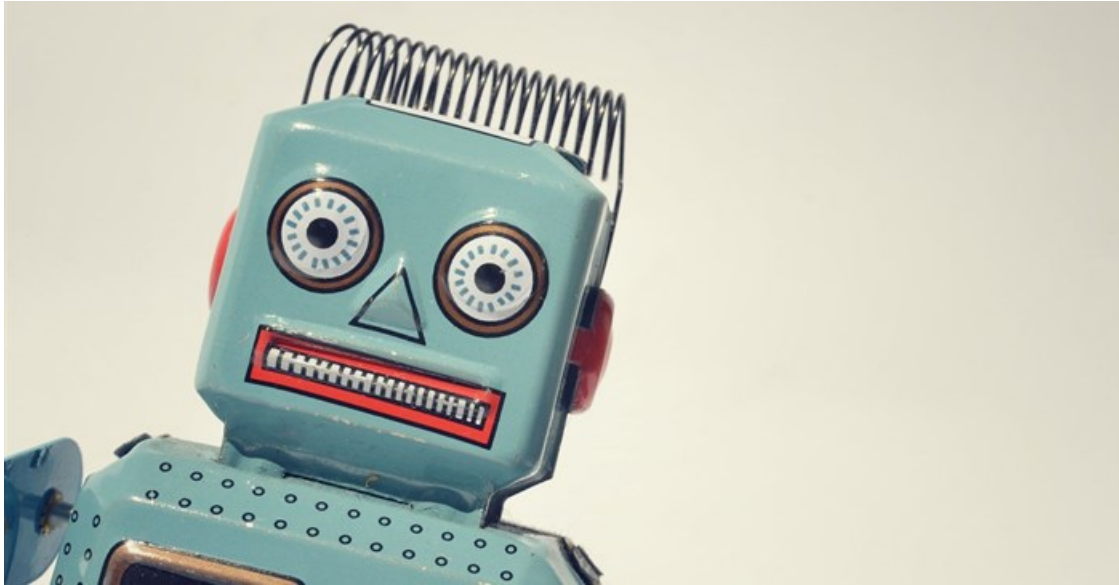


AI is already here - we just call them Transformers!

 By [Mareli Smit](#)

4 Oct 2017

In my line of work, we do a lot of mystery calls and immersions and I am always amazed at how little we as customers expect from service as a whole in this country. We expect that the call will be dropped, that the Interactive Voice Response (IVR) will be difficult (or in some cases impossible) to navigate, that the service agent won't be able to solve my problem first time around, that I will be treated like a number and not as an individual... the list goes on and on.



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I recently had the pleasure to call five call centres in a specific industry asking them for assistance. I was my happy self and put some breadcrumbs down for anyone to pick up on – I spoke about a huge milestone in my life (turning 40) and how I wanted to host an awesome party and not one, I promise you, not even one person that I spoke to took **any** human interest in me and my story. There were no congratulations, no asking out about my huge party plans, not even a smile – just: ‘ID number and address please.’

This got me thinking. When did it become such a transactional world that people working in call centres (or in most retail stores I may add) have become so desensitised to other humans or so afraid that they will not follow the script or protocol and being penalised for long handling times, that the fear of being human has become the norm? I just love this video that illustrates in a fun way what it looks like if we are systems driven only: ‘the computer says no...’ comes in many different forms in different companies:

We already have robots in place

We read and see all these wonderful features and functionalities around artificial intelligence, how this is one of the biggest trends worldwide, but I want to counter and say that we already have 'robots' in place.

Not by their choice, I must add, they are all really human inside but have a huge protective layer outside – almost like Transformers! Most Transformers have not received the empowerment to solve problems in a creative way. They are employees that are trained to be functional, not to waste time, not to step outside the lines and never to really connect on a human level.

I want to be bold and say that customer centricity is impossible if the culture of a company is driven by fear of really and fully, stepping into the shoes of a customer. There can't be something like customer experience if the call centre agent is afraid that they may be marked down and not get an incentive bonus for connecting with a customer's story on a human level.



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Leigh Andrews 9 Jan 2017



Customer experience is impossible if managed as a function rather than a culture. You can have the best systems, the biggest data, the best journey maps, the highest NPS scores and customer centric programmes, but if the customer doesn't feel great about themselves in the moment when interacting with your brand, you've wasted your time and money.

So, bring in the AI robots to make sure that the mechanics are in place and working, but please, oh please, don't get rid of the humanics!

ABOUT MARELI SMIT

Creative, focused, goal driven, loyal and a team player with a passion for relationship building through targeted communication and networking - with a knack for organising almost anything under the sun!

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