

CUSTOMERS THE DAY AFTER TOMORROW – CRM on AI basis

written by Julia Weinzettl - www.taskfarm.com

Stephen van Belleghem,

Thought Leader on the Transformation of Customer Relationships

Reading Time: 4 minutes

The third phase of digitalization has arrived, says Stephen van Belleghem, Thought Leader on the Transformation of Customer Relationships. The main task for companies is to prepare for the customers of the day after tomorrow now. The challenge is to find the right balance between the relationship between man and machine, outlining the role of the human touch and using the power to connect people with people to maximum advantage.

In line with the [taskfarm concept](#) Stephen van Belleghem was invited by [Helmut Blocher, Managing Director Succus GmbH](#), to the interview.

He is speaking on the 18th of February 2020 at the [German CRM FORUM](#).

We are entering phase 3 of digitalization; what does that mean?

Stephen van Belleghem: The first phase of digital transformation was making information accessible. In the second phase, the focus was on mobile, social media, and how they connect people. The third phase is about a world of artificial intelligence. We are entering phase 3 now. This phase will change the world of businesses and customers forever. Leading companies are already moving from a mobile-first to an AI-first strategy.

Does that mean humans are not needed anymore?

Stephen van Belleghem: No. Although AI is making technology cooler than ever before, it's not about the evolution of technology. It's about technology changing the expectation of customers fast. For customers, the third phase of digitization will be fantastic. Without doing anything, customers will arrive in a world of faster than real-time customer service, a world of hyper-personalization, and a world of intuitive user interfaces that offer the ultimate convenience.

Can you give me an example of what that might look like?

Stephen van Belleghem: It's already happening, for example, in Disney World. I'm a big fan of Disney World, and I was even more amazed to see how elegant data and technology is used in the Disney experience. You receive a magic band with which you can pay everything if you hold it next to a sensor – a Micky Mouse icon that turns green once the payment is made. All if Disney World if equipped with perfectly working wifi, that means you can book everything, including restaurants with an app. In some places, there is even a sensor before you enter, so you are greeted by name when you enter a location.

What does such a development mean for an average company?

Stephen van Belleghem: It shows that it's time to take a look at your business plans and ask yourself how much time and resources you invest in the customer relationship of today and how much you focus on the customer relationship of tomorrow. Reality is an investment in the customer of the day after tomorrow must start today. To embrace an AI-first mindset, your company must become a data company. Data feeds artificial intelligence, so you must create a circle of life for AI. Data creates a vital competitive advantage needed to succeed in an AI-first world. The AI-first world is a world where only the best user interfaces will survive. Surveys show that customers give a new app one shot, about 30 seconds – that's it. New interfaces like voice-controlled assistants are already changing behavior, and that could mean the end of shopping as

we know it. We already live in a world where ordering products has never been more accessible in a world in which convenience has become the new loyalty. The world is increasingly dominated by substantial technology platforms like facebook, amazon, we-chat, and Alibaba. As a business it's time to stand on the shoulders of these giants because without the leverage of the tech-platforms it's game over. On the other hand, every business can work smart to fight back against these big commodity magnets. By investing in marketing to machines, investing in the human touch, and finding the right communication channels, you can make your business stand out from the crowd.

How about humans in the day after tomorrow? It sounds quite dystopic.

Stephen van Belleghem: On the contrary – the third phase of digital makes the roll of humans more important and relevant than ever before. It's all about augmented intelligence, embracing smart software that raises human performance to new heights allowing them to add more value to the customer experience than ever before.

The key is to let computers work on operational tasks, and humans work on creative and emotional tasks. The power of combining digital and human will be the main success factor for companies in the future. There is an urgent need for an extreme transformation of the customer relationship. Customers live in a world of self-service, big data, customer automation, and the integration of the online & offline world. Due to the digital evolution, your customer relations need to change on a human level as well. The key challenges are finding a balance in the relationship between man and machine, outlining the role of the human touch, and using the power to connect people with people to maximum advantage.

<http://stevenvanbelleghem.com>

About:

Steven van Belleghem is a leader in the transformation of customer relations and the future of marketing. He is an expert in inspiring companies to become true customer-centric organizations in this high-speed digital world. His talks inspire companies about the smart usage of technology in the customer relationship without forgetting the human side of the business.