

3 ways companies can build meaningful customer relationships to drive growth

Ivan Moroke, CEO of Kantar and chairperson of the Marketing Achievement Awards (MAA), which takes place on 13 July 2022, and Asha Patel, head of marketing at Google South, Africa Council member of the MAA, and one of the 2022 MAA judges look at how companies can build meaningful customer relationships to drive growth.



Source: © raw pixel [123rf](#) One of the most powerful touchpoints between a consumer and a brand is its marketing

One of the most powerful touchpoints between a consumer and a brand is its marketing. Brand marketing determines how a business is perceived by its customers, enabling that business to build brand affinity, drive customer retention, and showcase reliability and leadership.

According to the 26th edition of the CMO Survey, 72.2% of companies saw the role of marketing increase in importance in 2021, after a year of pandemic-related lockdowns and restrictions.

Brands must make use of decisive, informative, and impactful marketing to connect with people in a disconnected world. The right marketing strategy allows a business to build meaningful relationships with consumers.

3 things to think about to build relationships

1. Understand your consumer

Knowing exactly who your customer is — their wants, needs, concerns, and expectations — is critical to providing a positive customer experience across all aspects of the customer journey.

The last two years of uncertainty have changed what consumers are looking for from businesses, including the way they shop, and even the way they pay. They want brands to be an example and guide change (28%). They also want them to help consumers in their everyday lives (21%) and reduce their anxiety and concerns (12%).

We've also seen a rapid increase in the number of people shopping online alongside a shift to digital payments and banking, and a growing expectation of personalisation that reflects how a brand values them. This level of consumer understanding should form the basis of all marketing initiatives.



Supplied. Ivan Mbrokeis the CEO of Kantar, Insight Division South Africa, incorporating Kantar Consulting

2. Be helpful

Today, consumers evaluate brands as if they were individuals. They gravitate towards brands that value their customers by displaying values consistent with their own.

Brands are expected to meaningfully participate in the communities where they operate. Essentially, consumers are looking at brands to be helpful, whether that's by addressing social issues, championing equity and inclusivity, or supporting local businesses. The expectation is that brands make a positive impact on the world around them.

Being helpful requires brands to build and maintain trust with customers, provide solutions to customers' problems, and establish a business which balances purpose with profit. Brands that are helpful enjoy more sustainable commercial success.



Supplied. Asha Patel is the head of marketing of Google South Africa and head of B2B marketing in sub-Saharan Africa

3. Think digital-first

The world is rapidly moving towards an increasingly digital environment as technology continues to permeate nearly every aspect in our lives. If leveraged correctly, this digital shift offers brands the ability to meet changing customer needs and expectations.

In this digital-first space, we're seeing brands derive significant value from using first-party data to gain better insights into their customer base, and integrating IoT into their campaigns to facilitate increased interaction with consumers.

We're also seeing a trend towards marketers using social media, USSD, and app marketing to build better relationships with their customers. Mobile technology, as the most common means of internet access, has the potential to strengthen the interaction between brands and their customers, and redefine the customer experience by enhancing engagement and accessibility.

Investing in mobile is no longer a nice-to-have, but rather essential to connecting to your customers where they are, particularly as younger generations are at the forefront of the digital revolution. It makes business sense too: speeding up your brand's mobile site by one tenth of a second can lead to an increase in conversion rates of up to 8.4% for retail and 10.1% for travel.

As economies and consumers continue to undergo massive shifts in expectations and experiences, innovation in marketing has become essential to its effectiveness in driving business growth.

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