



BRING THEM BACK!

7 Tips to winning more
of your customer \$

By: Eriks Celmins

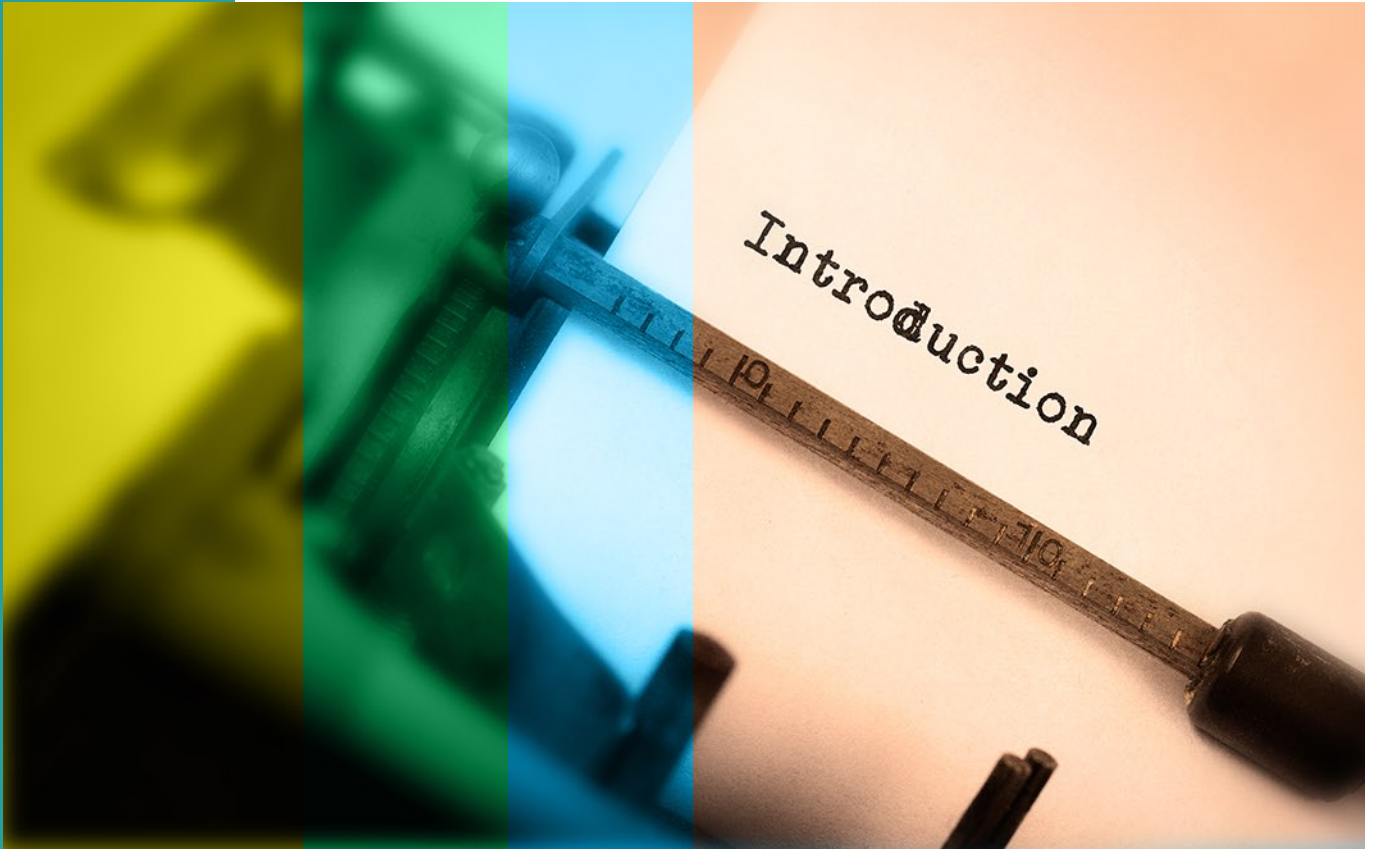
**Engage
4Insights**

**Global
innovator**

The Engagement Method

'IT'S ALL ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS'





The business world is being fragmented by globalisation, international brands turning up in your backyard (Amazon!), social media, and the emergence of newer, faster, consumer engagement & purchase channels made for short attention-spans and small screens.

