

# Customer experience - on purpose



Image source: Brian Solis.

## What's the next big thing in customer experience?

Well, we've been sifting through the array of predictions that every blogger and his mother seems to have issued over the last three months and here's a very quick recap of what's in store for 2014 - in no particular order

**THE INTERNET OF THINGS** enabling your fridge to talk to your kettle to talk to your spouse **MOBILE EXPERIENCE** which allows consumers to do everything on the move and may well help to solve the obesity crisis if only people can develop skinny fingers **PREDICTIVE ANALYSIS** means brands know what customers are going to do before they know it themselves – scary **OMNICHANNEL** horrible buzzword for delivering your experience seamlessly across multiple channels **HYPER-TARGETING SOON TO BE OVER-TAKEN BY NANO-TARGETING** no shopper will ever be safe from being bombarded by personalised pop-up ads wherever they happen to be **BIG DATA** no, this isn't an Excel sheet viewed at 150% for the visually challenged, it is in fact integrating huge amounts of meta data to arrive at new insights **REAL TIME DATA** which logs our preferences as we consume **TECHNOLOGICAL EVALUATION OF BRAND BEHAVIOURS** technology suppliers trying to make their kit more aligned with how customers actually want to use it - there's a radical thought, **EPHEMERAL SOCIAL NETWORKS** social media that self-destructs permitting 'for your eyes only' selfies, **BESPOKE TARGETED NETWORKS** a community for every geek thing out there **WEARABLE TECHNOLOGY** a chip embedded in your clothing (or your body!) that allows you to walk out of a shop with an item and have the payment automatically debited from your account- ouch! ... The list goes on

Notice a theme, which runs throughout them all?

Technology.

There is no doubt that 2014 will be the year when technology will potentially dominate the world of customer experience. But should it? The danger is that we can all too easily focus on the widgets and whistles and forget how humans actually make decisions – through their emotional connection with a brand. We are of the view that the experience should drive the technology – not the other way around. We do not claim this is an original thought (way back in 2007 Brian

Solis wrote an article titled 'Social Media is About Sociology Not Technology') but the evidence is that executives continue to focus on the technology rather than the experience. Here are a few things to think about:

### **Be clear about your brand purpose**

Define why you exist, what you stand up for, and how you want to be distinctly different – in a way that customers will care about. This drives the promise you make to customers and creates a very strong emotional connection with them across whichever channel and platform they happen to use. Customer experience innovations that are disconnected from the brand purpose become mere marketing gimmicks. Technological innovations must be based on what you should do rather than what you can do.

**Be Holistic.** Delivering a seamless experience across all your channels requires a seamless connection between sales, operations, IT and Marketing. You can redesign your experience, you can redesign your processes, but unless everybody is infected by the same sense of purpose, truly 'gets it' and executes the whole experience flawlessly, it just won't work. And that requires aligned leadership. As Ronan Dunne CEO of O2 says, "It only works when it all works"

### **Be infectious in your communication**

'Above the line' is increasingly becoming 'below the radar' because customers just don't pay attention to traditional marketing and advertising any more. When was the last time you watched a TV ad? You have to be infectious to get noticed and that means focusing your attention on what your customers are interested in knowing, rather than what you are interested in telling. If you create something that captures their interest they will spread the word for you.

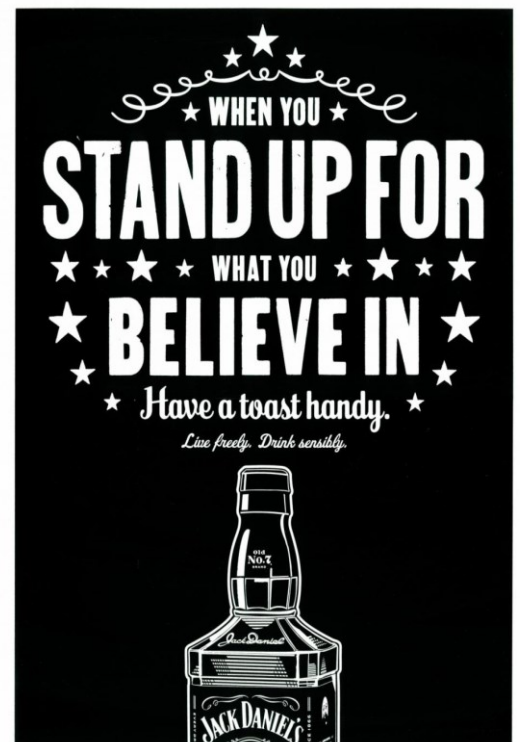
### **Become a story teller**

One of the best ways of creating infectious communication is to create a great brand story, which can be shared by people across many different channels. The best stories have great characters, they take you on a journey through a multitude of emotions along a story arc that rises and falls. Yet most brands don't do it, or do it badly. The key is to base your story on the truth about who you are and what you stand for – you simply must be authentic otherwise the crowd will find you out. One of our favourite examples of an authentic story is the Jack Daniels posters you see at underground stations. They engage us in a low-tech way that works.

### **Be human**

The key to a great story is that it has to touch the human in us. Brands are driven by emotion and therefore can't be built with cold rational propositions. With so much focus now on digital and technology, it's all too easy to forget one of the most important elements in customer experience – great people who, in turn, make customers feel great. This is what builds a real connection. Technology can help, but you shouldn't let it be the primary driver.

Let your purpose be your guide, use your processes and people deliver your experience and harness the technology to enable it.



## **Be bold**

Delivering a seamless experience across multiple channels is probably one of the biggest headaches for today's marketers. Merely keeping up with the latest platforms is difficult enough. Using them to convey a clear sense of what your brand stands for is even harder. Keeping a sense of purpose helps keep you grounded, and most importantly opens up the opportunity for fun, creativity and the enjoyment needed to sustain you on your journey. You can't do it all so select a few things that you can be bold about and make them unique to your brand.

**There is no doubt that the concept of brand 'Purpose' and the multi-channel customer experience, will converge to create a huge opportunity for brands to differentiate themselves.** Consumers are looking for authenticity and seamlessness in the way they experience the brand regardless of channel.

Our last book '**Bold-how to be brave in business and win**' was awarded 'best management e-book for 2012' by Management Today. It told the story of 14 brands that are transforming their markets through the customer experience. Our forthcoming book '**On Purpose- how to deliver a multi-channel experience**' will take the companies we profiled in our last book but focus on how these brands are being intentional in delivering an experience that is on purpose and delivered consistently across channels. We shall also be telling the stories of some new, exciting brands; brands like CitizenM and Sugru.

We are conducting research and this is where you come in. If you follow this link: <http://on-purpose.questionpro.com> it will take you to a short survey. If you complete it about your organisation we shall be happy to send you an advance copy of our findings and an executive summary for the new book along with an executive summary of our award winning book 'BOLD-how to be brave in business and win'. We shall also be making a donation to a charity of your choice so that our purpose is not purely self-serving. So what are you waiting for? Be BOLD!

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**Shaun Smith** speaks and consults internationally on the subject of the customer experience. Shaun's last book 'BOLD- how to be brave in business and win' co-authored with Andy Milligan was awarded '**Business e-book of the year**' for 2012 by CMI. Shaun's next book 'On Purpose-how to deliver multi-channel experiences' co-written with Janine Dyer will be published in early 2015.

**You can compare your brand with the brands featured in the new book and contribute to the research by following this link:** <http://on-purpose.questionpro.com>

**For more baffling brand and experience terms, see**  
<http://www.smithcoconsultancy.com/knowledge-bank/jargon-buster>

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