

Creating customers

 By Leigh Andrews

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It's not about the low-hanging fruit or quick wins, effective customer experience management that results in happy returning customers is all about effective change *now* to improve the overall future customer experience (CX).

Customer Experience Management or CEM Africa Summit, the largest CX gathering in Africa, took place for the fifth time in Cape Town over 17 and 18 August 2016 at the Century City Convention Centre.

First up was a panel discussion moderated by professor Adre Schreuder, CEO of Consultant Research, founder and chair of SAcsi. Schreuder kicked off by quoting Peter Drucker who said the most valid definition of business is simply to create a customer.



If only it were this easy to create loyal customers! © Anyka – 123RF.com

He pointed out that the focus of the local CX industry is complaints, and research proves that the CX industry is getting a handle on handling those customer complaints, but says businesses need to ask if that is actually taking us forward and are we getting customer loyalty out of that?

Next, Schreuder moderated a panel on next-generation CEM and its future, which provided thoughts on how the customer has evolved, as well as the latest trends in how businesses are exciting and delighting their customers.

CX is the entire company's responsibility

Eddie Moyce, former chief customer experience officer at MTN said what C-suite executives need to start thinking about is less marketing and sales and more that if they don't take care of customers in the short term, the business suffers in the long term, especially if customers start leaving in droves. Nothing profound or next-wave about it, but thinking carefully about how the customer is the entire company's responsibility. Without customers, we won't exist tomorrow.

The illusion of customer loyalty as the Holy Grail

Jean Ochse, head of benefits tracking and extraction at Standard Bank retail bank, said strategy is definitely an issue as different sections of the company try to achieve different goals. We forget the importance of emotion and humanness. Sometimes it takes a leap of faith to boost the bottom line. Is loyalty really the Holy Grail we should be seeking?

What 40 things do you want to do before 2020?

Chantel Botha, head of brand design and customer experience strategy at BrandLove, said there is a people capability side for CX of the future. 2020 is 40 months away. What 40 things do you want to do before 2020? She recommends looking to new generation leadership demands, collaboration and openness, letting employees manage themselves and allowing for a much higher level of collaboration. Organisations that do well don't obsess over competitors.

Future proof by getting the right thinking in place in the c-suite

Craig Lee, former executive customer experience and brand manager for Emirates Group, focused on just three things: people, business transformation and technology. Transformation is a difficult thing, customer transformation is not just another project, it's a c-suite change. Don't get hooked up in your own data, CX is a blend of art and science. Leverage the incredible talents you've already employed. Juniors can have a greater following than the CEO.

Are we properly listening to our customers?

Simon Cranswick, MD of Anana Africa, says it's not just instilling culture but also seeing a measurable return, the real dashboard isn't at c-level, it's with the customer. There is a need to put the customer at the centre of everything or go back to the boardroom and challenge on spend. It's difficult to put numbers to it, but that's the challenge. It's not about call centres, corporates are simply not embracing this properly.

Schreuder closed by summarising that all the panelists had addressed transformation, but if you're not actually doing anything different, how the hell do you expect things to change?

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ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

Leigh Andrews AKA the #MilkshakeQueen, is former Editor-in-Chief: Marketing & Media at Bizcommunity.com, with a passion for issues of diversity, inclusion and equality, and of course, gourmet food and drinks! She can be reached on Twitter at @Leigh_Andrews.

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