

COLUMNS

Luxury of a personalized conversation

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By now everyone is aware that today's workforce includes the first Internet-raised generation as well as their influential tools and practices. However, the effect of the resulting shift in the way individuals across age groups and departments communicate cannot be overstated.

Now, consumers no matter audience member, presenter, client or colleague expect to be able to ask questions and provide their own insights. They want to problem solve and debate. They want their opinions heard and taken into account.

Getting personal

When it comes to communications, expectations are not far off from what many of us used to consider a VIP experience: personalized, prompt and facilitated by a person who demonstrates a deep knowledge of his or her audience.

With this VIP-like treatment becoming the norm, going the extra mile to engage audiences with a collaborative experience tailored to them is even more paramount for luxury brand professionals.

First-class branding is about much more than just a product. It is about emotions and aspirations, quality and resilience. The teams behind these brands invest everything they have got in building messaging and content that endures.

To continue delivering against that promise, brands will need look more closely not just at what they communicate, but how.

Conversational presenting

In sales and marketing, personalization as we have known it has mostly been about adding a company's branding to a pitch deck, or including deep research such as a competitor analysis.

An approach called conversational presenting takes these tactics a step further by giving the audience a say in the information that they are presented.

When it comes to presenting with slides, most of us are familiar with memorizing a script and saving Q&A for the

end.

The conversational method flips tradition on its head by encouraging viewers to decide the order in which content is delivered.

By displaying a range of topics on a single screen, consumers and prospects are invited to select where to start and how to proceed. It is the cherry on top of an already personalized experience.

If it seems a bit radical, consider the way you consume information when you visit a Web site. Chances are you do not read every word on every page and subpage before you are finished.

Instead, you pick and choose the different pieces you need to make a decision, and then you are off to complete the next task on your to-do list. This is exactly how conversational presenting works, and for luxury brand professionals, with audiences who are expecting the best of the best, it can make all the difference.

It is focused. Your clients' time is precious and proving that you respect that is important.

The conversational approach is laser-focused, so you do not need to spend any number of minutes reviewing information that is not necessary. Instead, you are zooming straight to the information that they care about most and ultimately telling a story that fits into their personal narratives.

True engagement. Few things are worse than seeing a prospective client's eyes glaze over, or watching as they pull out their phones during your pitch.

Conversational presenting lends the flexibility needed to change up the interactions that occur during a presentation so you can keep the focus where it should be.

Imagine seamlessly transitioning from one personalized asset to another, from simply speaking about your idea to placing it in your prospects hands, if you are using a mobile device.

This creates a highly visual, highly interactive environment, and the more frequent the change, the harder it is for the brain to look for stimulation elsewhere.

Memorability. When you allow space in your pitch for your prospect or client to experience it as a contributor rather than just a spectator, you invite them to connect with the content. This creates the perfect foundation for high-end customer relationships because it is not just telling them the story of your offerings it is making them a part of it.

The deeper the connection, the stronger the emotion associated with the presentation, as well as the memory of it.

Standing out and being memorable long after the conversation is over is a much-needed edge in a world where competition is high and time is short.

Science behind engagement and retention

There are a few reasons why conversational presenting works as well as it does, but the most interesting ones can be explained by science.

Three neurological factors in particular stand out, the first being the role vision plays in our understanding of the world.

Between 80 percent and 90 percent of the information that our brain processes comes in through our eyes and, almost incredibly, two-thirds of the brain's electrical activity is dedicated to vision when the eyes are open.

In other words, we are hardwired to consume visuals, and our brains have evolved powerful storage capacity for visual information.

The second factor is our biological predilection for stories.

According to *The Scientific American*, stories make up 65 percent of our conversations a fact that is rooted in the ways stories engage our brains.

Lastly, our brains respond powerfully to two-way conversations.

When you have a conversation with somebody, your brain activity actually begins to mirror theirs a process known as neural coupling.

SUCCESS IN business is all about great communication and making your audience feel special by giving them something with which they can truly connect.

A dynamic and conversational approach can help accomplish this in a way that cannot be done through scripted interactions or static slides, no matter how closely they match a prospect's own branding.

If sales and marketing professionals want to be more persuasive, memorable and engaging, not just in the luxury space but also in this day and age, they need to take advantage of this method.

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