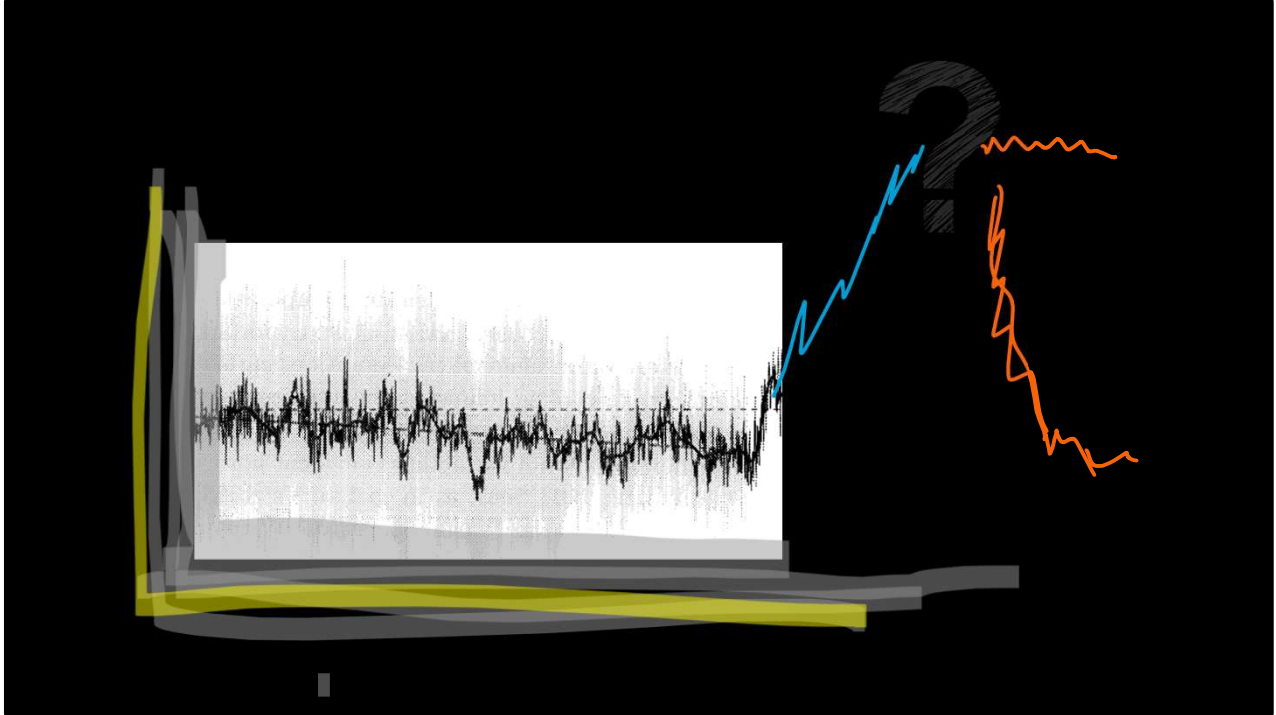


We have tons of new  
customers thanks to the  
Covid-induced  
ecommerce explosion!

