



SIX STEPS TO A GREAT MULTICHANNEL EXPERIENCE

Colin Shaw is the first to admit that his initial advice on how to create a great multichannel experience might come across as a bit strange but that doesn't necessarily mean that it isn't to be trusted – strange but true

We live in a complex world and the bad news it's going to get worse. I am a geek. I'm fascinated by what technology can do today and moreover, what it will do tomorrow. One thing is for certain it is going to have a huge effect on us all, like it or not.

How do organisations manage these new channels?

My first bit of advice may be a bit strange. You need to look at your own mind set. Are you thinking 'how do I manage all our products down all these channels' or are you thinking 'as I understand my customers these channels provide me with a great way to interact with them'. The first is product centric and reactive. The latter is customer centric, proactive and looks at this multichannel environment as being an advantage and an opportunity.

Once you have established which lens you are looking at the challenge through, how do you go about managing the Multichannel experience?

1. Above all, understand your Customers first!

It is critical to understand your Customers at a much greater level of detail than most organisations do today. In doing so you will be able to understand and predict their behaviours; which channel is best to use in what circumstance. It is accepting Customers are people and are driven by emotions. In addition; various academic psychology theories about human behaviour apply. We call this 'Experience Psychology' and outlined this in our last book *Customer Experience: Future trends and insights*, Palgrave MacMillan, 2010. Understanding the psychological aspect of a Customer Experience means, you will understand customers may choose one channel over another because of how they want to feel or do not want to feel. For example, some customers don't like complaining in person as they don't like conflict. Instead they prefer to write an email or a message on social media. Understanding your customer helps you design an experience for each channel and predict their use.

2. Define the experience you wish to deliver

What is the experience you are trying to deliver across all your channels? I would wager you probably don't know. If you haven't defined your experience, each channel will do what they think is best. When Customers interact in these different channels they see and feel a different experience dependent on the channel they use. They see and feel the lack of coordination. Customers are not stupid. They change their behaviour to get what they need. For example, a Customer will see an email saying 'we will answer this email in 5 days'. They determine they need a

quicker reply and pick up the phone, knowing they'll get a quicker response. The irony is this costs the organisation more money to service but with a better understanding of the customer this could be avoided.

3. Design your channel experience

Once you have defined your experience you need to implement it in each channel. Simple.

4. Define an owner of the Customer Experience

As I mentioned before the channels are normally in various organizational silos. Someone has to take a cross channel view and look at the world from the customer's view point. I would suggest that someone in the organization needs to be given responsibility and the authority to ensure the experience is being delivered across all channels.

5. Customer view on systems

With multiple channels this normally means multiple systems. Unfortunately you will need to invest in a system that provides you and the customer with a view of the Customer experience.

6. Embrace social media and the fact it needs a different approach

DO NOT just transfer the transitional experience you provide to Customers in the social media channel. It is different. Far too many organisations treat social media as a broadcast mechanism. It is not, it is an interaction channel.

The multichannel experience is here to stay. I see this as an advantage not a disadvantage. The key is to understand your customer at a much greater level than you do now and then design a deliberate experience in each channel. ■



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