Which means fierce competition for a customer's time, attention and discretionary spend, and constantly rising expectations. Today's innovation in the customer experience is tomorrow's 'meh'!

It's been said that today's customer is easier to reach, but harder to engage. Digital channels are extremely crowded and insatiably hungry for fresh content, personalisation and interaction. The cardinal sin is boredom.

In these **7 Tips** we explore how to build and support your customer relationships, to win not only their hearts & minds, but ultimately a greater share of their dollar.

1

THE QUALITY OF YOUR CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP IS CRITICAL TO GROWTH



It doesn't matter that your commercial systems are super-efficient, and your staff are highly talented and hard-working. If your customer relationships are dysfunctional, they're not going to hang around, and will seek a better experience with your competitors .

A personal relationship only thrives on equal terms, with two-way conversation, regular feedback and mutual love and respect – otherwise, it will wither on the vine and die.

“ *The best marketing doesn't feel like marketing.* ”
TOM FISHBURNE

The same is true for your relationship with your customers. Even the most passionate affair will eventually cool off if they feel their relationship is one-sided, and they don't feel they're being listened to.

The goal is to make customers feel special and loved. You need them to believe that they have a personal connection; one they're proud to share with their family and friends as social currency, acting as your strongest brand advocate. And, ultimately, as a long-term, loyal customer.

THOUGHT-STARTER

*Is it time to run a health-check on the key stages of your customer relationships?
How are your social metrics, EDM opens and digital funnel conversions?*

2

NOT EVERY CUSTOMER IS EQUAL



It's important to segment your database when having a conversation, so that you can ask specific questions that can help your decision-making and the fine-tuning of marketing messages.

Established brands face the regeneration challenge of bringing Millennials into the fold. When old loyalties are disintegrating in the new swipe & wipe world of more transitory, and often global relationships, fuelled by mobile social media.

“ *Speak to your audience in their language about what's in their heart.* ”
JONATHAN LISTER

What do you know about their engagement path. When, where, what channels & devices, what content excites them? How do you compete locally with Amazon and its 3 billion website visitors?

How do your long-term loyal fans feel about the relationship versus those who are still uncertain about making a commitment? What about fans with a large social media following? What are they telling their friends, that you don't know about?

THOUGHT-STARTER

There are many different ways to segment customers. Some are obvious, like their purchase history. But what about their brand experience preferences? Are they an early or late-adopter?

3

TRADITIONAL RESEARCH METHODS TURN OFF THE MODERN CUSTOMER

We hear a lot about building brand advocates: the people who will rave about you in their social circles. But do you really think they'll become that fanatical if you send them long, boring surveys and make them feel like they're filling out a tax form?

The market research industry itself is now seriously questioning traditional methods, because poor participant experience is driving down response rates and panel retention.



I've seen this myself over the years, where traditional market research takes fans of entertainment brands and sends them a tedious, repetitive survey – or sticks them into a cold, lab-rat environment of creepy two-way mirrors! This is clearly a brand betrayal, and it makes no sense for engaging and retaining VIP customers.

“ *Stop interrupting what people are interested in and be what people are interested in.* ”

CRAIG DAVIS,
FORMER CHIEF CREATIVE OFFICER AT J. WALTER THOMPSON

The good news is that now there's no obstacle to having a conversation with a customer like they're a mate, not a data point. A more open-ended chat will reveal what they really want from your brand, and how they honestly feel about you.

The key is that people love helping you the human being, not an automated chatbot. The people you engage simply want to be respected and appreciated, and to see the results of their time and effort.

THOUGHT-STARTER

Review your current research for engagement value, brand-fit and actionable insights.

4

RELATIONSHIPS RUN ON DEEP INSIGHTS BEYOND STATS

You'd be surprised how people feel valued, just because you asked them about what they enjoy most about purchasing from you, what detracts from their experience and what obstacles are preventing them from becoming a more loyal customer. It might be the price – but, then again, it might not be. How will you know unless you ask?