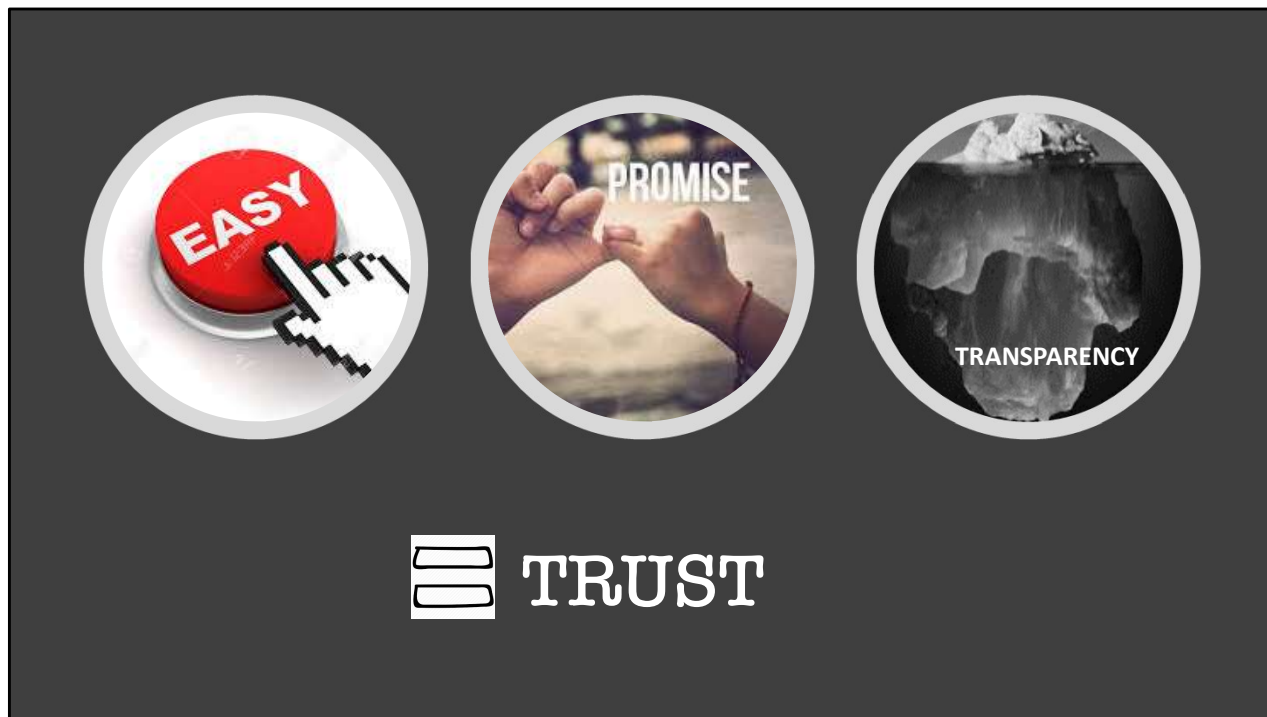
So, now what?

Janel Wellborn

We have tons of new customers thanks to the covid-induced ecommerce explosion! Now what?



So we were all trucking along, business as usual with normal ups and downs in our business, in our ability to acquire (& retain) customers... Then all of the sudden, people & organizations had to take their business online in order to survive the pandemic. As customers, we completely shifted our behavior and needs to online, whether we wanted to or not... and as companies, we had to scale our operations and growth in 3 months for what we expected to scale in our 3+ year plans thanks to 200% YoY growth! We've gotten through that 1<sup>st</sup> tidal wave with huge new customer acquisition, with people buying our products or services for the 1<sup>st</sup> time... and it was our opportunity to make a good 1<sup>st</sup> impression. There's another tidal wave coming and we have to be prepared for it – are there experiences during this time when they HAVE to shop with us good enough to get them coming back to do so again & again when it's no longer *necessary*, but because they WANT to? Or was this just a 1 hit wonder? And we'll have lost the opportunity to seize (and sustain) market share and exponential growth...



Well the answer is really quite simple... but it requires a bit of honest reflection on your part.

Take a moment and close your eyes. No, seriously. ;) I promise not to make you meditate...

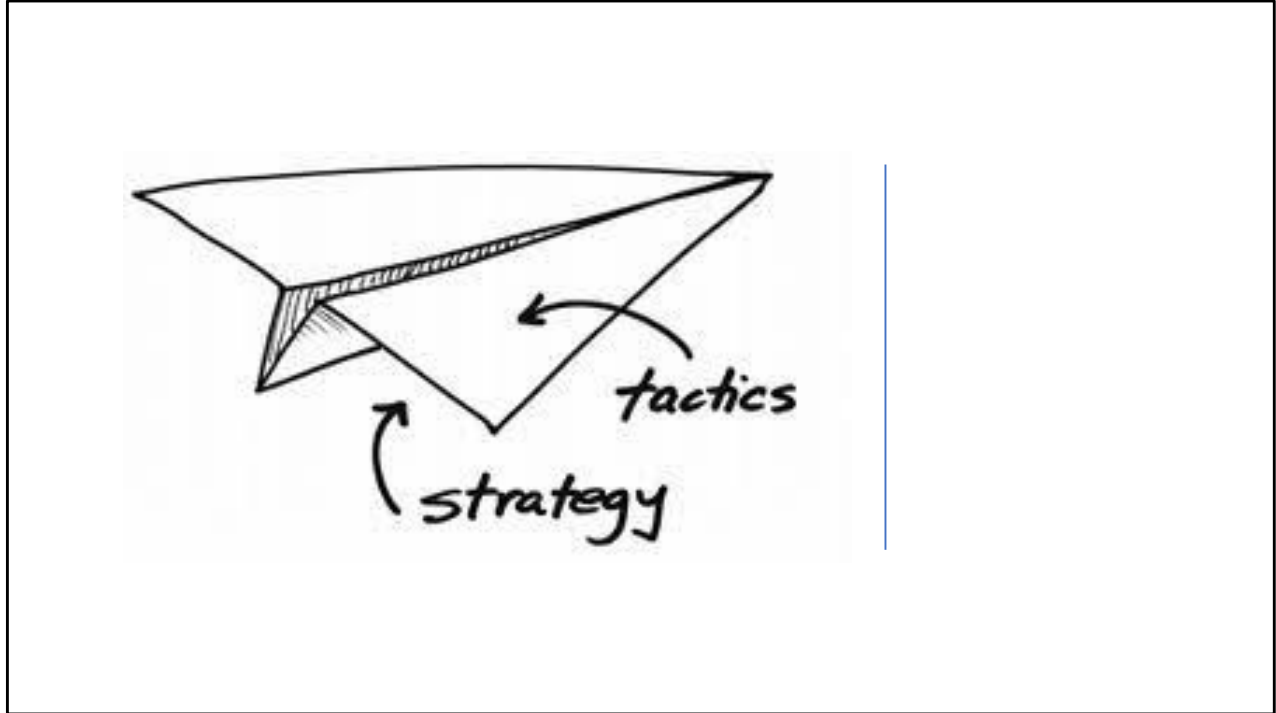
Think about the last ecommerce experience you had... for me, it was ordering groceries for my family, for online for delivery.

