

Think your customers are loyal? Think again.

We all carry a stack of loyalty cards in our wallets, for medical aid, banks, retail stores, coffee shops, grocery stores, chemists, the local health shop, book stores, airline miles, your spa and many more. On paper you look like a loyal customer, but behind the scenes you shop around and might jump ship to a competitor at any moment.

“We live in the Age of the Customer, and extra legroom on a flight or rewards to get a free smoothie only go so far,” says Adrian Zanetti, managing director at NEXT Solutions. “Today there is very little differentiation between points and perks, tiers and transaction, or miles and meaning. None of these do much to influence true customer retention or any long-term commitment to your company or brand.”

Customers today are more empowered than ever before, because they can access information about products and services over the internet in real time. Customers know your competitors and if you don't offer something unique or different, they switch in a heartbeat.

“This is why brands should keep re-inventing themselves and stay relevant. The key is a customer benefit programme that operates on a personal level with customers, treating them as individuals and taking care of their unique life moments, at that specific point in time,” explains Zanetti.

A customer benefit programme can and should offer a simple-to-use, easy-to-understand benefit. Consumers don't want to be confused by the clever trickery of mystery currencies, complex tiering structures and confusing redemption rules. Treating consumers with rewards for behaving like you want them to, in order to maintain your profitability, is also slowly wavering. According to Zanetti, we are all consumers and the biggest insult to any customers is packaging something as a benefit and then making it difficult to derive value from it.

“Today's on-demand world is full of information, choice and technology. This is why you want to offer your customers broad, real benefits through services that make their lives easier, either through the financial savings you offer, the ease of engagement or by solving their real-life needs”, concludes Zanetti.