

Editorial: *Facing the reshaping of the world business, by adequately addressing the new realities via a change in response marketing across the full range of touch points specific to each customer-engagement ecosystem*

As we all know, every day we learn about different research, methods, testing, approaches on saving the world by saving the companies and people. It is a kind of a special play allowing us to cultivate imagination and innovation within the new culture of learning¹ which needs to leverage social and technical infrastructures in new ways, knowledge being seen as fluid and evolving. In this way, we see that the world of business is reshaped today through four trends: “*technological advances and the speed with which new technologies are created and copied, the loss of geographic advantage resulting from globalization, the shake-up of traditionally stable industries as a result of deregulation and the rising power of the consumer and their ability to get what they want, when they want it, from whomever they want*”²; digital has disrupted the ability to cleanly separate communications from experiences and the first part of the customer experience journey is represented by the new-style landing pages³; in this more democratic marketing landscape, ideas and creativity are considered the big winners, there is accountability to test and testing is leading to knowing⁴; customers, situations, industries are different, so as brands have different strategies within an industry, and over time all this can change⁵; a customer experience strategy must describe, in detail, the customer experience you want to deliver, be aligned with your overall company strategy your company's brand attributes, be shared with all employees⁶.

On different occasions we have seen how difficult it is to capture the attention of the customers and gain their engagement. Of course, specialists explained, for instance, that customers like touching, trying, tasting, smelling, and exploring the world of desirable objects, and this artful juxtaposition of those objects can most of the times make all the difference in the world. And giving this opportunity to touch, try, taste, and smell the products offered by the

¹ <http://www.newcultureoflearning.com/>

² Doug Leather - Competitive Advantage & Customer Centricity (relevant to 99% of companies), July 29, 2012, http://www.customerthink.com/blog/letter_to_the_board_competitive_advantage_customer_centricity_relevant_to_99_of_companies

³ Scott Brinker – Landing pages are experiences, not just communications, September 21, 2012, <http://www.ioninteractive.com/post-click-marketing-blog/2012/9/21/landing-pages-are-experiences-not-just-communications.html>

⁴ Justin Talerico – Predict or perform: Marketer choice, September 18, 2012, <http://www.ioninteractive.com/post-click-marketing-blog/2012/9/18/predict-or-perform-marketers-choice.html>

⁵ Bob Thompson - Giving consumers the Right Stuff more important than great customer service, http://www.customerthink.com/blog/study_giving_consumers_the_right_stuff_more_important_than_great_customer_service

⁶ Harley Manning - Does Your Company Have A Customer Experience Strategy? No, Really, September 4, 2012, http://www.customerthink.com/blog/does_your_company_have_a_customer_experience_strategy_no_really

retailer, this is probably the most powerful incitement to shopping⁷. Specialists also argued that in order to achieve a broader perspective on marketing, the key is to build customer relationships, by understanding that customer relationships are the most important company asset needing to be managed. On the other hand, the “Father of Marketing”, Philip Kotler, underlined the need to acknowledge and reconcile the sphere and complexity of marketing activities by using holistic marketing (relational marketing, integrated marketing, internal marketing and marketing of social responsibilities), while Kotler’s mentor, Peter Drucker, stated that the purpose of marketing is to know and understand the customer so well that the product or service is perfectly suited to him and sells itself. There is no doubt that the customers want to know exactly what specific problems the products and services solve, and they want to hear this in their own words. That is why every time the organization writes a message for the customers, it has the opportunity to communicate with its customers, and at each stage of the sales process, well-written materials will help the customers to understand how the organization’s products and services will help them.⁸ And that is why it is necessary to recognize that today’s real challenge is to be very responsive, and to give feedback⁹. The new abilities in accordance to the evolution and confrontation with the new opportunities and challenges help organizations to operate a retail environment that fits the particular needs of consumers.¹⁰

In June 2009, four representatives of McKinsey Company, David Court, Dave Elzinga, Susie Mulder, and Ole Jorgen Vetvik¹¹ attracted our attention on the fact that: “*Consumers are moving outside the purchasing funnel - changing the way they research and buy your products. If your marketing hasn’t changed in response, it should.*” They underlined the history of the so-called “soap opera”, starting from identifying the “touch points” (understood through the metaphor of a “funnel”) when consumers are open to influence, and pledging for the need for more sophisticated approach named the “*consumer decision journey*” (an ongoing cycle: Awareness – Familiarity – Consideration – Purchase – Loyalty) in order to help marketers navigate this *environment characterized by “the explosion of product choices and digital channels, coupled with the emergence of an increasingly discerning, well-informed consumer.”* And this is due to the fact that, within the two-way conversation, marketers need a more systematic approach so as to reach consumers in the right place at the right time with the right message, by aligning all elements of marketing (strategy, spending, channel management, and message) with “the journey” (understood so as to direct spending and messaging to the moments of maximum influence) and by integrating those elements across the organization.

