10 PRINCIPLES FOR CREATING AMAZING ONLINE EXPERIENCES

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All retailers want to deliver amazing online experiences, but only a few are making it happen. The starting point is to create a frame of reference by understanding the characteristics of a great physical retail experience:

1. A great salesperson will modify the information based on a consumer's questions and preferences.
2. The information presented is easy to understand.
3. The salesperson has tools and deep knowledge to assist decision making and introduces information at the right time.

The consumer feels this experience is *personalised and based on a one to one interaction*. When a consumer has a buying intent they will:

1. Seek out *relevant information* on their device of choice.
2. Choose the extent at which they continue, complete, or pause based on their situation.
3. Complete the mission only once they have met their need.

To meet this consumer requirement, retailers need to be...

• Visible in the right places.
• Easy to deal with.
• Speak the consumer's language.
• Add value (provide content to assist with decision making).

For retailers to deliver amazing online experiences they must be selling (presenting content) in the identical manner in which a consumer wants to purchase (receiving content).

Only in 2.5 to 3 percent of occurrences do retailers meet consumer expectations for online shopping. Here are 10 key considerations for retailers seeking to improve this situation:

1 CONSUMERS ARE ON A JOURNEY

Consumers are on a journey. A 2013 Google study found that, on average, consumers referenced 12 sources of information online before buying online or in store. In 2010, the average was 5.

2 EACH JOURNEY COMPRISES MULTIPLE STEPS

In the eyes of the consumer, a 'step' occurs when they take an action and new content is presented.

3 THE FUNCTION OF 'USER EXPERIENCE' OR UX

To understand how 'UX' contributes it needs to be broken down into two parts:
1. 'Interaction Cost.'   2. 'Value Design.'

'Interaction Cost' is the *effort required of consumers* to undertake each step within their journey, both physical and mental. The goal is to reduce both forms of effort as much as possible.

'Value Design' is the creation and presentation of content to simplify decision making. Examples include video, detailed product content, and guided selling tools.

4 PRIORITISE VISIBILITY

The landing page of your website is like the front page of a newspaper. Consumers are unlikely to seek out content if it lies outside the initial landing page. They're more prone to scrolling than they used to be, but will only make the effort if they perceive the content below 'the fold' will add value to their journey.

5 LET DATA DO THE DECISION MAKING

Having access to the right data is an important part of determining what is and what is not working. Use data insights to answer:

1. What are you doing right to acquire new customers?
2. What are your customers' pain points?
3. What are the pain points of the people who come to you but do not end up purchasing?

Insights gathered from #3 will enhance experiences and drive acquisition, partly because consumers are now more loyal to their own needs than to a brand. This insight drives the focus for 'value design' creation.

6 APPLY BEST PRACTICE (THE 'SCIENCE')

The world of ecommerce and digital conduct has been around for 20 plus years, providing a wealth of knowledge for businesses to expedite their digital evolution.

7 WIREFRAMING

The process of translating the experience plan to touchpoints is done through wireframes.

Wireframes are plain boxes guiding page element placement. Wireframes ensure the integrity of the experience by eliminating the subjective and emotional influences of look and feel.

8 DESIGN 'CONSUMER FIRST' NOT 'MOBILE FIRST'

The retailer has the ability to leverage varying screen sizes to improve the consumer experience. Key considerations include:

• Simultaneously create wireframes for all touchpoints.
• Consider context (and what experience the consumer is looking for on a particular screen).
• Do not forget about the enlarged monitors which are growing in popularity for desktop.

9 DESIGN EXPERIENCES FOR INTENT DRIVEN MICRO-MOMENTS

A 'micro moment' is a consumer's moment of high intent and need for engagement.

Thanks to smartphones, it is nearly impossible to predict where buying intent comes from and when it starts. This makes the world of the retailer very complicated and is why the use of demographics as a proxy for people is not effective.

10 BE ITERATIVE (CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT)

Creating amazing online experiences is not a 'one-off' process but includes:

1. Data mining, insight gathering and hypothesis creation.
2. Iterative and agile development programming. Many of the decisions require development and technology enhancements. Technology is the enabler for everything.

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