible for the creation of these products and services. In order to build the ultimate “Dream team” one needs to understand that digital does not thrive in silos, instead teams should form around opportunities, bringing together diverse components of expertise from all walks of digital. Not only does this create the environment for innovation and collaboration but it will provide growth for the individuals across the team as they lean on one another’s expertise. Cross functional learning becomes a norm and teams become more aware of their colleagues’ functions and how they contribute to the overall objective.

While it is important to have a variety of skill sets and specialists in any one team to share expertise, it is also important to try keep these teams tight. The CEO of Amazon, Jeff Bezos, has a strict 2 pizza rule, “If a team can’t be fed by two pizzas then it is too big”. The concept is based around the theory that smaller, tighter teams with the right skill sets will results in an inclusive environment and therefore higher engagement, as the team becomes responsible and committed to the outcomes.

Finally, teams should define clear objectives and performance indicators that translate into measurable outcomes all the while keeping the customer at the centre of their efforts. Measure the tasks that would contribute toward these objectives and priorities the efforts that move the needle in a meaningful way. This allows for teams to focus their efforts and promotes accountability towards the end result.

Where are we heading?

Digital transformation is an ongoing process but a cultural change is not something that simply happens overnight. Brands need to actively drive the adoption of a digital mind-set if they are to keep up with the changing environment. Gone are the days where change happened progressively, information and resources are readily available to all and with it, accelerated change. Will you be ready?

ABOUT TERENCE REI

Fascinated by all things digital I am passionate about innovation, customer centricity, and data-driven insights. Corporate meets creative, I work for Vodacom SA as a digital marketing specialist.
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