

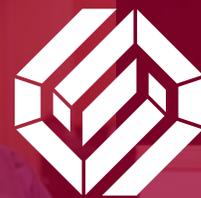


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By Howard Rosenberg, CEO and co-founder of B-Stock

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By Karen Fedder, Blancco

When it comes to selling previously used phones, laptops, servers or data storage drives, two conditions are critical to a thriving second-hand market: there must be enough sellable product changing hands and there must be trust at each stage of the selling and buying process.



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By Sarah Johnson, Milestone Equipment Holdings

As today's shoppers make more purchases online, they have higher expectations for speedy shipping and seamless return policies than ever before. Although the world of e-commerce may be more convenient for consumers, it's produced significant logistics challenges for retailers buried in returned inventory.



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As we enter 2020, we start not only a new decade but a new era. It is an era dominated by technology advances such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), Robotic Process Automation (RPA) and BOTS for just about everything including direct customer engagement. However, there is also a less talked about yet more critical transformation underway. The TALENT Transformation. The transformation of the skills and capabilities we humans need as the role of people and technology continues to blur.

In its Future of Jobs report, the World Economic Forum (WEF) detected a change in the skills required within the new digital economy:

Skills such as Emotional Intelligence (#6) and Cognitive Flexibility (#10) are rapidly becoming critical to business success. This skills shift is not about developing new capabilities for using technology, but rather a reflection of the growing need for innate human skills as the role of technology changes over the next few years.

The WEF report reflects the increased role of machines and technology in dealing with routine tasks such as basic quality control functions, with artificial intelligence enabling self-diagnosis and self-healing. Companies are veering away from paying people to perform “checking” and “fixing” functions now that they can be reliably and efficiently machine-enabled.

While customer engagement and specifically returns

management will need a combination of physical behavior (listening), intellectual activity (analysis and problem solving), and on-target emotional response to be truly effective and to help companies stand out from the crowd.

Technology can be leveraged to analyze returns data, identify returns patterns as well as identify underlying product issues such as quality, usability or fit. In the case of routine return scenarios, may even enable self-service returns processing for frequent and loyal customers. However, technology appears unable to replace the expectation for personal engagement within the return experience. Consumers have demonstrate a clear preference to handle returns directly with a company representative vs. simply shipping back the item based

TOP 10 SKILLS IN 2020



THE FUTURE DOES NOT FIT IN THE CONTAINERS OF THE PAST.

The reason that many companies have struggled and failed to adjust to the Digital era is that most of them have developed finely-tuned processes and metrics that polish yesterday to a fine shine while tomorrow slowly slips away.

They fail to understand that they no longer compete in isolated industries, but rather in fast-moving digital ecosystems with porous borders in the era of the Live Enterprise.

Take for example Amazon Alexa, which now has over 80,000 skills and learns approximately 100 new ones each day. Amazon's human ecosystems are shaping Alexa's voice search algorithm, teaching it how we search—and how context changes the meaning of what we intend.

Data-driven solutions like Alexa, are enhancing every aspect of an organization, from supply chain to new product definition to customer engagement.

These advanced technology algorithms are powering recommendation engines that are helping people do what they never could on their own.

Customers already expect companies to personalize experiences in real-time and, not only predict what they need, but proactively deliver on those needs automatically. In short, the organizations that will win are those that deliver on customer needs and elevate their customer experience from ordinary to extraordinary.



To learn more about elevating customer experience, contact Sylvie.Thompson01@Infosys.com



on a self-generated return label. When you consider the return process and the desired customer experience, you can easily see why Cognitive Flexibility and Emotional Intelligence were identified as a top skill for the future.

Customers have various options on how they wish to engage with companies. The rise of self-service options powered by consumer APPs and Chat Bots have become the first line of engagement. Therefore, when a customer takes the step to reach out to another person the expectation is for a superior personalized and conversational interaction. The quickest way to infuriate a customer is to provide them with a customer support agent who seems only capable of reading a script, rather than solving a specific concern. Customer Engagement representatives must be able to think on their feet and seamlessly shift gears between intellectual activities and creative problem solving.

These are not skills easily taught in a classroom, let alone online. They require on-the-job training in order to establish context and real-world cognitive responses. Traditional training approaches are not conducive to developing deep, compound, multi-faceted, experiential skills such as emotional intelligence and cognitive flexibility. Millennials have extremely short attention spans for in-depth training, and most new technologies are so intuitive that they eliminate the need for training. Consequently, companies are getting rusty in developing and delivering complex, in-depth training curricula.

At Infosys Consulting, we are finding innovative solutions to address capabilities development. Things like emotional intelligence or cognitive flexibility are closer to a practice than a skill and so require a degree of instinctive reaction or “muscle memory”. They are built up through successive cycles of insight, application, feedback and internalization (reflection). Emotional intelligence and cognitive flexibility requires a shift in personal mindset alongside retraining conditional responses. An approach insists that before rushing into problem solving, we pause to reflect on and explore the real needs and emotions of customers. The objective is to find ways to approach solutions from a human-centric, rather than a process, technology, or financial angle. It also requires that we abandon our fear of failure and criticism, and open ourselves up to successive cycles of insight, application and receipt of feedback both positive and constructive. This will allow us fine-tune our complex human capabilities to the real-world needs of our customers.

Developing such capabilities calls for a combination of face-to-face instruction, ongoing on-the-job practice and allocation, and a supportive, reinforcing environment. This type of approach allows organizations to remove internal roadblocks, improve customer engagement, identify innovation solutions, and help customers improve their own customer experience regardless of direct person-to-person contact or through various self-service options.

On a final note, we see one other fascinating influences on the development of deep compound skills such as Mindfulness. It inherently helps develop intellect, emotion, self-reflection, curiosity, openness, and other attributes that fuel emotional intelligence and cognitive flexibility.

The concept of Mindfulness in business is becoming mainstream. Many companies are investing in introducing mindfulness to their organizations. Google, LinkedIn, Facebook, Aetna, Ford, Eileen Fisher, Twitter, Slack, and Kaiser Permanente, just for starters, have all spoken publicly on this topic and on the positive impacts it has had on their organizations. These companies alone highlight the mainstream nature of mindfulness in modern business.

The skills needed to be successful going forward are not about technology; instead, they are about constructive interaction between people. As you entire this new decade, it is a great time for all of us to rethink how we develop the complex, compound skills, required to meet rising customer expectations and to support our employees in building themselves.



Holly Benson, Partner, Infosys Consulting: Holly leads the Talent Management & Organizational Change practice at Infosys Consulting in North America. She brings her curiosity and observational skills to the world around her. She uses her interactions with some of the world’s leading organizations – and their workforces – to form fresh and intriguing insights on education and capabilities development.



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