Was it a positive experience? Or a negative one? If positive, think to the one prior to that.. And prior to that, til you get to a negative one. I know it won't take too long. Maybe you're still annoyed about it! Reflecting on that negative experience, maybe you didn't get what you ordered, when you ordered it... or you had anxiety about what were next steps & when they were going to happen... or it was next to impossible to make a change?

Whatever the case, ask yourself, would I go back again for another order or service? If so, it's probably because of these 3 things:

- They made it easy for you to do business with them.
- They met their promise, or if not, they corrected any issues quickly.
- They were transparent throughout the journey.

These 3 things build trust. And that trust in your company or brand is the key to getting our deluge of new customers to come back again. And again.



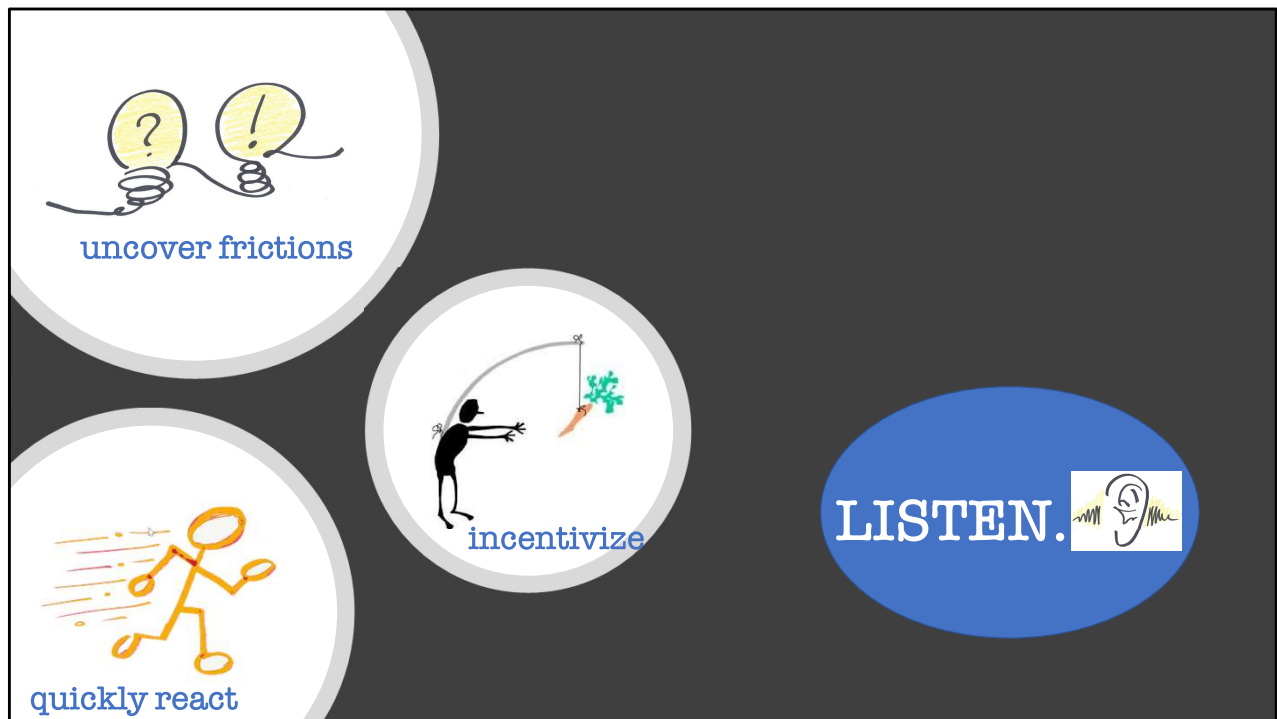
Imagine it's April 2021. Things are back to normal. We can meet face to face. Travel is possible. Toilet paper is easy to buy. But things have changed. COVID-19 has forever changed the experience of being a customer, an employee, and a human. I believe we can expect to see behavior change at scale for some time to come. So how can we build that trust and connect with our customers in a way that will ensure that they come back again, in this "new normal", in a way that addresses their new expectations and new behaviors?