Despite the fact that traditional marketing remains important, in the opinion of the four representatives of McKinsey Company, marketers must take into account that: two-thirds of the

⁷ Paco Underhill – Why We Buy. The Science of Shopping, Updated and revised for the Internet, the global consumer and beyond, Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, New York, 2009, p. 170

⁸ David Meerman Scott – The New Rules of Marketing and PR. How to Use News Releases, Blogs, Podcasting, Viral Marketing, & Online Media to Reach Buyers Directly, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., New Jersey, 2007, p. 145

⁹ Brad Berens - Don E. Schultz on What Companies Can Do to Integrate, iMedia Connection, December 06, 2006

¹⁰ Paco Underhill – Why We Buy. The Science of Shopping, Updated and revised for the Internet, the global consumer and beyond, Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, New York, 2009, p. 167

¹¹ David Court, Dave Elzinga, Susan Mulder, and Ole Jørgen Vetvik - The consumer decision journey, McKinsey Quarterly, June 2009,

https://www.mckinseyquarterly.com/Marketing/Strategy/The_consumer_decision_journey_2373

touch points during the active-evaluation phase involve consumer-driven marketing activities (Internet reviews and word-of-mouth recommendations from friends and family; in-store interactions and recollections of past experiences etc.); a third of the touch points involve company-driven marketing; it is necessary to focus the spending on the new touch points (making expanding the base of active loyalists a priority), and “to adopt new ways of measuring consumer attitudes, brand performance, and the effectiveness of marketing expenditures across the whole process.” To address the new realities of this “journey”, they recommend *four kinds of activities*: prioritize objectives and spending; tailor messaging; invest in consumer-driven; win the in-store battle. They also pledge for the need for marketers to integrate all customer-facing activities, adjust the spending and view the change as an opportunity to be in the right place at the right time, giving consumers the information and support they need to make the right decisions.

Allow us to remember that two years ago, Kevin Stirz¹² argued that in order to be successful in any business, that involves knowing how good the company is in the eyes of the customers, taking into account that only the sum of the experiences of the customers and of the employees make up the company’s reputation. But to help your company perform at its best, it is necessary to get everyone involved (by connecting with them on an ongoing basis and developing feedback) and to create and publish standards which differentiate your company from your competition (“customer service standards” or “brand promise”, real roadmap for management in empowering the employees to do and helping customers and employees to understand the goal, the actual experience and the gap and to easily communicate that gap to management), by identifying and eliminating the gap between promise and expectation, giving on this way your customers what they want and increasing customers’ loyalty. We also remembered that in today’s business climate there is a real need for having an informed approach to marketing based on facts and goals, a framework as Quaero’s “Six Dimensions” (actionable strategies, organizational alignment, appropriate measures, effective processes, information assets and analytics, enabling technologies - aligned strategies, processes, and organization driving the technology decisions) offering a solid understanding of marketing effectiveness and a clear roadmap for improving it¹³.

In the summer of this year, three other representatives of McKinsey Company (Tom French, Laura LaBerge, and Paul Magill)¹⁴ invited us to move in the right direction and look at *some ways to jump-start customer engagement across the organization*, considering the fact that *customers are demanding very different kinds of relationships with companies*. In their opinion, in order to orchestrate customer engagement for the entire organization, the marketing function must be able to influence touch points it doesn’t directly control, and that is why it is necessary to make << five “no regrets” moves >> which improve the coordination of activities across the

¹² Kevin Stirz - How good are you, May, 26, 2010, <http://amazingserviceguy.com/3153/how-good-are-you/>

¹³ Your blueprint for success, http://quaero.csgsystems.com/six_dimensions/

¹⁴ Tom French, Laura LaBerge, and Paul Magill - Five “no regrets” moves for superior customer engagement, McKinsey Quarterly, July 2012, https://www.mckinseyquarterly.com/article_print.aspx?L2=16&L3=20&ar=2999

broad range of touch points and enable more rapid and adequate responses: *hold a customer-engagement summit* (engagement going beyond managing the experience at touch points, and participants coordinating the activities required to reach and engage customers across the full range of touch points specific to the customer-engagement ecosystem); *create a customer-engagement council* (could be a strategic-planning or a brand council, which has a critical role in breaking the “silo” mind-set and allows to coordinate tactics across touch points in a more timely manner, by bringing together all primary forms of engagement, by translating the findings into specific actions at individual touch points and by making fact-based decisions in accordance to a customer-engagement charter); *appoint a “chief content officer”* (responsible for both, to feed consumer demand for information and engagement and to manage the content consumers themselves generate, and working closely with colleagues to deeply understand the company’s character and to gain a full perspective on how the company interacts with external stakeholders); *create a “listening center”* (which monitor what is being said in order to both, complement internal metrics and traditional tracking research and feed consumer feedback); *challenge your total customer-engagement budget* (by looking at total spending on customer engagement and putting the money in the good places, by communicating with customers much more productively thanks to digital and social channels, and determine customers to voluntarily serve as advocates for the company’s brand and building more lifetime loyalty, by optimizing the impact of investments across the entire set of touch points and by a proper balancing between the strategic assessment of how customer expectations are evolving and how competitors are changing their methods of customer engagement).

And as four years ago, **Professor Ion Smedescu, Founding Rector of the Romanian-American University** chose the 5th of October, to step on the path of eternity, also allow us to remember that Professor Ion Smedescu lived with intensity, making a constant and coherent effort to transpose in the academic landscape powerful ideas specific to the „cultural architect” that is his beloved „Marketing”.¹⁵ As **a true Holistic Marketing Manager, Professor Ion Smedescu** *proved the right understanding of the interaction between the managerial culture, the university culture and the surrounding culture, bringing together marketer and customer into a lasting marketing relationship while considering the importance of the quality of team relations, as well as the quality of the network in initiating partnerships in adequately addressing across the full range of touch points specific to the customer-engagement ecosystem. Professor Ion Smedescu* will always remain alive in our memories as a standard, bringing all University staff, Students and Partners renewed trust, hope and inspiration.

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¹⁵ <http://holisticmarketingmanagement.ro/four-years-ago-professor-ion-smedescu-a-true-holistic-marketing-manager-founding-rector-of-the-romanian-american-university/>