

BEING HUMAN IN A VIRTUAL WORLD

These CX Trends Won't Just Guide You. They'll Define You.

The Covid pandemic has brought great change to the consumer world. Brand relationships that were once defined by visiting stores, attending public gatherings, or face-to-face conversations with salespeople are now—by necessity—being reimaged.

The widespread adoption of remote work and the shift to conducting all modes of home business over the web happened literally overnight. The result? Well, let's just say that we're all spending more time online than we ever thought we would.

This mass migration to a virtual world has meant accelerated digital transformation for business and consumer alike—consolidating more and more of the customer journey into digital channels. In turn, that's put great pressure on brands to figure out how to be genuinely human in the channels still available to them.

Regardless of what happens with Covid, the need for brands to be more human in an increasingly virtual world is here to stay.



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Why? Because even if the pandemic suddenly went away, it's unlikely that most consumers would go back to their pre-Covid behaviors.

Think about it: Do you believe people who've had to endure lockdowns, holidays without family, and the loss of social gatherings will be eager to go back to standing in line at stores when they could be spending time with friends and family? I didn't think so.

So, if your business is planning to maintain the same quantity and quality of contact with customers it enjoyed pre-pandemic, more of that contact—like it or not—is likely going to have to be more virtual than before.

That means figuring out how to inject more humanity into the fabric of your customer interactions in a commercial world increasingly mediated through a screen, keyboard, headset, or chatbot.

How does a brand go about being more human in an increasingly virtual world?

Well it can start by being intentional about how it would like to be experienced virtually. Soon, that experience won't just contribute to your brand's identity.

It will BE its identity.
That's already happening.
The trends are there.

But as virtualization accelerates, there will be more and more pressure from your human customers to...





1

INTERACT LIKE A HUMAN.

Cognitive technologies make it possible for brands and their customers to interact more like real people.

Each encounter at every touchpoint is more human as a result. Conversational AI uses natural language processing (NLP) to allow for more natural voice and chat exchanges. Experiential technologies—like image recognition, augmented reality (AR), and virtual reality (VR)—allow for more personal experiences across virtual channels. Contextual AI helps brands know which offers to make based on what's going on in a customer's life. All will become more central to customer relationships moving forward.



2 /

CARE LIKE A HUMAN.

Customer care is getting a “promotion” and becoming more central to your brand relationships.

While CX is so much more than what’s traditionally been called “customer service” (we think of CX as the sum of all the interactions a brand has with its customers), customer care has never been more central. Why? Increasingly, it’s the only way a customer can engage with a live person who represents the brand. That means customer care is going to have a bigger role in a virtual world. It’s where it all comes together. The question becomes: How do you make that human contact as valuable as possible?



3

CONNECT LIKE A HUMAN.

The power of employee experience to drive your customer experience will become more apparent.

We all know it's EX that so often drives the quality of CX. Moving forward, EX will be more essential than ever. As customer care becomes an urgent channel for delivering ex, all the time and effort that goes into strengthening the experience of the customer care front line will have a greater impact on business outcomes. That front-line employee's ability to embody a brand's culture, character, and values will make all the difference.





4 /

UNDERSTAND LIKE A HUMAN.

More and more customer interaction data will get converted into insight to drive **BOTH** better experience **AND** stronger revenue.

Brands have already invested heavily in omnichannel. So, they're able to interact with their customers across email, chat, voice, text, social messaging apps, etc. They own this data. But few are taking advantage of the data that flows from those interactions as they should: They're not mining it. They're not turning it into actionable insight. They're not using the data to improve the experience, personalize it, and—ideally—drive added revenue. But that can change. And it must in a more virtual world.

