

"Voetsek," do you think I'm stupid?

 By [Carmen Murray](#)

6 Dec 2018

It's late afternoon. My phone rings. "Carmen, I want you to audition for a TV commercial tomorrow. Would you be interested?" Super excited for the opportunity, I don't even hesitate, and give a full-hearted "YES! I'm in!"



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I receive the script later that afternoon, and my jaw literally drops to the floor. I think misleading is a very kind word. The script was deceptive and false. It required me to stand in front of a green screen and convincingly act, that I have been using this product and it is the reason for the way I look.

I have never heard of this product in my life? This just validates to me, why I don't trust most advertising. Consumers are patronised and treated in a condescending way and let us call a spade a spade. They can spot a "phoney" brand a mile away.

Now, the reason I am bringing up this experience is not to 'brand shame'. It is to start a conversation about authenticity and integrity.

We are living in the age of the connected individual. A generation that is woke. There is no sustainable future for businesses big or small, that don't recognise they need "shape up or ship out!"

[Stackla Consumer Content Report: Influence in the Digital Age](#) revealed some interesting key findings for marketers that reinforces the point that authenticity is the “nutcracker”

Here are some highlights:

- 86% of consumers say authenticity is important when deciding what brands they like and support
- Consumers are 3x more likely to say content created by a consumer is authentic compared to content created by a brand
- On average, 60% of consumers say content from friends or family influence their purchases decisions, while just 23% say content from celebrities and influencers are impactful

Trust is the currency of the 21st century.

These insights are a true testimony that consumers crave brands that are authentic. They are not stupid, and they know when you are deceiving them. Content is created by humans. Humans have an inner moral compass, and we as humans recognise when we are being lied to and we avoid those we don't trust.

A brand can advertise to them until they are blue in the face. It will not have an impact. People buy from people they like and they trust. The same applies to brands, more now than ever before.

But, there is hope

It goes without saying that there are many brands out there that are truly dedicated to becoming more customer-centric and accept and know they need to change to become Future Fit.

Peter Drucker famously said:

“ Every organisation must prepare for the abandonment of everything they do. ”

I have the privilege to work very closely with exceptional blue-chip companies to build connected customer experiences that put the customer first with integrity and goodwill. With many of the audits we do, ground-breaking insights reveal that businesses lose more money by treating the symptom rather than the cause.

It is very refreshing to see how committed many brands are to do things the right way and take a long-term view on the bottom line. They are denting the consumer's universes and seeing the ROI, by building a business to serve consumers in an authentic way. It is possible to change the route, but only if the Captain of the Ship takes the wheel and leads the business into a safe and healthy destination.

In closing

It's possible to change the direction of your ship before it hits the iceberg to a crashing 'bottom line'. The Titanic quoted “God himself could not sink this ship,” and they clearly did not fulfil their brand promise. The reality is, they deceived their guests, which resulted in one of the biggest tragedies in history.

I want to encourage brands to “set your course by the stars, not by the lights of every passing ship,” as Omar N Bradley said.

Don't do it, because everyone else is doing it. Be guided by a moral compass.

ABOUT CARMEN MURRAY

Carmen Murray is one of the most influential modern marketers in South Africa. Her strong background in content, digital, mobile, innovation, and data analytics allows her to identify

emerging trends and conceptualise disruptive communication strategies deployed with precision. The customer and their needs are always at the heart of her approach.

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