

IAB Insight Series: Customer key to digital success

By [Danette Breitenbach](#)

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Digital is often viewed by organisations as a silver bullet to leapfrog into the 21st Century and meet their customers' needs, but with a plethora of channels and technology types, as well as an overwhelming amount of data, is it really that simple?



Ashish Williams, CEO of Mediacom and IAB SA Research Council lead, Nicole Gundelfinger, group marketing manager, Cash Converters, Candice Goodman, MD Mobitainment and IAB Education Council, Johan Walters, managing consultant at DQ&A and Mongezi Mtati, Ornico's marketing manager. © [IAB SA Twitter](#).

A panel of digital experts at a recent IAB SA Insight Series held in Sandton, Gauteng, explored the topic. The panel included Ashish Williams, CEO of Mediacom and IAB SA Research Council lead; Mongezi Mtati, Ornico marketing manager; Candice Goodman, MD of Mobitainment and IAB Education Council member; Johan Walters, managing consultant at DQ&A; and Nicole Gundelfinger, group marketing manager at Cash Converters.



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Keep it simple

There are amazing solutions out there, but many people leapfrog to the most complex solutions, instead of starting with the basics. Walters explained that most organisations still need to mature into the world of digital.

He said:

“First, clients must realise that they need to adapt to technology before they can connect the data points which then allows them to morph into a customer-centric organisation.”

Only when this happens will their media plan put the customer first, not the channel. “Organisations need to use a technology framework to work out how they can create an experience that is relevant to the customer. This is the point where humanity and technology meet,” said Walters.

Humanity and technology

At the base of technology lies humanity. How we bring humanity through technology to the digital consumer is key to achieving success in the digital era.

The challenges in our business are because of the digital economy, said Williams.

“ We tend to focus on the technology side and forget about the people, yet technology is a means to an end only. The end being how we communicate to people and we need to speak to the heart of people. ”

“The digital customer is just a customer and we need to view it in that light,” Goodman added.

Big data is not customer insights

To be human, marketers need to understand that people use different platforms for different reasons and different platforms offer different types of engagement and interaction.

Currently, there is a lot of talk around influencer marketing. “As a brand, you need to understand exactly who the influencer is in that space and the interaction and engagement that happens. Where brands have used influencer marketing it has been driven by campaigns, and not in a way that is useful to the influencers and their audience,” says Mtati.



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Despite people having shorter attention spans, studies over the past three years have also shown that people are watching more and more long format on digital. “It shows that people will engage on the things they want to view,” says Mtati.

“ Data must be used to provide human insights and insights used to inform strategy. It is about how you utilise the data you have from a digital perspective to move outside of the digital context and change peoples’ lives by placing your product where it matters for a particular community. ”

Data costs Shorter attention spans are a reality, and in South Africa so is data costs - for marketers and consumers. “No conversation on digital can be held in South Africa without a reference to the cost of data in this country,” says Goodman.

She makes the point that in South Africa data can cost 100 times more than in other countries.

“ If marketers want consumers to engage with their information and content on digital channels, they need to take responsibility for the cost and take the burden onto themselves and off consumers. ”

She adds that there is technology that can be used to reverse the data costs to marketers.

From brick-and-mortar to digital

Cash Converters is a well-established brick-and-mortar brand in the country. Gundelfinger explained that the brand has been working on a digital Point of Sale (POS) solution. “We have been working on this for two years because it is imperative, we have an intrinsic understanding of our customer.”

By understanding the power of digital and big data and its usefulness, the brand can determine where it can add value.

“ The heart of our thinking is our customer, and this is determining which digital touchpoints we speak to. ”

Customer centricity is crucial, she said because once a customer comes through the door, they only have one chance to keep them. “If their first experience is horrific, they never come back. The opposite is also true. We want to bridge the gap between understanding the customer, speaking to customers, getting them through the door and making it a comfortable experience.”

Digital should not be the only solution. “There is a perception that digital will solve all our problems and as a result, there is a complete disregard for the rest of the marketing mix and the in-store experience. However, traditional media still has a place for us, and in the long term while we will utilise digital more, we will be very specific in our digital offering, so that we do not lose customers, but rather be there when the customer needs us,” she explained.

Winners in customer centricity

Discovery was viewed by the panel as one of the most successful in being customer-centric in its digital offering. “The Discovery app is an example of an offering based on insights, the insights of Vitality. The customer goes there to track themselves and buys into the ecosystem,” said Williams.

Other brands winning in this space include FNB, Virgin Active and TymeBank.

“TymeBank is a newcomer in the competitive banking space but has managed to differentiate itself in this sector. It started with a soft launch with 50,000 customers but in only a few months it has 250,000 customers,” said Mtati.

A big insight that can be gleaned from this newcomer is that the customer is smart and does not need to know about banking.” People in South Africa have been taught about banking for a long time. All they want is to open an account and transfer money. There is also an understanding that not everyone in South Africa has an address, and not having an address does not exclude them from opening an account. TymeBank allows people to open an account with ease by utilising these insights,” he explained.

Williams added:

“ Technology is nothing but a means to provide ease of access to everything, as brands such as Uber and Discovery prove. If something is easily available, we will go for it. Underlying this is the key insight that we are human. ”

Technology for good Last but not least the panel touched on how technology can improve lives. Goodman gave an example of an app that alleviates hunger in the world. “Hunger is not a scarcity problem; it is a logistics problem. This app bridges the divide between the supply and the demand for food as it matches a surplus of food to needy organisations. Technology is not about the bits and bytes, but how we use technology for good.”

ABOUT DANETTE BREITENBACH

Danette Breitenbach is a marketing & media editor at Bizcommunity.com. Previously she freelanced in the marketing and media sector, including for Bizcommunity. She was editor and publisher of AdVantage, the publication that served the marketing, media and advertising industry in southern Africa. She has worked extensively in print media, mainly B2B. She has a Masters in Financial Journalism from Wits.

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