

# How Walgreens Is Building for the Future of Customer Experiences

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With consumer expectations skyrocketing, marketers must deliver exceptional customer experiences to stay relevant. Chief Digital Marketing Officer of Walgreens Boots Alliance, Deepika Pandey, shares how her traditionally brick-and-mortar brand embraces technology to drive a competitive advantage.



think with **Google**

**D**ue to rapid advancements in technology, consumers today expect their shopping experience to be faster, better, easier. They want products delivered within an hour, to pay for purchases with their phone, and have pretty much anything they need to know or buy right there at their fingertips.

Consumers no longer shop in an “online” or “offline” world—they shop in a “non-line” world. They expect brands to deliver a seamless experience, optimized across all channels. Today, marketers must be concerned with not only delivering the best retail experience or the best online experience. We must be focused on delivering the best customer experience.

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With consumer expectations rising, we as marketers must vow to put customer needs at the center of everything we do. Here are three ways to deliver on that promise.

### **Assist customers, wherever they are**

We constantly ask ourselves how can we be more relevant? How can we better meet the daily needs of customers who are in-store, at home or work, on a tropical vacation, and everywhere in between?

One of the things we hear repeatedly is that customers really value their connections with individual pharmacists and staff. We wanted to replicate that connection digitally, so customers can get a high-value, personalized experience even when they can't make it into a store. Pharmacy Chat enables customers to have access to trusted experts through our site or mobile app anytime of the day or night, wherever they are.

We're also investing heavily in assistive technology to improve the

shopping experience for customers visiting our stores. A key insight we received from these shoppers is that they're easily overwhelmed by the product choices available to them in stores. To address that, we partnered with WebMD and created Relief Advisor. Customers answer a couple of questions, and within seconds, we recommend products to best fit their specific needs.

Our mindset of creating relevant, frictionless experiences also applies to our outward messaging and media channels. We spend a lot of time thinking about what our customers search for via Google—such as specific product offerings or nearby store information—and how we can show up where and when they need us, to help bridge the gap between online and offline.

This approach works. Customers who shop in-store and on mobile are 6X more valuable to us than those who shop only in a store.

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## **Stay a step ahead of consumer needs**

Our brand promise has always been to assist each and every customer in the most convenient and helpful way. We take that promise very seriously. We invest in upfront research and invite customers to visit our facilities so we can better understand their individual needs and pain points. By leveraging these customer insights, we can solve real, everyday problems with technology.

For example, we saw that a key point of friction was within the checkout process. So, we became one of the first retailers to link our loyalty program with Android Pay. Now customers can find and clip digital

coupons anytime, anywhere and seamlessly apply their loyalty benefits when they pay through their phone.

This approach goes beyond just our consumer-facing technology. We provide our in-store Beauty Advisors with tablets so they can make meaningful, data-driven recommendations based on customers' interests, intent, and past purchases.

## Don't innovate for innovation's sake

All these technological innovations have one thing in common: They're conceived from our customers needs. And that brings me to my final point. Great consumer experiences should inspire technology, not the other way around. Because everything we do at Walgreens is customer-led, we believe that innovation shouldn't just fall to a single team. So, we made innovation part of everyone's job. With the shared goal of creating better products and experiences for our customers, we hold weekly forums with leads from different teams to discuss consumer research, share ideas, and challenge each other.

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A great example of an innovation that came out of this process is our mobile app feature for prescription refills. People don't think about reinventing the way a customer transacts as an opportunity to build brand love. But customers consistently said they hated manually refilling prescriptions. So we launched Refill by Scan, which enabled customers to submit prescription refills in less than 20 seconds and transformed an onerous experience into an enjoyable one. One of my favorite pieces of feedback was from a customer who thought Refill by Scan was so much fun, they wished they had more prescriptions to refill.

All of these examples illustrate how Walgreens has rallied around the customer, ensuring everything we do somehow makes their lives better and easier. Despite all the noise, we marketers must keep our teams focused on that singular goal. Only then will we find we've created truly customer-centric organizations.

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