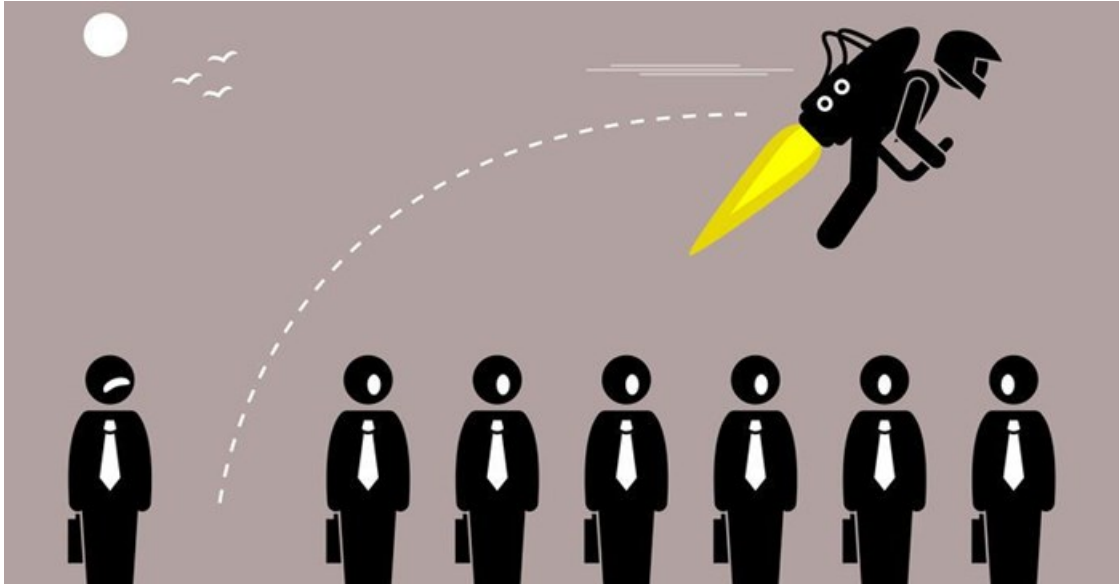


How to leapfrog when improving customer experience

 By Leigh Andrews

14 Nov 2018

My highlight of the second day of AfricaCom 2018 featured the morning's first headliner keynote session on customer experience in the digital frontier, where Indranil Das, VP and head of Ericsson digital services for EMEA explained the importance of anticipating customer needs on the path towards Africa 4.0.



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Jan Vermeulen, editor-at-large of *MyBroadband*, kicked off the second day of AfricaCom 2018 by saying that as a journalist, he feels allergic to buzzwords, so it pains him to utter such phrases as 'Fourth Industrial Revolution' and 'IoT', but he does see the benefit of this type of shorthand for the complex ideas that tend to dominate the world of tech.

A look at digital transformation, from the 1990s to now

Setting the context for the first session of the day, Vermeulen added that 'digital transformation' in the 1990s meant making the big move of launching a website and setting up desktop email for your company.



But how did the email make you feel?

Amanda Patterson 2 Nov 2015



We've clearly come a long way since then as nowadays, digital transformation means incorporating AI and working to disrupt your company before a competitor does so.

It's also about anticipating customer needs and forging a path towards the digital future.

Vermeulen then handed over to the first presentation of the day, Indranil Das, VP and head of Ericsson Digital Services EMEA on 'customer experience in the digital frontier'. Das said it's interesting to note that we now live in both the physical and digital world.

He also quoted Nicholas Negroponte, who predicted as early as 1995 (see here in [Wired](#)) that computer bits would be more important than human atoms.

Don't lose sight of the atoms in focusing on the bits

That's what Das sees today, with his children choosing to play inside on technological devices - even when playing with each other - rather than in the 'real world' outside.



Importance of real-world play for 21st century six-year-olds

25 Oct 2017



Similarly, we increasingly choose to communicate online, yet most companies don't realise there's a mismatch between consumers' expectations and the reality of their experience with your brand.

That mismatch can prove fatal to your brand's longevity. Here's why...

“ We tend to mirror the physical process in the digital world, but brands don't need an intensive 'big bang style' full digital transformation. Instead, realise there are specific gaps in the customer journey to fill and work on creating one-click, seamless omnichannel experiences step-by-step. Start by digitising customer interaction, and reassessing where your internal infrastructure can work better digitally. ”

For example, Das said it's fair and well to include video on your website as that's the format customers prefer for content these days. But video buffering is a bad customer experience. So to properly tap into the video trend, we need to ensure more efficient video infrastructure before we create the content - make sure the bare bones run optimally before you dress them up.



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Leigh Andrews 20 Nov 2015



Simply put, brands need to do what they can to anticipate customer problems, and prevent fault detection from occurring in the first place.

Das concluded that the rise of AI and all the implications for connectivity, you need to pre-empt the customer experience as much as possible and to leapfrog that, you need to understand the top tech trends in front of us at the moment.

Does customer experience exceed the expectation?

Das personally believes the following seven trends will shape the world over the next five years:

1. 5G IoT
2. AR and VR
3. All aspects of AI
4. Voice as the new user interface
5. Blockchain
6. Quantum computing that's 10,000 times faster than today's fastest PC
7. Self-driving autonomous vehicles



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Das says these technological trends need to be incorporated into current business offerings in order to create unique value and experience for customers.

Das concluded that **digital value creation** is based on a simple equation: The experience you get against the expectation you have.

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ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

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