

Touchpoint

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Digital Service Design: Lessons from the Cloud

The cloud might be a little frightening: it's invisible, all-consuming and, scariest of all, it's telling you that your business needs to change. There are nuances of Service Design within the digital realm that might not be discernible to the unaided eye. Through years of experience helping clients who have a strong foothold in the physical world to enhance their offerings with digital services, Continuum has discovered several principles you may want to know before you dive into the haze.

1. Rethink the Role of Staff

This first lesson may seem unintuitive for the digital service domain. Why staff? Because information is widely available, people and communities have become the main source of support and knowledge.

For instance, TD Bank in the U.S. has recently emphasised digital banking in order to free up staff to focus on customer service. As a result, the bank's tone has shifted from one of 'cold expert advisor' to 'friendly host'. Another example is Zappos, whose humorous commercials highlight relationship-building between staff

and consumers, demonstrating a shift in company values.

2. Use Technology in the Right Way

As we immerse ourselves further into the 'cloud', we need to remember that technology is getting smarter, but the human connection must exist alongside it.

What does technology provide that is unique, and how does it enhance physical interactions? In the U.S., the recent food truck revolution is an example of a traditional business that has been re-energised with mapping and location-based services, ordering apps, microblogging,

and affordable/hack-able tools such as the iPhone. With these new modes of commerce, it has revived a sense of hyper-localism in which people and communities are reconnecting.

3. Deliver a Consistent Experience

Customers yearn for a consistent user experience provided by a unified company, not a collection of disparate 'silos'. As a result, we need to design digital and physical touchpoints to feel the same, while allowing each to do what they do best. Offering a consistent experience involves a translation of your business's core essence to each touchpoint, which is something that 'just-breaking-into-the-cloud' companies often neglect.

Weight Watchers, for instance, exemplifies this marriage of digital and nondigital, front-end and back-end, making sure that they streamline their online weight-loss services with people's physical experience.

4. Keep Learning from Customers

There are countless examples of brands that have managed to successfully move into the digital realm, and that’s because they continue learning from their customers by fostering dialogue.

Nike Plus and Gatorade have embraced co-creation, allowing users to create their own exercise-oriented community and dedicating a 24/7 Twitter response centre.

5. Refocus your Organisation to Deliver What’s Right

Depending on how your company is structured, it may be necessary to rethink the organisation to deliver the right experience to your customer.

The connection between front-of-house (consumer-facing business) and back-of-house (employee-based systems) needs to be seamless. Furthermore, the digital experience should be an integrated, outward-facing whole, not simply a manifestation of how the businesses is organised.

So What Do These Lessons Really Tell Us?

They tell us that implementing Service Design ‘in the cloud’ is not about slapping on a Facebook or Twitter icon or merely digitising information. It’s about balancing design craft, organisational innovation, systems management, and new digital technologies in the entire context of Service Design, while keeping the human connection in mind.

Above all, it is about designing the ideal experience for people and making sure the company is ready to deliver it. We need to merge the business tools of management consulting with the visual and storytelling tools of Service Design.

Overall, we need to develop our staff, leverage our technology appropriately, and prioritise our dialogues so we can all remain relevant in the digital cloud that has, slowly but surely, become our world. ●

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