

Providing customer experience excellence using analytics *and* intuition

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3 Jul 2023

While digitalisation and automation create many opportunities for businesses to streamline tasks and deliver benefits of ease and convenience to customers, this doesn't automatically translate to good customer service.



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In fact, that assumption can create a significant risk for any business, because the simple truth is that you cannot entirely remove the human element from your business when you are dealing with customers who are human.

So, while debate has long raged, and will likely continue to do so forever, about whether analytics or intuition is more important when it comes to creating positive customer experiences, the reality is that it takes both, in equal measure.

The human variable

A simple illustration of this equal weighting of technology and people in the customer experience equation is an Uber ride. While Uber is first and foremost a digital platform, the quality of the user experience is ultimately a product of how well the app works and how the outcome of using that app turned out.

In other words, an Uber customer could have a wonderfully slick, seamless and hassle-free experience of booking a ride on the digital platform, but if they are picked up in a dirty car driven by a sulky driver, and they feel they were overcharged, the overall experience is not going to be a positive one.

The same is true of any customer experience. Organisations can invest massive amounts of money into gathering and analysing data, but unless they combine that data to deliver customer touchpoints and experiences that deliver on their expectations and the promises made by the brand, these analytics investments are unlikely to deliver any significant returns.

Augmented intelligence

The most obvious example of the successful integration of human intuition and digital capability is augmented intelligence. Done successfully, augmented intelligence brings together common sense, imagination, creativity and intuition of human intelligence and the speed, accuracy and convenience of artificial intelligence.

Separately, both of these have benefits to offer customers and advantages for the business. But combined effectively, these benefits are amplified, as labour-intensive computational tasks are automated, freeing up human knowledge and intuition to inform and achieve meaningful customer engagement.



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It's been said before, but it bears repeating. Customers are not interested in digitalisation that is undertaken merely as a way of replacing human interaction or saving a business money.

Yes, they want the convenience and speed of automated tasks, where such automation is appropriate. But ultimately, they still want to be treated as human beings, more often than not, by another human being. Or, at the very least, they want a digital experience that is based on an understanding of their needs and expectations as a human, and that serves to build a relationship of trust between themselves and the business with which they engage.

Analytics can take a business some of the way towards delivering this type of human-led digital experience, but getting all the way there requires insights, creativity and empathy, which will likely always be exclusively human traits. So, unless a company's analytics functions and digitalisation strategies include the objective to free up humans to use their humanness to deliver human-led customer experiences, those strategies will never be 100% effective.

Finding the balance

This idea of a balanced approach to the customer experience, which combines elements of man and machine, is nothing new. In fact, the concept has existed since the 1970s, when computers really began making their way into many organisations. The difference back then, however, was that technology only served a very limited 'back-end' purpose, mainly providing the means for companies to capture and store mostly transactional information.

The digital revolution of recent years has resulted in an over-correction, where the race for digital leadership has caused many organisations to focus on harnessing the benefits of digital, data, and analytics, while losing sight of the importance of also retaining their humanness if they want to retain their customers.

Of course, there are also many businesses that are getting this balance right. And when they do, the result is not just augmented intelligence, it is an augmented and enhanced customer experience, informed by both analytics and intuition. This enables them to consistently hit the sweet spot of customer expectations through optimised processes that never sacrifice the all-important human element.

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