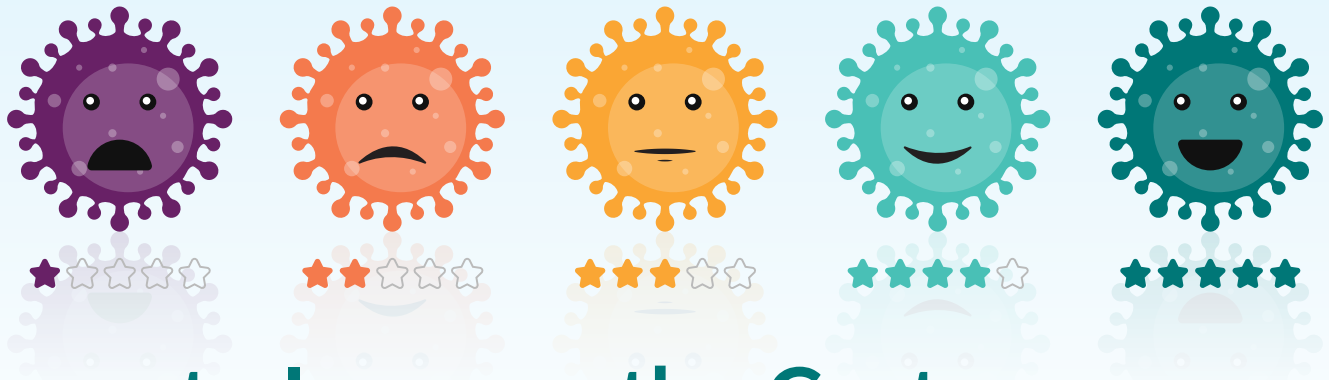


Five Ways



to Improve the Customer Experience during COVID-19

In many industries, COVID-19 has transformed how companies think about engaging and communicating with customers. Capita Consulting's **Fabian Wong** provides his five key tips for understanding what's changed and how to retain your competitive edge

C COVID-19 has brought into focus how important it is for businesses to keep their customers close and engaged, which in turn has put a spotlight on the experience they are providing.

Criticaleye spoke to **Fabian Wong**, Capita Consulting's Chief Creative Officer, to see what organisations should be doing now and in the longer term.

1. Accept The New Normal

Customers are thinking differently about the products and services they consume and how they do it. Fear and ethical experiences are at

the forefront now, hence businesses must re-examine their offerings and how they can inspire confidence in their customers through a review of their current experience designs.

Take drive-thru food outlets as an example: there are questions around how these businesses will handle goods and take payments in the future because of hygiene concerns. The focus on ethical and socially responsible experience redesign will be absolutely critical.

All organisations will be looking to navigate their way through this crisis and to progress, but the companies that

focus in the short-term on pivoting fast on experience redesign and reframing it in the marketplace rapidly may gain more market share than competitors in the long-term. Also, experiences with clear links to data driving decisions will be critical.

This will be the 'new normal' – one where expectations are set very high.

2. Understand The Experience Premium

In the short-term, there are many different experience and data redesign options for businesses to implement, either individually or in combination, >



but I believe the key is to understand the experience premium. This is what customers will pay over and above to businesses that are demonstrating extra care and attention to their customers by improving engagement and interactions through better, integrated ethical experiences. Experience premiums can only be gained through clear connectivity to the use of data and what its insights bring.

To start with, one of the ways to do this is to reflect on their brand promise: what is important for their brand and how does it impact the market from an experience point of view? From there, companies could examine what to do to create that experience premium. They can take the 360-degree view by reviewing their public facing and backend employee experiences, and then looking to where the experience premium could possibly be redesigned.

The alternative is to zone-in on one experience area within a customer journey touchpoint where ethical customer experience, co-created experiences could be remodelled. Not so subtle, perhaps, but it could still be effective to start the momentum going.

Finally, businesses could take the ecosystem approach. This requires an organisation to take a higher, bird's-eye view, thinking about what the whole sector needs to do and then design and set standards for that ecosystem. This will be the hardest as it will need multiple party coordination.

The thread through it all will be businesses taking an innovative view in how experience premiums could be reimaged.

3. Build Loyalty Through Your Brand

If we assume that the COVID-19 situation will ebb and flow in many economies and geographies, it could take six to 12 months to subside and a further one or two years for conditions to normalise. No one really knows. The economies could take a gentle V shape or it could go for a W shape recovery.

Bearing that in mind, businesses really need to start thinking now about how they interact with their customers, who in turn will be thinking about their relationships with organisations and who they really want to do business with.

It reinforces the point that customer loyalty is so much more important than ever today. There are limited touchpoints because of the current situation, so when making transactions digitally, for example, you must make the most of them by amplifying the human angle.

Businesses also need to be authentic with these digital opportunities and think about which platforms best serve their goals.

4. The Future Of Customer Experience

There are three areas that will become increasingly important for businesses to incorporate into their long-term strategy.

These are:

1. Co-created experiences where companies work with customers directly and take a consumer view before determining the experience design.

2. Ethical experiences where organisations present their customer experience in a way that is moral and designed to protect them and wider society.

3. A blend of human and machine experience attributes with regards to how customers interact with a brand.

5. Planning For Recovery

When I look at the recovery horizon for businesses, I think those in the healthcare, technology, public sector and education sectors are best placed to come through this crisis well. These are the sectors where the experience premium could be most interesting. ■



Fabian Wong
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As Chief Creative Officer, Fabian leads Capita Consulting's Experience and Design Practice. He is a digital strategist and futurism experience technologist and has built multiple award-winning teams.

Working with Deloitte Digital he led a number of businesses in Asia, including a full suite of global creative digital teams to deliver an unforgettable experience for the Olympics 2020, as well as other global clients.

Other highlights include presenting on digital innovation to the prime ministers of China and Russia, EU Heads of State and global top 500 companies such as HP and Sony.

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