There are tons of ways! Today, we'll focus on 3 strategies and a few tactics for each.



The 1<sup>st</sup> starts with listening – in order to ensure that we are delivering on our promise, or quickly resolving it when we can't.

People are shifting their buying habits and creating new behaviors faster than ever! And we need to be humble enough to acknowledge that we don't know everything about our customers – how they make decisions, how their expectations are changing as they move into a “new normal”, what frictions are in their path, and how their mindset is changing. But we need to! So our strategy is to create opportunities to listen. Then quickly adapt. Learn from how they engage. And reassess. And then do it all over again.



Tactics we can employ could include:

- Incentivize those who come in frequent contact with your customers to monitor & report customer frictions or behavior shifts – and make it easy for them to do so! E.g. call center agents, delivery people (even 3<sup>rd</sup> party when we outsource)
- Make sure someone (or someones) are accountable for (and invested in) continuous monitoring of quant & qual customer feedback – app store reviews, medalia or NPS surveys, applause reports, top reasons for calling the call center – looking for frictions... and that we’re engaging in regular, low touch customer research.... In each case - Inspect the customer journey for unhappy paths – what happens when things go wrong and they (or we) need to cancel, substitute, return, or modify an order or service request? Are we making it easy for our employees in call center, stores, delivery to address these quickly? Or better yet, are we making it easy for customers to self serve and handle on their own?
- Ensure that it’s easy to feed findings from all of these into our digital and that we’ve carve out capacity/priority/and \$\$ for our IT delivery teams to address and QUICKLY launch these fixes or enhancements in real time, not waiting for it to get “prioritized” in an annual planning cycle (e.g. Quick wins sprints or Customer Empathy-alooza days)

## 2 SAVE TIME.



The 2<sup>nd</sup> is about saving time for your customers – in order to make it easy for them to do business with you. During this pandemic, people have been forced to give up certain activities – some of them perhaps gladly (e.g. the commute!) and some of them begrudgingly (like going to cheer your kids on during endless hours of soccer games, or entertaining and having parties/asadas???). As a result, they haven't found themselves with tons of extra time, but rather they have rediscovered old hobbies, learned new ones... reconnected with old friends (phones are for phone calls again, what?!), spent more time with their families, dug into more books or started making progress on their endless home projects lists. The point is, they've found new ways to use that time and they have had a taste of what it's like, and aren't going to want to give it back when they have to start commuting, or carpooling again. So it will be more important than ever for us to find ways to save time and make things easy for them when they do business with us.



The 3 tactics we can employ here aren't new or groundbreaking – they are the same things we've been trying to do for ages in order to delight our customers, but now they have become table stakes... an imperative.

- Lower anxiety. Being as proactive as possible to address their questions and ease their anxiety – as simple as leaving no question around when will my package/delivery arrive. Or helping them feel comfort that what they see is what they're really going to get.... Don't make me guess or call your call center or search for & wade through FAQs... just answer my questions in context, in the middle of my decision making process/ your purchase flow (e.g. what will I or won't I be able to get from my virtual appointment, or what services are no longer included in the package I normally buy due to safety restrictions). So I can find a quick answer pre & post "submit"...
- Lower the burden. Using explicit and implicit ways to help customers weed through our entire product catalog or service offering – eliminating noise and things that are less relevant to them so they can find what they need faster. Making sure your search and your information architecture are accurate and intuitive. And that we allow customers to explicitly or implicitly (through data/machine learning) auto renew/replenish or re-order/repeat. If I'm a grocery shopper and I typically have 43 items in my basket and you make me search for and select and add and validate the same milk and eggs and

