

Lead with empathy and connect with consumers on an emotional level

 By [Craig Naicker](#)

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Once, I saw a special on a smart TV at a big retail store and I was convinced that it was a lifetime deal and I was going to make the purchase. I made my way to the store with my wife, proudly wearing my Liverpool jersey. As we stood in the store looking at the TV, a salesperson introduced himself and the first thing he noticed was my Liverpool jersey.



Photo by [Clay Banks](#) on [Unsplash](#).

Before I could tell him that I wanted to buy the TV, he started talking about how he is also a Liverpool fan. He then proceeded to quiz me about my passion for the team. Now if you know me, then you know that my order of importance in life is Liverpool, God and family. Twenty minutes later my wife stopped us and redirected my attention to the reason why we were at the store. "You don't want to buy this TV, it might be a great special, but it does not have full functionality", said the salesperson. He then showed us a TV that had more functionality but was R2000 more expensive than the one we initially wanted to buy. Due to the connection we had in the first 20 minutes of meeting each other, I trusted his opinion and made the purchase.

People buy from people, products or services that you offer are secondary, is something that we hear often. In these uncertain times, the way we connect with our consumers, clients and work colleagues can go a long way to ensure our survival.



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Connecting from afar

Quite often when developing strategies and creative for brands, we rely on broad-based data in the form of qualitative, and or, quantitative research to inform an insight or narrative. Can you remember the number of times you tried to connect with a consumer on an emotional level by immersing yourself in their lives? Not much, right? For some, not ever! We would rather look from afar and let the data do the work for us. Covid-19 has now amplified this behaviour.

In the work environment, people only connect emotionally along their demographic or department lines and connect from afar with people outside of it. Sounds harsh but if you look at an agency before the Covid-19 pandemic when we could still hang out at the bar, you generally found people congregate based on their demographic and sometimes departments, with maybe one or two people outside their demographic and departments. You never truly found an integrated mix. I find this strange as agency life is meant to be all about creating connections.



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Personal or personality

When it comes to our clients, we sometimes grapple with the whole notion of personal versus personality. Personal is the first thing that comes to mind, I have seen many a Suit breakdown over the years because they think that their client has a personal challenge with them. In most cases, it is a personality challenge as we do not take the time to emotionally connect with our clients from the onset.

Let's be the change

Over the years, I have seen on very few occasions, people leading with empathy. If we want to truly lead with empathy, it is time for us to start connecting on an emotional level by changing our behaviour.



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Let's stop looking from our ivory tower or glasshouse with a blanket approach and start making emotional connections with people on the ground. Take the time to emotionally connect with our work colleagues, no matter the title, demographic or department. Place people before profits, when you can do that you see the true value of your biggest assets which are the people you work with, the profits will follow. Understand your client's backgrounds and circumstances, show them that you are emotionally invested in them and not there to just sell them a service or a product.

“ If we truly want to be stronger together and beat the social and economic challenges we currently face, it's time for everyone to lead with empathy. ”

ABOUT CRAIG NAICKER

Craig Naicker is Group Managing Director at CWDi. For more information or to connect with CWDi, please click here.

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