Insights projects must have marketing benefits in the sense of being the 'social human face' of a brand. Marketing is no longer a one-way, shouting of messages, it's a two-way conversation.

This is the way people now communicate between themselves and the brands in their lives, going back to the primal need to share their feelings and opinions around the camp fire.

“ A brand is no longer what we tell the consumer it is – it is what consumers tell each other it is.

SCOTT COOK

”

They inform, entertain and influence each other in short, sharp bites, independent of traditional channels. Reputations can be made and slayed with no control, or even any knowledge, on the part of the brand until it's too late.

But what if you could get advanced knowledge of issues and reduce the negative comments? The most effective way is to open a constant but private conversation loop with your customers.

THOUGHT-STARTER

What are your hot conversation topics, right now, for a chat with customers?

5

BYE TWITTER! WHAT TAYLOR SWIFT KNOWS ABOUT CUSTOMERS

A large number of Likes looks good as a vanity metric, but not much else – unless you do something tangible and actionable with them. Gathering feedback, as well as sharing your own learnings and what you’re doing about them, are vital steps in the process. Otherwise, it’s just a shallow PR exercise that today’s savvy socialites can see right through.

One of the most important things you can do with any following is to identify your most influential real customers, then woo them and nurture them. But don’t just whisper sweet nothings into their ear – sit down and talk to them. Find out their greatest pains, needs and desires.

Taylor Swift gets this. She has developed a global reach of 300 million + Facebook followers, all of whom feel they have a direct personal channel to her. She cleverly cuts out the usual middle people that make a star seem unreachable in a distant ivory tower.

The Swift Life is her new, one-stop social platform, to make every single Swiftie feel wanted through regular feedback mechanisms, and special fan-exclusive events for advocates with their own large social following.

People prefer to buy from people, not faceless brands. You can make someone in your company the ‘star’ of your customer contact points. They could be ‘The Boss’, or a frontline team member.

Then they can reach out to customers in a personalised way which is immediately more engaging. A good example is Australia’s ‘Lucky You’re With AAMI’ campaign, humanising the traditional category of insurance since 1985.



THOUGHT-STARTER

Who could you use as the face of your customer relationship and insights program?

6

CREATE A CUSTOMER AVATAR



What does it take to really understand your customers? It doesn't matter which marketing channels you are using, or how much you invest in recruiting them. If you don't know your prospective customers, and I mean really know them, you have close to zero chance of triggering an emotional response that will motivate them to load up the cart.

Paint a picture of your customers, armed with demographic info plus your observations, describing what life is like for them. Tell the story of what their life is like, how your brand fits into that life, and what it needs to do to extend the relationship.

“ *It's hard to target a message to a generic 35-year-old middle-class working mother of two. It's much easier to target a message to Jennifer, who has two children under four, works as a paralegal, and is always looking for quick but healthy dinners and ways to spend more time with her kids and less time on housework.* ”

ELIZABETH GARDNER

Then test your thinking. This is the critical step where you need to actually talk to customers. Your messages won't connect emotionally if you're using the wrong language. Tapping into the authentic tone, and using words that resonate with them is the critical difference between a cut-through marketing message and wallpaper.

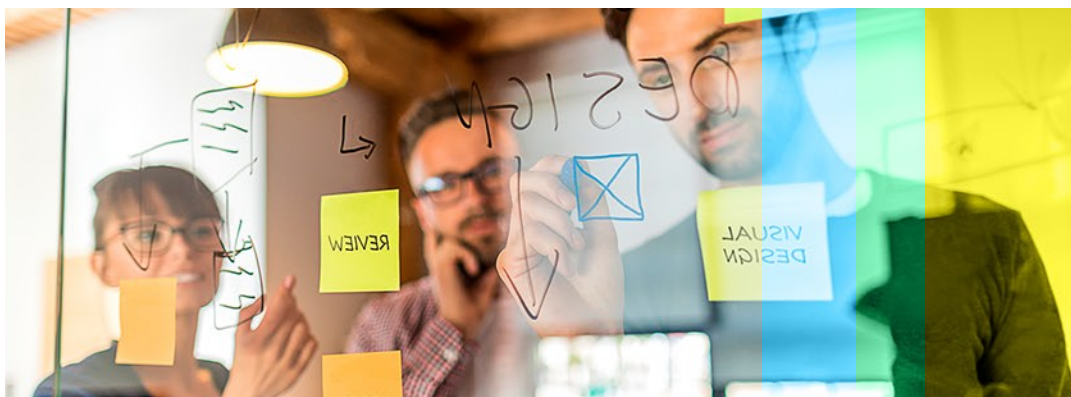
Of course, it never stops there! You need to continually engage in the process of tweaking your messages and evaluating changes in the market. Maintaining a dialogue with customers, and having regular, friendly chats with them, keeps you ahead of the game and strengthens that relationship.

