

How to embrace the power of customer experience management

 By Leigh Andrews

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Axel Schaefer, head of product and industry marketing for Adobe Analytics EMEA and part of Adobe's global marketing cloud strategy group flew in from Germany to present the opening session of the Adobe CX Forum Cape Town 2019's exclusive morning briefing, titled 'don't fight it - embrace the power of customer experience management'. He explained the importance of cross-channel optimisation, in particular, to offer the best possible experience to the coming 'consumer 2020'.



Schaefer presenting at the Adobe CX Forum

Setting the context for the forum, Schaefer said that as customer behaviour continues to evolve, brands and marketers need to drive brand engagement or become irrelevant.

As a result of this, a new category of customer experience management (CXM) technology is rising to address these demands and help brands balance the ability to efficiently author, manage, personalise and measure experiences with the desire to create extremely customised experiences.



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Back in 2013, Schaefer said that in a world where customers access multiple channels (voice, TV, digital, stores) across multiple screens (TV, mobile, PC), no two customer journeys are alike.

Multiple channels, multiple screens, multiple customer journeys

Organisations, therefore, should use multichannel analytics to combine data from diverse channels into a single customer-centric view that empowers analysts and marketers to find answers quickly to critical enterprise business questions.

This will enable organisations to optimise marketing programmes against budget, goals, and business metrics.

Empowered with the right data, organisations can tie objectives for digital channels to business outcomes. For example, social media can be measured against the business objective of reducing costs through lower call centre volumes by using the percentage of queries resolved via social media as a KPI.



Schaefer presenting at the Adobe CX Forum

In his 2019 update, Schaefer said that recent research from the [IDC and Adobe](#) has shown that brands now need to focus on three key areas of CXM to succeed in this field – those of **customer journeys, customer engagement and consent**.

Schaefer further unveiled the findings of this research and explored how brands, marketers and IT teams can use the learnings to stay ahead of the competition, and their customers' needs.

Key among these top needs is cybersecurity and keeping on top of digital transformation trends. For consumers, it's about knowing how companies are storing and protecting their personal data; while for brands, securing leads and attracting new customers stays top-of-mind.



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This means only tapping into the trends that make sense to your business, and what will make the experience special for customers. "Some of the things that are happening are crazy cool, others are crazy silly," says Schaefer – the challenge lies in delivering what your customers ask for.

Be prepared to match and better your brand promise

At McDonald's this meant implementing a self-service option that allows choice in payment options and varying levels of burger customisation, depending on location.

Schaefer added further context in sharing that customers of today expect **100% of the brand promise to be fulfilled**, sometimes more. Putting his customer hat on, he said we expect everything to work perfectly, especially on newly installed apps – even if they're free.

In addition, the organisations that **leave out middle men**, like Uber and Airbnb, show that new business models are possible, and a better understanding of customers can change the business model for the better.

Skip the middlemen, embrace agility

Brands also need to ensure that despite the knowledge our customers already have of us, we can change from a structural aspect from department to department, or from country entity to country entity to suit changing needs



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Schaefer says to focus on customers' feedback: They'll highlight where they're struggling on the customer journey, which then needs to be mapped into the IT and general business systems fast, in order to find solutions and enhance overall customer satisfaction.

As a result of his role, Schaefer speaks to many cultures himself and says one commonality across the globe is the challenge of finding the right way to express those business challenges in such a way as to place them back in the system to find a solution.



Schaefer presenting at the Adobe CX Forum

A few decades ago, all the information from different stages of the customer journey had to be integrated through various tech solutions, but today, those getting CX right are the ones that form the entire business around the customer.

However, with more and more data coming in on a continuous basis, we need to pinpoint the most important aspects to focus on.

To help drill down to those crucial bits, Schaefer says to take a hands-on look at the tools you're using, whether the data is being stored for customer service, marketing or even book-keeping services.



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That holistic customer view needs to be readily accessible, because if you can't offer an up-sell to the customer before they have walked out of your store – whether physical or digital – you're missing an opportunity.

The boom of business touchpoints

Getting back to basics, Schaefer said we need to know which customers to spend our money on, which brings home the importance of relevance.

“ Each specific experience needs to go beyond marketing, so as to touch on every touchpoint of developing sustainable business relationships. ”

No business knows everything, which is why it's becoming more important to work with partners in order to develop a good network and overall business community. You most likely can't meet all your customer needs yourself, nor should you need to limit yourself to your internal resources.

To get this right, Schaefer says to focus on intelligence and remaster digital optimisation. This means knowing whether it's best to reply to a customer SMS query with another SMS or to switch channels to a phone call or email, and scaling these interactions is the key to success in the future.



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Artificial intelligence or AI itself isn't necessarily the answer to everything, but we do need to know how to leverage it in the best possible way.

What makes cross-channel optimisation difficult?

Schaefer expanded on this 'downside of so much data', asking whether brands really understand our customers' purchase behaviour and decision-making motivation or if we just know that they clicked on a link in a newsletter at a certain time of day.

If we can get customers through the journey faster, we also learn how to bypass some steps and optimise the journey overall by chopping out some of the touchpoints along the road to conversion.



