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Maintaining Business Relationships During a Pandemic

For those of us in relationship focused businesses, the pandemic has forced us to be creative and to adapt in a rapidly changing social and technological landscape. PwC Research found that – prior to the pandemic – 59 percent of global consumers surveyed felt companies had lost touch with the human element of customer experience, and 75 percent of the customers surveyed preferred to interact with a human versus an automated machine.

The pandemic has complicated any effort to rectify these negative business relationship experiences. Much of the sentiment conveyed by the PwC survey is likely attributable to the increased prevalence of technology, such as email, and the ease of contacting customers in a time where cellphones are ubiquitous. However, as relationship business people, we must still find ways to transcend these less intimate technologies and to recreate the human element for the majority of customers that crave such an experience.

Consider the case of an elderly customer who spent their formative years in a customer service landscape where meeting face-to-face was paramount and without any of the technology that currently drives business. How can we tailor the customer experience to these individuals in our current world? One solution could take the form of identifying a third party who can assist us in conducting a video conference with the elderly customer. Another could be to activate nostalgia by writing the customer a handwritten note.

Innovation should reflect the process of understanding that in relationship businesses like legal and financial services, there is clearly no “one size fits all” solution for all customers. Every customer is different and has their own relationship expectations. We have engaged in and observed many unconventional solutions to the relationship problems posed by the pandemic. After all, even many court hearings currently occur via video platforms. Though the pandemic may be the greatest business disruption of our lifetimes, it can also be one of the greatest opportunities. Engage your clients to understand their expectations and be amenable to adaptation. After all, we are only as valuable as our clients perceive us to be.

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