THOUGHT-STARTER

What does your Customer Avatar look like in emotional detail beyond demographics?

7

USE INSIGHTS TO DRIVE INNOVATION



If you listen carefully, those honest conversations will contain nuggets of gold that will help feed the creative process when you're designing engagement programs. You'll discover how to come up with something new and exciting that's different to your previous campaigns, and what your competitors are doing.

What connections can you make between a fan's world and your brand? A simple creative technique is to map key words and phrases from a discussion on a whiteboard, then clash totally unrelated concepts together. This juxtaposition has an energy that can produce the next big thing.

“ If you do what you've always done, you'll get what you've always gotten. ”
TONY ROBBINS

Most of the great innovations of our time started as weird hybrids that didn't make sense until you actually used them. Take the humble shopping trolley. It was invented in 1937 by taking a wooden folding chair, putting a basket on the seat and wheels on the legs. At first nobody wanted to be seen with them. Guys said it was too feminine, women thought it was only for babies. The rest is history.

Talk, listen and innovate. Real creativity comes from real people, talking about real life. Conversations will take you beyond the 'what' of an issue where you may have piles of data, and bring you to the 'why', which is the missing link that will sharpen your communications.

THOUGHT-STARTER

What unrelated customer experience concepts could you throw together to create something new & interesting?

BONUS TIP

JUST SAY 'NO' TO ENDLESS MEETINGS

How many times have you tried to develop new marketing collateral, only to find you can't get everyone in the team to agree. Instead, ask your audience!

We've seen our own clients spending hours in exec meetings and emails, discussing the merits of a particular promotion name, content theme, logo, straplines and executions.

In almost every instance, a two-way, focussed chat with fans will take the bolt-cutters to those epic email chains.

THE TAKEAWAY

Building a lasting relationship that extends to long-term customer value, takes time and a commitment to conversation, feedback and actions.

By keeping the conversation going, that relationship will always feel as fresh as the first date.

