

Modern customer engagement: Keeping up with Gen Y and Z

 By [Andrew Bourne](#)

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The term 'customer engagement' is arguably one of the biggest buzzwords in today's business landscape. It's so widely used that when many people hear the phrase, they interpret it as a checkbox item. It is, however, an ongoing crucial relationship between a company and its customers, which is determined by the customer's preferences and behaviour.



Source: www.pexels.com

Customer engagement entails actively engaging with an audience through messaging that interests, educates or helps them, as well as encouraging two-way communication with your business. In short, it's about figuring out what the customer wants and giving it to them at the right time.

This may appear to be a simple and straightforward task. However, in today's world, where the majority of a business's customer base is composed of the digital-native 'millennials and zoomers', the consumer has little patience for complicated processes in the name of customer engagement. So what does this mean for you as a business, and how can you adapt to this new market reality and ensure that your engagement techniques are actually engaging?

Preparing for a mobile-led shift

Mobile use has surpassed laptop use, and today's target audience is more likely to look something up on their phones or tablets than on a device.

According to the GSMA's [The Mobile Economy Sub-Saharan Africa](#) report, the mobile market in Sub-Saharan Africa will reach several significant milestones over the next five years: including half a billion mobile subscribers in 2021, 1 billion mobile connections in 2024, and 50% subscriber penetration by 2025. Over the next five years, the number of smartphone connections in Sub-Saharan Africa will nearly double to reach 678 million by the end of 2025, representing a 65% adoption rate.

It is, therefore, no longer an option to provide a mobile-friendly website or customer support portals - it is now a requirement.



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Catering to the 'always-connected' generation

Being accessible to current and potential customers is the most important aspect of customer interaction. This is particularly challenging in today's setting, where time and geography are no longer important and the customer expects businesses to be reachable at all hours of the day and night.

While the advent of chatbots has eliminated the need for businesses to hire additional employees to cover multiple shifts, bringing developers onboard to build bots that can meet multiple requirements can end up being costly too. Instead, try thinking along the lines of using a sales engagement software that provides easy-to-use features like drag-and-drop chatbot builders.

Making AI chatbots more human

Though chatbots were invented to free up staff from mundane tasks so they can focus on the more complex ones, research shows that customers find it harder to get issues resolved by AI chatbots. The ideal solution is an AI-driven chatbot that can greet prospects or customers, respond to small talk, and even understand common questions, regardless of the tone or words used, and respond to them using a company's internally available documented resources. If the customer chooses to speak with a human agent, the AI-powered chatbot will forward the conversation to the team member.

Personalising your messaging without over targeting

While personalisation is widely regarded as the pinnacle of customer engagement, it's all too easy at the same time to cross the line between being helpful and being intrusive when dealing with a more privacy-conscious generation of customers. So make sure your conversation is relevant and provide timely information to your most valuable customers right when they need it, like an offer for help after a failed transaction, or when they've spent a long time trying to decide

between two products.



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Many of us fall prey to ad fatigue and endless re-targeting. While it's frustrating, it throws light on the fact that customer data is still jumbled, redundant, or even mismanaged chunks of information. Businesses should make sure that they use a CRM tool that gives a holistic view of customer data, and helps avoid any missteps in data management and customer communication.

A customer engagement strategy is critical to the success of any business. Customers who are actively engaged not only spend more money, but also become a company's best brand advocate and recommend the business to their friends, colleagues, and family.

ABOUT ANDREW BOURNE

Andrew Bourne is Zoho's regional manager for the Africa region and is based in Cape Town, South Africa. He has more than 15 years of experience in sales and marketing and has spent the last five years focusing on the implementation and testing of various business technologies. He is very passionate about Zoho and has exceptional insight into the business and marketing world.

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