

"Be an experience business or be out of business" - Adobe

 By [Leigh Andrews](#)

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CEM Africa attendees were presented with a choice of workshops to attend throughout the two-day summit. As the Summit was completely sold out, these sessions were limited to 30 attendees max and it really was a tough choice deciding which to sit in on. I'm so glad I went with the session by James McDonald, solution consultant at Adobe, on how to be an experience-driven business. Here's why.

McDonald began with the scary observation that digital is slowly but surely changing everything, and consumers now have infinite choices in content. They're connected to an explosion of devices and want every experience with your brand to be seamless. Sadly, that's not always the case.

To meet those digital demands, your brand needs to deliver in-the-moment experiences that are compelling, personal, useful and delight the customer at every touch point. That's not as easy as it sounds, as you need a healthy dose of bravery and the willingness to disrupt your own business to get this right.



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To illustrate, McDonald shared two examples of businesses that have those disruptive ideas without the required bravery.

First up: Stephen J Sasson, inventor of the world's first digital camera back in 1975. The company? Kodak. He took his invention to the board but as they couldn't answer questions such as how people would access, retrieve and store the images they took (remember the cloud was but a distant twinkling at the time) but more importantly, how they would ultimately make money from the invention. They didn't have the answers so they kept it quiet, continued with their printing and film priorities and eventually went bankrupt. Now, Kodak is a mere shadow of its former self. The reason? They had the disruptive idea but not the bravery to push it forward and iron out the details as they went along.



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Then there's the example of Blockbuster Video, which met with the founder of Netflix when Blockbuster was at the height of its power and Netflix was in its early days. They laughed Netflix out of the room for their revolutionary idea and went out of business not long after. Netflix, on the other hand, effectively invented a new business industry of its own and became a dominant force through perseverance and pluck.



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Both of these serve as sobering warnings to keep the customer view in mind. The consumer of today has an immense amount of choice, and can easily switch loyalty. In fact, McDonald says, we're at a massive inflection point in the technology wave:

- **The back office wave** saw investment into process management automation and the like;
- **The front office wave** came next with a move towards CRM systems and linking sales with the automated back office; and
- The current wave of **experience business** is owned by the consumer, putting pressure on brands for instant gratification, ultimately dictating the pace.

Adobe feels all companies will go through a point in their evolution where a choice will be made about being brave and pushing forward with an idea that doesn't seem to make sense at the time. For them, it came when they switched from their upfront payment, boxed offering model to cloud-based service they are now, in just 2.5 years - a scary undertaking at the time, but the change was certainly in line with the technological business context.

McDonald said the pillars of change are based on timing and content fitting into context, offering compelling and personalised experiences, anticipating customer needs, orchestrating each experience across all the consumer's touch points with your brands and continually measuring for success. And remember:

“*“You’ve got to start with the customer experience and work back toward the technology, not the other way around.”*

—Steve Jobs [#Justsaying](#)— Harini Calamur (@calamur) [May 1, 2017](#) ”

McDonald said, "If you look back at your old way of work and think 'What were we thinking,' you're probably doing it right." It's not all about the technology, it's about the will and passion to disrupt your own business and put customers first, as **great customer experience or CX is the great differentiator of today**.

The opportunity is there if you engage your customers in the right way, at the right moment. The following video by the Adobe Marketing Cloud demonstrates the essence of McDonald's presentation perfectly:

ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

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