

# The digital revolution is futile without a customer focus

 By John Sanei

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As the digital industry, we are the custodians of change. We introduce the tools that have the potential to bring exponential levels of growth, efficiency and engagement to our businesses. However, digital alone is not the cure-all for every business problem. In order for digital to succeed in today's climate, it has to be keenly focused on consumer and employee needs.



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Our commercial landscape can be defined by two key trends: **decentralisation of power** and the **democratisation of knowledge**. The government and large organisations are losing their grip on power, the power is squarely in the consumers' hands. In the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, consumers made decisions based on which brands grabbed their attention. In the 1990s, the decision became influenced by both attention and time spent with a product or service. Today, consumers are most swayed by experience – this is a process of understanding the brand and trusting it to perform a specific purpose before purchasing it.

## Changing need states

While the next big trend is important in digital, our core focus should be the changing “need states” of our consumers and employees. This should be the first layer of any business or campaign, with digitisation falling on top of this. Examine any of the world's multi-billion dollar businesses, and you will find a firm grasp of five defining need states. These are:

1. **Hyper-personalisation:** We live busy lives and don't have time to make decisions for ourselves. For this reason, we love brands that think for us. Amazon, for example, has gone as far as sending boxes of products to customers that they anticipate will be ordered next. Too farfetched? They have already reported a very high acceptance rate.
2. **Hyper-convenience:** Brands need to help us save time. Uber, for example, made it possible to order transport with the press of two buttons. This created a whole new market with people who did not catch taxis before.
3. **Hyper-trust:** Woolworths is an example of a brand that has invested heavily in promoting an association of quality and trust in their brand. While they sell food like many other grocery stores, we will pay more for a bunch of celery there because we have learnt to trust the product.
4. **Hyper-recognition:** We want brands to recognise our loyalty and reward us for it. The first customer recognition

program was an air miles campaign, launched in 1981. This was the birth of the gamification of consumption. We respond to programs that give us incentive to spend, exercise or save.

5. **Hyper-value:** This is closely linked to trust. We want to feel that a brand is being transparent and not overcharging or taking advantage of us. It is not a case of being cheap or expensive, but a perception that the product is worth the pricetag.

Without taking these factors into account, digital cannot have its required impact on your business. For example, businesses that have introduced Trello to manage tasks and employees only have a 6% to 12% uptake if they don't create a culture of gamification and hyper-recognition first. While the technology is excellent, the appetite for it has not been created for it to succeed.

## Rise of the gig economy

In addition to businesses looking to the need states to attract consumers and employees, they will also need to take an objective look at themselves. You cannot innovate from within. You have to hire people to disrupt from the outside then bring that information internally to refine your business. The nature of a corporate role is to keep the business stable.

However, the future is not stable, so people in those jobs don't have the DNA that drives a person to disrupt. For this reason, I feel the workplace of the future will attract more members of the "gig economy." Freelancers and experts in their fields will enter corporates for a set contract or "gig," using their specialist insight to disrupt the business and effect real, impactful change.

We are entering a phenomenal era in technology, where trends such as immersive and augmented reality will connect brands to consumers more vividly than ever before. Digitisation is poised to filter every aspect of our lives, but with this comes a critical focus on human needs. In my presentation at the IAB Summit on 16 March, I hope to challenge the audience by asking important questions on how gamification can be used to impact every area of their business, strengthening their brand and boosting their growth in the process.

*Sanei will be speaking on the application of gamification to all facets of business at the IAB Digital Summit powered by Accenture Interactive, taking place on Thursday, 16 March at the Galleria Sandton. IAB Digital Summit tickets are available [here](#).*

## ABOUT JOHN SANEI

Futures Strategist John Sanei makes sense of future trends and merges them so individuals and organisations can forge forward with confidence, elevating their leadership vision to exponential heights. At the intersection of human science, neuroscience, quantum technology, futurism and business strategy, John has a knack for sharing his knowledge and creating meaningful connections. He ignites platforms, connects with crowds and leaves an empowering perspective that lasts long after the lights have switched off.

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