

Consumers rule! Stay ahead with self-service kiosks, digital signage

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In today's world where time-starved and less loyal consumers rule and information confusion and chaos reigns, forward-thinking retailers are turning to self-service kiosks and digital signage to automate transactions, enhance employees' performance and improve the consumer experience, said Dusty Lutz, of NCR Corporation, speaking at the 2011 JusttouchIT retail technology and expo at Vodacom World in Midrand yesterday, 28 June 2011.

A global survey conducted by NCR Corporation in 2010 shows that 86% of customers are more likely to do business with companies that offer self-service, and 56% of customers say their likelihood to use self-service has increased over the past year.

While 85% agree that organisations should do more to integrate their social networking sites with their other channels, the study also shows 60% believe the shopping experience would be faster if they had a personalised experience.

"That is the changing face of retail, a consumer-to-business (C2B) world, where you would have to take account of the consumer preference and presence," Lutz said, adding that this makes a consumer feel special.

"My preference means do you really know me: my language, my size, age, my favorite products, services and brands? How important are discounts and other offers to me? Do I want a receipt?"

"My presence means knowing how and where I want to interact with you? Am I in a mall or store, branch or airport, surfing the net at home, using a kiosk, or travelling, texting on my mobile device, or navigating with a GPS device?"

Lutz said retailers need to enable what he called the 'C-tailing' experience, which he said consists of delivering timely, personalised transactions, information and promotions seamlessly across all channels, including assisted and self-checkout, informational and transactional kiosks, digital signage, e-marketing sites and mobile technologies.

"Self-service facilities are everywhere, and have become an integral part of our life and has been ingrained into our culture and customers are increasingly demanding it," he said.

On display

Digital signage - which is another component of the 'C-tailing' experience - has become universal and is also growing faster, Lutz said, citing a NCR 2010 global survey indicating that 70% of respondents aged 12 or older have seen a digital

video display in a public venue in the past month.

However, he warns that in order for the 'C-tailing' experience to be successful, kiosk or signage must engage and provide value from the consumer's viewpoint based on their presence and preference, provide a seamless converged experience across the other channels through which the consumer interacts with you.

"Also, institute metrics to monitor system performance and usage and create an active management system of continuous improvement. Lastly, plan for success - make sure your solution can scale from a small proof of concept deployment to thousands of end points."

Earlier on, Yeahpoint International CEO John Anderson told delegates that the following 10 golden rules must be applied if a business wants to achieve a return on investment (ROI) on digital media:

1. What's in it for the customer - three touches to a reward
2. Never start a project without an ROI in mind
3. Understand the importance to the business
4. Crouching tiger - look for the hidden ROI
5. Hidden dragon - make sure there are no missed costs
6. Get Help - these projects are multi-disciplined
7. This is not a web project - don't treat it as such
8. If transactions are involved - understand the flow of money
9. Establish a single project sponsor / executive
10. Sell the solution to your target audience.

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Issa Sikiti da Silva is a winner of the 2010 SADC Media Awards (print category). He freelances for various media outlets, local and foreign, and has travelled extensively across Africa. His work has been published both in French and English. He used to contribute to Bizcommunity.com as a senior news writer.

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