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# Your customer experience needs a memory

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In August 1953 Henry Molaison lost his memory on the operating table at a Hospital in Hartford. He was being treated for epileptic seizures. The surgeon successfully removed an area known as the hippocampus from both hemispheres of Henry's brain. While the operation reduced his seizures it also left Henry with "global" amnesia. He was left unable to make new memories, one consequence of which was that meeting people was always as if for the first time<sup>1</sup>.

Imagine what it would have been like to meet Henry after his op. Every time you have a conversation with him means starting from scratch. He has no recollection of who you are or the role you play in his life. He doesn't remember the last conversation you had. There's simply no continuity and no foundation for a relationship to form. It gets recreated in every new interaction.

Unfortunately for all of us, a corporate version of this scenario is all too common. Many organisations seem to suffer from "global amnesia" particularly when it comes to customer interactions. Simply getting problem solved can mean multiple calls to a contact centre and the need to recount the same story, and provide the same information, over and over. New contact, new conversation, no continuity.

Marketing driven interactions aren't immune to this either, every contact can feel like it comes from a relative stranger, even if you have been their customer for years. There is no context and little connection.

Unlike Henry who lived with his condition for the rest of his life, there is a solution for organisations who want to do better for their customer. It all starts with data. Or perhaps more accurately your data strategy, and how it is informed the vision you have for your brand's customer experience.

At no time in the past have we had access to the richness of customer-centred data that we have today - who your customers are, how they behave, what they buy, who they connect with, what they like and what they don't.

But to be effective that data has to be given purpose and put to work. It needs to be accessible across touchpoints and provide the organisation with the means to both recognise and acknowledge the existing relationship with a customer. Used wisely it can do more of the heavy lifting that make interactions simpler and easier for the customer, and enable a highly personalised experience.

Most organisations have more data than they know what to do with; few have a customer data strategy that is designed with the end in mind. Do this and data can give your customer experience the memory it needs.

Memory, it turns out, provides a kind of “social glue” in relationships “enabling people to form social bonds more rapidly and easily, and to maintain them over the years<sup>2</sup>”. Even if people suffering from global amnesia do meet new people, “the inability to consciously recollect those people, their names, the places and times they have met and what happened likely further hampers social functioning<sup>2</sup>”. The same could be said for organisations who are seeking to build relationship equity with their customers and use this to deliver growth.

Amongst the many opportunities for data to create value, its benefit in enabling organisational memory in interactions with customers should not be overlooked. It is the key to creating interactions that feel more relevant, helpful and personal.

Which begs the question... just how good is your company’s memory when it comes to customers?

#### *Sources*

1 <http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/trouble-in-mind/201201/hm-the-man-no-memory>

2 <http://journal.frontiersin.org/Journal/10.3389/fpsyg.2012.00531/full>

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