

Learn how to build trust, nurture great CX from a surfing 'guardian angel'

 By Leigh Andrews

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Medford Torr, head UX specialist at Roam (Ringier One Africa Media) presented the second keynote session of CEM Africa Summit by speaking of building trust-based on insights from Red Bull Surfing's video of professional jet-ski surfer Sérgio Cosme, dubbed the 'guardian angel of big wave surfing at Nazaré'.



Torr presenting at the CEM Africa Summit 2019.

Learning to surf and mastering watersports are bucket-list items for many - creatives in particular as this is seen as the ultimate way to step away from office pressure and commune with nature, while also trying something new and creating your own experience.

But it's also extremely risky as one misjudged wave can send you tumbling to the ocean floor.



Paddle. Catch a wave. Stand. Surf. (Part 1)

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That's why Torr's CEM Africa Summit presentation was largely based on customer experience or CX lessons we can learn as a shot at the world's most famous 'big wave' venue — Praia do Norte, Nazaré, Portugal.

That's where professional diver Sérgio Cosme is based. An adventurer at heart, he's done it all, from motocross to rally car racing, but his current passion is all about being a rescue jet ski driver on the biggest days at Nazaré.

He outruns mountains of swell over 20 metres high to save up the surfers attempting to ride them, which puts him in one of the highest stakes positions in sport, yet he's not driven by money or accolades - it's all about mitigating risk and building trust in salvaging what could be a deadly experience...

Explaining why he feels all brands should strive to be more like Cosme, Torr said he's ticking all the CX boxes:

Taking care of his customer and the environment; putting their safety first; communicating his own knowledge and expertise precisely and timely, in 'surfer talk' they can relate to; and onboarding the surfer properly to help build confidence; while providing an exact service by immersing himself in the different surfer needs that arise.



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Simply put, in the business of surfing, Cosme trades on trust: You want to have the best possible experience, but you also want to be safe.

Cue all businesses to take note.

Putting on his customer hat, Torr spoke of his personal loyalty to a specific airline, based on the continuous excellent customer experience he receives from them.



Experience trumps channel

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It starts with the process of booking his flight online for business, where the user experience (UX) is first and foremost, as everything in the online booking process interface is seamless and flows in a way that makes sense.

Having booked his seat, he receives an SMS (his personal preference of communication method) reminding him to check-in online. Given a clear upsell option to upgrade his seat - as opposed to an unpleasant surprise at the checkout phase - Torr accepts and also completes the safety check, which has been gamified to a point that it's entertaining, not something to ignore.

Marrying experience: Bringing online excellence offline

Met with a professional staffer at the boarding gate, Torr's excellent experience continues throughout the physical flight. He confirms the service he received has changed his behaviour in that he doesn't even try looking for cheaper flights any more.

“ He's willing to pay a bit extra for that excellent customer experience. ”

The best part is that this experience is holistic, as it translates from the physical to the digital and back again. While this is the best possible way for customer experience to roll-out, remember that excellent customer experience is often based on an interaction with a single person, which is why it's important to employ those who are truly passionate about the work they do.



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Torr reminded attendees that trust is built through first impressions, which is often down to the impact of the tone and language used in your SMS or the call-to-action button at the moment of interaction.

Torr says to follow through on every touchpoint of the customer experience journey, which involves speaking regularly to your internal users and customers.



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MC Africa Melane pointed out that there's a fine balance as to the point it becomes too much when talking to the customer, as we don't want to receive daily Mailchimp surveys. Torr agreed that there's no blanket methodology as it's all based on how your specific brand's customers follow their customer journey and how often is too often to follow up.

Work to uncover the no secret sauce of interaction that's best for your own business - this involves research into what the customer needs at various stages of the journey and analysing data for insights into the UX and overall CX, so be open to feedback and tweaking the process as you go along.

Lessons any business can take to heart. Watch for my further coverage of the [CEM Africa Summit](#).

ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

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