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Leigh Andrews 25 Jun 2019



There's so much data out there, but the small things are essential to drive the journey to success, and that single view of the customer across multiple touchpoints.

“ A bonus of today's digital age is that we can design campaigns in more sustainable ways, and see in real-time if changes are needed before the customers drop off. ”

This includes steps like checking emailer layout across mobile, laptop and tablet screens, to ensure nothing's chopped off, and to optimise the headline and image inclusion going forward.

That's why Schaefer predicts that spending will increase significantly for data analytics and its application in the AI space, with a special opportunity to adopt AI for business in South Africa.



Schaefer presenting at the Adobe CX Forum

But remember that it's what we make of that data rather than seeing the tech itself as the be-all and end-all.

You can't draw useful insights by simply filling the process with creativity and machine learning if you don't have a base of quality, trustworthy data.



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Thinking specifically about how AI is driving customer interaction, Schaefer spoke of the importance of getting the conversation right, so that customers are more willing to share their data going forward.

We need to start at the very beginning by getting consent in the first place, especially with the likes of GDPR picking up pace overseas and POPI changing the way we think of customers' personal information locally.



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This rise in regulation is a response to what customers feel, so should be seen not as a threat but rather an opportunity to better understand how our customers think and treat their data fairly.

Schaefer explained that Adobe Sensei brings together these capabilities of “different things for different purposes,” so that brands can understand how to create things in a better way by understanding what the customer needs and how to deliver on those needs.



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This is largely experience-powered, so Schaefer says to make sure the CXM system you use actually helps you and doesn't unnecessarily complicate the process.

We don't necessarily get more budget each year, so we need to ensure we are delivering the right content to the right people at the right time.



Schaefer presenting at the Adobe CX Forum

This means that we need to be able to ask the right questions and pull the right answers from the system.

“ Based on a specific customer journey, we can then see how many times to share a specific message with a customer before it becomes overkill. If they’ve already bought the shoes, stop serving them the ad on other platforms! ”

That’s the crux of getting the multi-channel approach right.

On GDPR in particular, Schaefer said most companies realised it was coming, but now realise privacy is essential, with data breaches making regular headlines.



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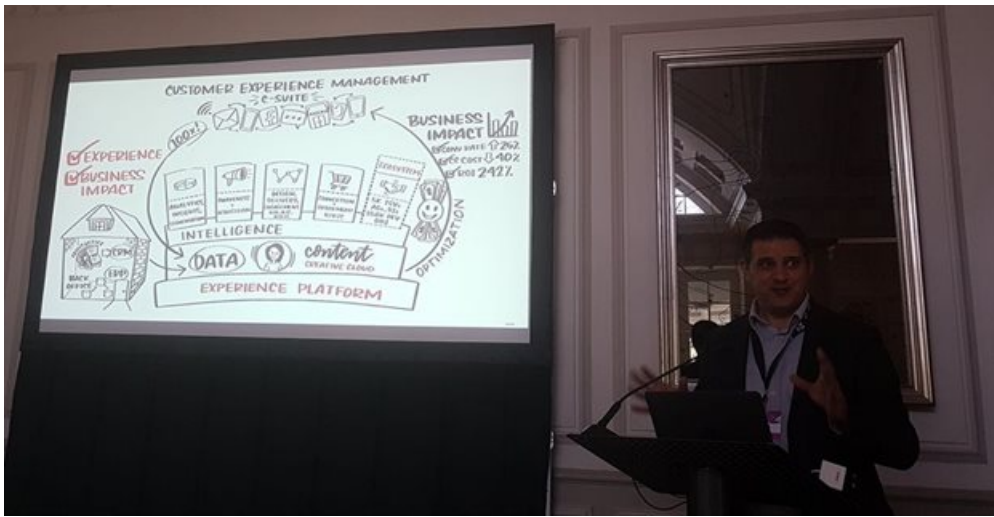
It’s about treating customers more equally – this involves a change of perspective so that every business decision is based on the impact to the customer and overall real benefit of a campaign.

At the end of the day, companies that succeed at the customer journey are the ones that work to make customers’ lives easier.

This could range from the obvious discount or loyalty points offers, to the basics of helping them in a more ‘how to’ way, such as in setting up the service or product they’ve bought from you.

The echoing call for consent

In closing, Schaefer emphasised the importance of embarking on joint journeys in unison with partner brands, which can offer the consumer more in a different direction than dovetails with your offering.



Schaefer presenting at the Adobe CX Forum

Also remember that privacy by design is growing in momentum, as it means customers can access their own data and give consent for specific uses of that data.



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Consent is especially important when getting products to market. You may only need an email address at first but should ideally ask for consent again if you request further details to help streamline the customer journey.

And streamlining the customer journey is the best thing for any business today.

The numbers back this up, as an article by [CIO](#) on the Adobe customer experience mandate reports:

“ Make no mistake: making experience your business is good for business. Consider a [May 2018 study by Forrester Consulting](#), commissioned by Adobe, which found experience-led companies have 1.6x higher brand awareness, 1.5x higher employee satisfaction, and 1.9x higher average order value. Experience-led businesses also have 1.7x higher customer retention, 1.9x return on spend, and 1.6x higher customer satisfaction rates. ”

Business proof of the benefits of putting customers first.

ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

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