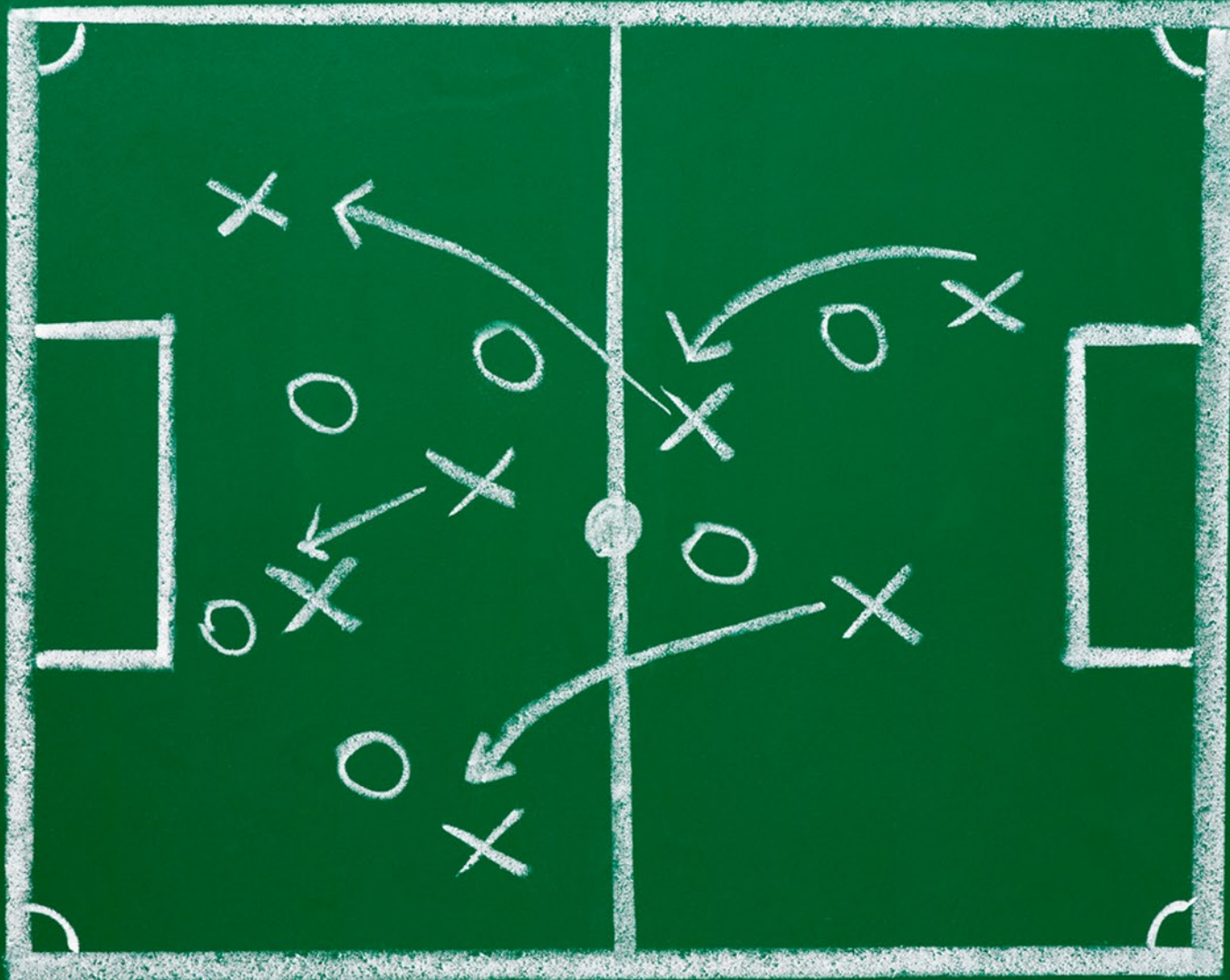




TIP SHEET SUMMARY

- 1** The quality of your customer relationship is critical to growth
- 2** Not every customer is equal
- 3** Traditional research methods turn off the modern customer
- 4** Relationships run on deep insights beyond stats
- 5** Bye Twitter! What Taylor Swift knows about customers
- 6** Create a Customer Avatar
- 7** Use insights to drive innovation

Bonus Tip Just say 'no' to endless meetings



THOUGHT-STARTER ACTION LIST

Is it time to run a health-check on the key stages of your customer relationships? How are your social metrics, EDM opens and digital funnel conversions?

There are many different ways to segment customers. Some are obvious, like their purchase history. But what about their brand experience preferences?

Review your current research for engagement value, brand-fit and actionable insights

What are your hot conversation topics, right now, for a chat with customers?

Who could you use as the face of your customer relationship and insights program?

What does your Customer Avatar look like in emotional detail beyond demographics?

What unrelated customer experience concepts could you throw together to create something new & interesting?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Eriks Celmins brings a wealth of global experience in talking to media & entertainment audiences, as a long-time research & content consultant.

Eriks has conducted both in-depth quantitative & qualitative research, including his innovative techniques for participant engagement.



He passionately believes in the power of conversation to build audience relationships, and help marketing teams gather fast, real-time insights.

He is the mind behind The Engagement Method - market research that actually creates Raving Fans. As well as his own social style, private chat platform **cliizii** ... **C**ustomer **L**ed **I**nsights made easy!

Full Member of AMSRS (Australian Market & Social Research Society).



Engage
4 Insights
People First Research