Chapter 16
Project Management and Customer Activation

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ABSTRACT

In a digitally (em)powered age, customers expect a service and product experience in line with continuously evolving expectations. This induces great potential for organisations that shape engagement before, during, or after the main customer touch points. Powered by insights coming from the CRM-driven 360° view, they entail even more value when enabling a company to quickly and continuously learn from its experiences. This chapter will illustrate that project managers need to master a dual dynamic to attain through activated customer engagement. On the one hand, new types of projects, changing expectations, and shifting habits offer humbling challenges. On the other hand, governance, change, and delivery continue to be the foundational baseline. By integrating theoretical insights and real-life cases, the author wants to stimulate project managers. Rather than seeing the digital era as a transformational tsunami for customer engagement, they should see it as an opportunity to go beyond things in a reality where rapidly changing demand entails growth, learning, and great value.

INTRODUCTION

In an era where technological evolutions are airing at high speed, companies are continuously challenged to reinvent themselves. This Digital Transformation in the Fourth Industrial Revolution is not about technology itself, but about how to transform businesses and shape the way of working (Caudron & Van Peteghem, 2014). One of the biggest changes that comes with it is therefore the transition from a product and competition-based economy to a service and customer journey focused reality (Janssens, 2018). Traditional customer engagement is challenged to evolve along with it. Companies need to give themselves the means to really knowing their customers and being truly adaptive – and reactive - in the service offering if they want to matter and create qualitative customer engagement.

Projects to catalyse this internal transformation are key. Given the fundamental changes on customer engagement coming with Industry 4.0 and the growing impact of data power, it can be stated that all

stages of 'traditional' project management discipline will be changed too. This would leave companies that desire to shape their direction towards digital customer engagement lost in a vacuum without references to reinvent themselves. In this chapter, a more differentiated angle will be taken. It will be explained that traditional project management fundamentals remain valid, but the emphasis on specific dimensions needs to be adapted. Aspects that require increased attention are: an agile project approach from elaboration up until the reporting, empowering people, managing change for everyone, and continued delivery. By integrating attention points for the project management with examples and cases from reality-based experience in conservative and progressive industries, the author wants to illustrate that the fundamentals for modern customer engagement enabling projects remain strongly valid, but involve a different emphasis, embedded in a more proactive and collaborative dynamic.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Every industrial revolution is driven by new technologies. In the Fourth Industrial Revolution, new technologies get combined with technologies that finally become mature and affordable, like computing power, connected devices, genetic sequencing, artificial intelligence and the like. From a corporate perspective, facts are available in spades to illustrate the vastness of the impact of this evolution. In 2016, the CEO of technology and consultancy company Accenture stated that digital transformation is one of the main reasons half of the companies on the Fortune 500 have disappeared since 2000 (Nanterme, 2016). The growing impact of the GAFAs and the NATUs[1] only confirms this.

From a human perspective, the way people live, work and interact is transforming at high speed (Arbib & Seba, 2017; Schwab, 2016; Van Driessche, 2014). The transformation of physical and digital worlds entails great potential. At the same time, this leads to (pressure for) increased human productivity. Customers expect businesses to anticipate their needs and provide personalised service through any communication channel. B2B and B2C businesses need to shift therefore from a model focused solely on selling products, to a service model driven by deeper connections with customers (Janssens, 2017). This deeper connection is embodied through the concept of 'customer journeys'. Customer journeys are the sum of experiences and touchpoints that customers go through when interacting with a company, before, during and after the main interaction (Schadler, 2018; Truog, 2018; Van den Brink, 2018). By improving customer journeys, companies can continue to remain relevant, nourish the customer engagement relationship and stimulate their growth.

Data is the New Currency

In the Digital Age, people are using connected devices, privately and professionally, and are sharing large amounts of data every day. In 2018, human and machine data were expected to grow from 33ZB in 2018 to 175ZB by 2025 - of which a third in real-time (Reinsel, Gantz & Rydning, 2018). Through the data fuel, Artificial Intelligence (AI) is driving innovation across growing numbers of products and services. In 2017, organisations with AI expected to see a 39% increase on average in their revenues by 2020, alongside a 37% reduction in costs (Economic Times, 2017). The higher the quantity and quality of the data, the higher the quality of the artificial learning. From a customer engagement perspective, machine learning algorithms and the like are therefore able to help businesses anticipate trends in consumer demands, personalize promotions for individual customers, and optimize pricing. Consumer

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