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The 2019 Path to Purchase Expo touted a Bold Path Forward. “Customer behavior is not what it used to be, and that calls for a new direction, a different path, an un-blazed trail,” says the event website. These words inspired us at Centific as we prepared to participate in the event as sponsors and attendees.

The world’s leading consumer packaged goods and retailers gathered in Chicago November 13-14 to learn and to network. The agenda featured digital technologies that are still nascent (such as augmented reality) and those that are already rapidly changing the way CPG firms and retailers operate (such as cloud computing).

Our take: we’re already seeing the emergence of the next generation of technologies and experiences that improve the path to purchase. Consider technologies that are enabling the next generation of engagement, such as voice, conversational AI, and immersive reality. Together they are rapidly evolving from building a brand through experiential applications to making the retail experience more exciting and immersive.

For example, Kohl’s recently launched a Snapchat experience to showcase holiday merchandise via augmented reality. The Kohl’s “New Gifts at Every Turn” experience makes it possible for consumers to use their mobile devices and step into a virtual store on Snapchat. From there, they can tap shoppable links to find products on the Kohl’s website. The use of AR allows Kohl’s to get a jump on the increasingly mobile Black Friday and Cyber Monday experience and reach the Snapchat generation.

While consumer facing experiences like immersive reality are exciting, they are just one part of the

entire “Next Generation” story. To see material gains, AI-enabled technologies must be tightly woven within the entire CPG and retail workflow from supply chain to distribution, trade promotion, and end-consumer facing experiences. This requires transformative change.

A staple global foods distribution and manufacturing company with more than $26 billion in annual revenue faced significant supply chain challenges. The sales-planning process was manual and overly complex, causing widespread slowdowns and propagating inaccurate data up the food chain to stakeholders and decision-makers. Behind these issues were deeply entrenched inefficiencies that could not be resolved using conventional methods. To reduce inefficiency and increase business velocity across the client’s organization, we helped them develop a custom digital platform that united their existing systems into an AI-enabled platform designed to optimize operations and boost productivity.

We think of retailers and CPG firms as adopting the “Path to Purchase 2.0: Data Driven Experiences. Winning the business of the technology savvy consumer means adopting immersive technology, yes, but also developing a strategy to tether together all the elements of Path to Purchase 2.0. We are excited to share how we execute this vision at the summit, such as:

- **Sales Force Modernization Platform**: Connect all enterprise systems into ONE unified tool that leverages Voice Technologies and Artificial Intelligence to provide your sales team with all the functionality they need to streamline and optimize their end-to-end sales efforts.
- **Customer Journey Intelligence and Experiences**: Leverage intelligence across your store to enhance the customer experience in unexpected ways. Add operational efficiencies while delighting your customers even more.
- **Next Generation Engagement**: Take your brand into the modern era by incorporating lovable experiences for your customers leveraging Voice, Conversational AI and Immersive reality in ways that add value to your brand strategy.

Finally, while much attention is paid inward toward internal operational processes and systems, global brands shouldn’t take their eye off untapped markets. One of the most promising, yet potentially problematic markets, is China. The technological, cultural, and geopolitical contexts require a specific set of tools and channels unique to their own. That is why we have created something that retailers and CPG brands who strive to expand through China would be interested in learning more:

- **China-in-a-Box:** Quickly launch or enhance operations in China by making sense of the wide choice of channels available through smart consumer insights, targeted commerce strategies, and engaging marketing tactics that resonate with the local consumer.

When businesses apply these technologies correctly, they’ll not only improve their operations but earn the loyalty of customers during and after their path to purchase.

We would love to talk with you!

If you can’t make it to the Path to Purchase Expo and want to speak with one of our subject matter experts on what you have read here, contact us and we will connect you.

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