

To lead in digital transformation, modernise legacy systems

 By [Chantel Troskie](#)

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With the recent [CEM Africa Summit](#) shining a light on customer experience across Africa, Chantel Troskie, senior CX sales manager of Oracle South Africa points out how innovations in business applications can help South African companies take the lead in improving the experience they provide to their customers



Chantel Troskie, senior CX sales manager of Oracle South Africa

They say that the customer is king. This has never been truer than today. Customers are asking for ever more personalised products and services and are demanding them over a widening berth of channels – from the storefront to the internet, to the mobile device.

Businesses today are in a race to give the customer what they want, when they want it, how and where they want it. It's a sink or swim situation, the fallout of which is already being seen in markets globally. The so-called retail apocalypse continues to capture headlines around the world, with many traditional retailers struggling, while startups and retail e-commerce companies 'born in the cloud' are experiencing dramatic growth.

It's important to keep in mind, however, that as the competitive environment changes and businesses have to innovate in order to survive, so too are the IT solutions and business applications that are meant to help business managers grow their companies and better compete.

Innovations in supply chain software are enabling businesses to streamline the supply chain, and in the process create a new platform that is better able to connect the supplier to the retailer and ultimately to the end customer in a way that more effectively meets customer needs and expectations.

Work in unison

Getting the right products delivered on time to customers requires all levels of the supply chain working in unison, from the early stages of go-to-market planning to procurement, logistics planning and the final sale, systems that are integrated and communicate together are critical to ensure consistency and reliability in order to meet customer expectations.

Businesses that are mired down in old, inflexible architectures that cannot adapt are the most at risk of failure in the marketplace. It is common for many businesses, particularly retailers, to be overwhelmed by complex IT architectures, which inhibit their ability to scale, adapt and onboard new products from suppliers and offer new service experiences for their customers.

However, true digital transformation requires that all systems – from those tracking the supply chain, to those managing customer engagement – share a common data platform. A common data platform, one that breaks down informational siloes, allows organisations to act on information regardless of where it occurs in the customer lifecycle, thereby enabling organisations to constantly tune the customer experience and business performance to meet the needs of the customers and shareholders.

Indeed, technology research firm IDC indicates that a growing number of retailers globally plan to implement a digital “core” platform, which will enable faster innovation, continuously utilising insights to drive intelligent actions.

Increasingly, the applications that are best suited to interact with this common data platform are those that are built for that purpose – typically SaaS (cloud-based) offerings. By modernising core applications related to CRM and ERP, retailers in South Africa can utilise all available data to gain insights and react to customer needs.

Over and above the access provided to a common data platform, modern CRM and ERP applications also provide improved agility (as cloud-based applications are scalable by their very nature), portable, and provide easy integration options into digital technology like IoT. While this is by no means the end of the digital transformation project, it is an important first step.

The race to exceptional customer experience

While they race to deliver exceptional customer experiences, some businesses may immediately turn to technologies like AI or IoT to help win the race.

However, by first modernising components of their core – especially those applications that are embedded in the client experience – businesses can establish a foundation upon which to build their digital transformation.

This process will enable those businesses to reap early rewards in bringing technology like AI into their processes by default, enabling incremental improvements in customer experience, and creating a common data platform on which to build the customer experience of the future.

ABOUT CHANTEL TROSKIE

Troskie is passionate about guiding businesses on technology that will help them better understand as well as engage with their customers.
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