



# Trust or Bust: Six reasons why 'extreme trust' is the new customer imperative

By Lucia Elliott

For over 200 years Australians have trusted us to deliver to communities around the country. With technological innovation now comes both the opportunity as well as necessity for Australia Post to transform itself into an e-commerce and e-service company for the future.

As sponsor and partner of the recent World Business Forum in Sydney, Australia Post's Chief Marketing Officer Greg Sutherland spoke of its mission to design customer experiences that put consumers and communities at the very heart of every one of its decisions; fresh, relevant and meaningful experiences that continue to earn and maintain the trust and faith Australians have always had in us.



Don Peppers

Don Peppers, regarded as one of the world's leading authorities on customer experience, spoke at the World Business Forum in a session hosted by Australia Post, where he presented the compelling case for using technology to deliver frictionless and human customer experiences that engender what Peppers refers to as 'extreme trust'.

Amazon's founder Jeff Bezos says it's already too late by the time you're 'doing customer service', because the *best* service is when the customer doesn't need to call or talk to you. It just works!

As a customer service trailblazer, Amazon champions empathy as well as ease. So it not only recommends a book based on like-minded purchases, it'll also warn you if there's a chance your next purchase is a double-up.

Raving fans probably say they love Amazon because it not only helps them make informed choices, but also avoid simple mistakes.

Then doesn't that really just mean that Amazon's customers 'love' a line of code? No, insists global marketing authority on customer relationship, Don Peppers. They love the fact that the intent behind each one of those automations revolves entirely around their needs, not Amazon's.

Peppers believes that every marketer can powerfully leverage technology, as Amazon does, to deliver humanity and empathy *at scale*.

## 1 Customers are now assets, capital... and disrupters

Google, AirBNB and Uber have no warehouses, inventory or SKUs. The value of their businesses lie in their customer base.

Customers now create more value, more quickly than any other single business asset. Intangible assets registered all but zero on S&P's 500 market cap 30 years ago. By 2010 they accounted for almost 60% and customers for >30%.

But customers now also have zero latency, rising expectations and access to an unparalleled source of information, making them our greatest potential disrupters and threat as well. Particularly as they're so enabled in community clusters on both a micro and macro scale.

So it's telling that the number one trait identified amongst successful disruptive startups like BuzzFeed, WhatsApp and Snapchat is their visionary customer advocacy.

## 2 F before E: A frictionless experience comes first

According to Peppers, a 'frictionless' customer experience must be the starting point because customers are like electricity and water. They'll seek the path of least resistance. If they encounter friction, they'll move on before you even know who they are.

Whether you build deep linking directly into your web or mobile app, provide a 'call me' button on your website, or launch proactive in-session support chat triggered by a customer's circuitous clickstream around your FAQs, use technology to eliminate every single obstacle for customers.

## 3 There's no such thing as an algorithm for trust

Computers don't trust people. Only *people* trust people, so humanity and empathy will always be important.

Peppers believes that earning a customer's trust is based on two factors; competence (doing things right) and good intentions (doing the right thing).

Competence can be automated, but good intentions; authenticity and proactively championing your customers' interests, is less likely to reveal itself in an algorithm. Empathy lies at the heart of trust and at least for the foreseeable future, it's not a computer's strong point.

## 4 The more we interact the more we need to trust

Zuckerberg's Law of Information Sharing predicts that every 20 years we interact a thousand times more with others. Sound far-fetched? Two decades ago there were no smartphones, tablets, cloud storage and the start of real social networking was some years away.

With the same exponential increase expected in the next 20 years, trust will become even more important because it makes interactions not only transparent, but much more efficient.

Peppers believes it's therefore essential that companies embrace what he refers to as proactive trustworthiness, because customers will not just expect but also assume you've put them first, pre-emptively and before all else.

## 5 Call centres will become cloud counsellors

Technology is enabling deflection of customer issues via automation. Which means there will be fewer and fewer of them that reach a call centre, but the ones that do will be 'escalated' issues that require more empathy than ever before.

With over 50% of customer calls in the US now a result of a failed or unresolved website session, the very nature of call centres is evolving.

With cloud technology, agents no longer even need to be centralised, but more importantly, the issues they attend to will be more acute and less predictable. Agents will need to provide bespoke solutions that are more emotionally nuanced and deftly negotiated.

## 6 E = Empathy squared (powering up your people)

Empathy can be an abstract concept and open to interpretation. It's fluid, it's intuitive, it's imprecise. Even academics have found no fewer than 40 definitions for it.

In the world of customer experience and particularly resolution, it's more than just a dialogue. It's a delicate dance with some fairly complex footwork.

So as Peppers points out, delivering humanity to your customers will require that companies trust and empower employees in ways that are not only self-organising but equally empathetic.

Self-organising cultures inspire workers to *want* to provide a better customer experience, so Peppers urges companies to furnish them with the power to act and react with humanity and empathy. In doing so they'll not only become your greatest customer champions, but also your most inspired company 'storytellers'.

## The business gold dust in extreme trust

For your customers, it all starts with systematically removing every pain point or obstacle to deliver a truly frictionless experience.

It is only then that you should proactively champion interactions, both automated or human, that demonstrate you genuinely have customers' best interests at heart, are looking out for them, and are in turn worthy of their valuable trust.

Because the customer journey shouldn't only be about the path of least resistance. It should promise and deliver much more; not just a frictionless experience but one that's human and trustable. If it's these three things, then the customer path will be one that's paved with gold for all who embark upon it.

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