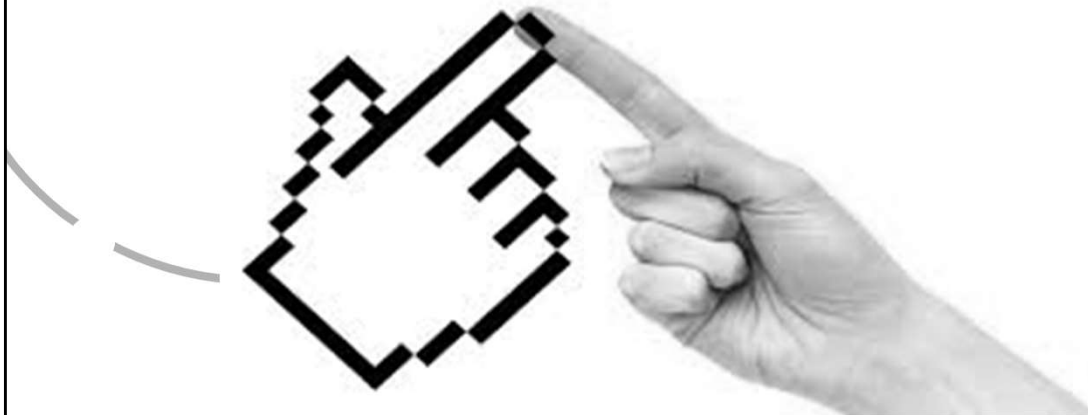


bread and kids waffles and apples and such one by one, every week – you’re putting the burden on me and wasting my time. This is using personalization, folks. Using the mounds of data we have to help them – if done right, it can feel like you’re reading their mind (in a good way! ;). And that emotional connection creates a sense of loyalty that can increase customer spend by 48%!

- Invest in speed. Speed of your website, speed of your operations, speed of delivery. Just be faster.

3

## OFFLINE to ONLINE.



The 3<sup>rd</sup> is about shifting the offline experience to online. Given the realities of the pandemic and SIP around us, many folks who never even considered engaging with your company online have a new attitude “if I can do it online, I will”, it’s become an acceleration of an existing trend, and it’s likely here to stay. The key, as always, starts with observing and listening to our customers... spend some time looking at how households are innovating, “hacking” new ways to live... it can be a great source of creativity for our businesses – new product or service offerings, preferences for how to engage with you... or even clues to how you can position your products or services as part of the domestic scene can enable a stronger connection with your customers, since now more than ever, “home is where the heart is”...



So how can we help ensure our customers don't lose any of the goodness of the offline experience when they engage with us online? Again, the need for investing in these tactics isn't new, but HOW we implement them is where the innovation lies....and where you can differentiate.

- Reimagine and drive the connection and engagement with AR and VR – you know, those things that sound like they are only meant for the gaming industry? Well, now they need to be fasttracked in your digital investment plans. Even before the spread of COVID-19, the virtual/augmented reality market was expected to grow by [nearly 79% in 2020](#). Small business owners should start thinking about how augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) can help you connect with employees and customers while still honoring social distancing. Beyond taking measures to stop the spread of COVID-19, how can AR and VR improve your business operations? This can be as simple as helping a grocery shopper see the nutritional information/ingredients for each item they're shopping for... or helping them imagine just how many bananas they would get in 2 pounds. Or as complex as training your distributed associates with virtual reality, or allowing a customer to see how amazing she would look with that haircut, wearing that dress, driving that car...
- Enable connections – in the absence of going shopping with a friend, or asking the

associate for advice about which product or service is right for your needs, you turn to the wisdom of the masses. Things like customer reviews are more critical than ever. Not a bonus, but an expectations- According to Gartner L2, customer reviews can increase conversion by 133% – they are a big deal! Without them, customers may bail or go elsewhere. This goes further, creating a sense of community by allowing customers to share experiences, post pics or videos of themselves using your product, or engaging with your service for others to see help fill the gap of connecting, in a virtual world. Or leveraging your text or video chat platform for more than just a call center expense deflection – for FAQs and customer service – but also for discovery and sales, allowing customers to connect with your associates to help them evaluate tradeoffs or make a decision.



The scale we've seen shifting to ecommerce these past couple of months has revealed weaknesses in our ecommerce systems that would have taken us 5 years to find. For those of you who are willing to double down on addressing those weaknesses – in our operations (e.g. last mile delivery!), or our customer experiences, it's an opportunity for you to innovate. The speed with which we can... no MUST, respond, will be a competitive advantage, one that ensures our business will thrive.

This means we need more digital capital investment, and improved ways of working for fast delivery and frequent pivots in order to respond.