



CUSTOMERS THE DAY AFTER TOMORROW

4 tech trends that will shape the future of customer experience

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Technology continues to develop at a quicker rate than ever before. I don't look at technology for the sake of technology. I try to understand the impact these changes have on customer expectations and behavior. It is therefore always important to keep one eye on the horizon for coming developments, and here is my rundown of 5 tech trends that will change the playing field of customer experience management.

Intelligence augmented:

For many people, the whole idea of Artificial Intelligence still feels a little bit science fiction. The world's pioneering technology companies may be able to invest huge amounts of money into its development, but the idea that could it impact the operations of 'ordinary' businesses still seems far-fetched.

2017 will probably see a lot of statements from companies like IBM, Google and Facebook demonstrating the possibilities of AI and how it is evolving. Perhaps what will have the biggest impact this year, however, is not Artificial Intelligence but "Intelligence Augmented."

Put simply, intelligence augmented is when people use automated technologies to deliver a bigger or better service. For example, we will start to see more and more customer service teams using AI to help their reps make quicker, better decisions and

therefore deliver a higher level of service. Software is now available that analyses every customer interaction, question and outcome mathematically, allowing it to predict the most likely recommended action for the agent. Crucially, the end touchpoint for the customer is still a person, and they have the opportunity change that answer, but the application of AI means they are able to work quicker and smarter. This is something KLM are already using successfully.

AR versus VR:

Augmented Reality and Virtual Reality are two other areas of digital technology that are set to really take off in 2017. For many years people have seen virtual reality as a fun idea, and Facebook have recently demonstrated some really cool ideas, but generally people have struggled to find mainstream, practical applications for it.

I personally believe the impact of augmented reality will be a lot more significant than the impact of virtual reality in the near future. The explosion in popularity of Pokémon Go in 2016 was the start of something big, and it won't be long before AR moves from something that is fun in games to be a powerful B2B and B2C tool. I recently saw a demonstration from Microsoft where a surgeon was using AR during an operation to gather more information and improve the efficiency and impact of the operation, and if medical professionals are able to do this, it is easy to imagine how other companies can adopt a similar approach for their products or services.

Smart Contracts:

Blockchain technology has been one of the most significant technological developments of the last decade. Put simply, a blockchain is a distributed database that maintains a growing list of ordered, time-stamped records. This technology is increasingly used to create a record of events that cannot be modified, making it perfect for use in medical records or even tracking ownership of a diamond.

One new use of blockchain technology that will come into the mainstream in the coming years is smart contracts. These are contracts that can be set up and followed through using objective data, requiring no human interference. For example, imagine taking out a micro-insurance policy on a business flight: You could have a smart contract using the flight data, whereby if the flight leaves on time you pay, but if the flight is delayed the insurers pays out instantly.

Smart contracts create quicker, reliable solutions to businesses processes that used to be very admin-heavy.

Virtual personal assistants:

The battle of virtual personal assistants is likely to be one of the biggest tech stories of 2017. We have already seen the likes of Amazon, Apple, Google and Microsoft start to gain some traction with their virtual assistant products, but this could be the year when one starts to move out ahead of the competition, and their use becomes more widespread.

What is really interesting is what these virtual personal assistants mean for customer engagement. These devices could become the new way we shop – we tell them we have

run out of toothpaste, it adds toothpaste to a shopping list and then places the order for us. But, this almost presents tech companies like Amazon or Google with a dilemma. Do they truly do what is best for the consumer, as a real personal assistant would, or do they do what is best for their company commercially?

If you like to hear me explain these trends a little more in-depth, check out this video:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wEZUNNxFmXQ>



