

The rapid evolution of customer experience management

The annual CEM Africa Summit is set to place on 17 and 18 August in Cape Town, and will provide insight into the evolution of customer experience management.

Simon Cranswick, MD of Anana Africa, and Chantel Botha, CEO of BrandLove, are both members of this year's advisory panel. In an interview with Kinetic Events the two discuss how companies can stay ahead of the game – Cranswick from a technological solutions perspective and Botha representing the viewpoint of the consumer.



Chantel Botha & Simon Cranswick

What is your opinion of the overall customer experience (CX) landscape in Africa and how it has evolved over the last year?

Cranswick: When it comes to execution of CX, Africa is an interesting market in that on some things it is actually quite advanced, but in other dimensions still a bit behind the rest of the global landscape. So with historically not having had great access to service through the traditional landline, the African business to consumer market has exploded over the last 15 to 20 years due to the proliferation of mobile devices. Now that these devices have become smart, there is a plethora of ways in which customers can contact a brand and

a business can engage its customers. The digital age of CX engagement is upon us and it has brought with it a host of challenges for the not so agile companies and massive opportunities for the dynamic organisations that are embracing it.

Botha: When asked if companies and brands in South Africa are taking customer experience management and design seriously and using it to their advantage to differentiate and build relationships, I would say no. Customer experience as a subject is widely misunderstood. It requires commitment in terms of wide systemic change that includes all departments and with a focus on processes, people and technology.

How much time do you spend catering products/services to individual consumer needs versus to general market needs?

Cranswick: This has always been the challenge... customer interaction hubs have been developed for organisations that have a mass customer/consumer base. The challenge is how does one personalise the service in a dynamic fashion with 'in the moment context' around the customer? The answer is the smart organisation must spend time in addressing this as a requirement of their whole CX strategy. Both the general needs of the market and the personalisation of service will be part of any good CX strategy.

What does it take for you to feel like your specific needs are being met versus feeling like a brand is just targeting the general market?

Botha: The skills that are widely lacking when I engage with any brand as a customer are the ability for people to listen and to understand, as well as to anticipate possible solutions to my problem.

Most service consultants listen just enough, while they are punching in details on a computer, with the aim being to quickly respond and to get rid of you. It is rare to get someone who listens to really understand, asks more questions and responds with compassion and various solutions; who really tests those solutions to see which ones will make the customer happy.

I can respond very cheekily to the question of scalable personalisation, but we are just so far from getting the basics right.

What would you say is the recipe for successful CX implementation?

Cranswick:

- "Visualisation" of where you want to go i.e. an overall CX strategy & underlying roadmap of initiatives
 - Waking up to the fact that it is not just about implementing a CRM/BPM (Customer Relationship Management/Business Process Management package!)
 - Understanding where & how your customers are 'talking with or about your brand'
 - Taking an engagement approach rather than the 'ostrich with its head in the sand' approach
 - Development of an engagement methodology across all points of interaction that is enabled with context to seamlessly traverse the interaction channels as the dialogue/customer journey unfolds
 - Being able to report on efficacy and take action where the ball is being dropped or ingrain the top experiences as learnings and change standard processes accordingly
 - To realise that CX is about continuous improvement and not a once-off silver bullet
 - Proper C-level sponsorship
- To partner with good skills and expertise - check out the references and don't just listen to the slideware!

What are the enablers we need to create remarkable experiences?

Botha:

- Let people be human again: Most service consultants have a very clear view of what good service looks like. Empower them with solutions and let them grow those solutions themselves.
 - Cultivate courageous leaders: Cultivate leaders that try and try again and design experiences for their teams that will inspire them to deliver their very best.
 - Use design as a competitive weapon: You need to create an environment where people can design and you need facilitators that will lead design initiatives for you in a way that translates the design into implementation.
 - Fix the processes: Very often, we sweep the broken stuff in organisations under the carpet. Look through your journeys, fix all the broken stuff and challenge the limiting beliefs that to fix it would be too hard.
- Technology is no silver bullet: I love technology! But it can be dangerous when seen as a silver bullet or as something that will replace a compassionate human being. Technology can solve a lot of problems for us, but fundamentally, it needs to be integrated with the human experience.

Insights like these have been used in creating the agenda for the CEM Africa Summit, where the advisory panel and speakers will be sharing their personal experiences, the latest CEM developments and new, cutting edge ideas.

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