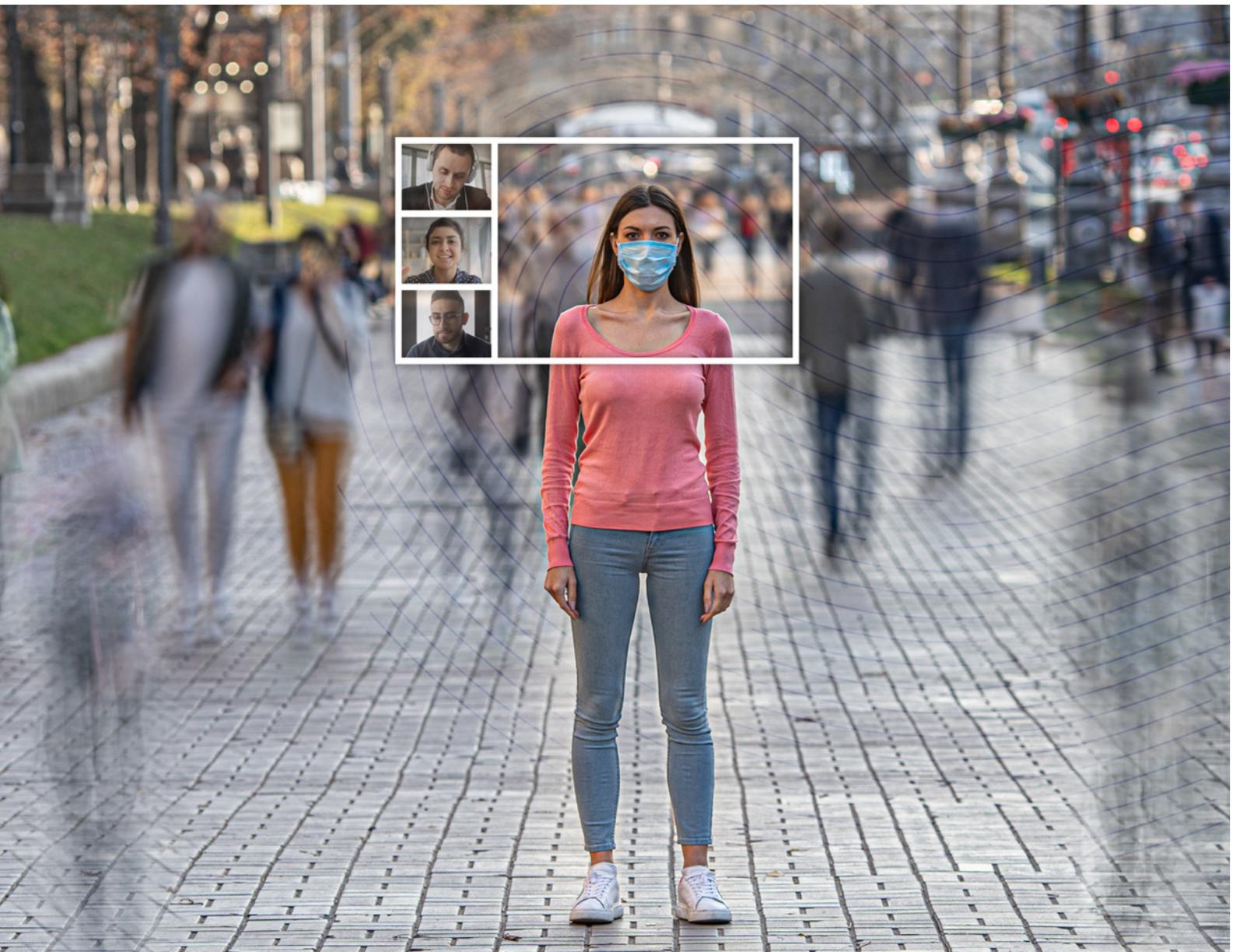


5

PROVIDE A HUMAN CHOICE.

A brand's ability to foster human "agency" by providing customer choice is key.

Real people make real choices. And real people grant other real people the ability to choose. So should brands who want to interact as persons. We humans offer choice because it honors who we are, and it's how we want to be treated. Likewise, customers want to be asked how they wish to be communicated with, and how they'd prefer for a problem to be resolved. Research shows that those able to exercise agency report having better experiences as a result. Turns out, choice doesn't just empower. It makes you feel better about the person offering it.



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As today's consumer world virtualizes, a brand's ability to actually "be human" to its customers and prospects takes center stage.

The good news? Being more human is something every brand can learn to be.

But it takes intention, curiosity, and commitment—three very human qualities.

We make digital human.

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Sutherland is a global product and platform powerhouse inside a trusted, digital transformation services company. Our mission is to deliver exceptionally engineered experiences for both customers and employees today, that continue to delight tomorrow. For over 30 years, we have delighted and cared for our customers' customers across all industries building integrated cloud-based solutions to accelerate growth. We are a team of global professionals, operationally effective, culturally meshed, and committed to our clients and to one another. We call it One Sutherland.

