

The Human Connection

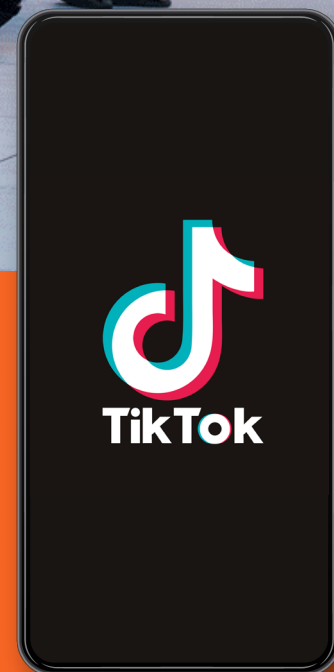
How a pandemic has made us want more human connection





As restrictions are finally starting to ease and we are all able to do the things we enjoy once again, I have been reflecting on my outcomes of the past 14 months and if I achieved what I was going to do.

Upon reflection, I did read more, spent more time outside (when the weather allowed me to), took an online British Sign language training class, ran a half marathon for fun, and I am signed up to run the London Landmarks Half Marathon in August. However, I most definitely spent more time looking at a screen than ever, I binge watched Tiger King, and developed a questionable addiction to TikTok.



Overall, I feel happy with what I achieved over the course of the last 14 months, but I am now so ready to get back to normal life and being able to see other people.

One major thing that the pandemic has taught me is how much a human connection affects all aspects of my life. After spending countless hours on Teams calls over the course of the last twelve months, I was not expecting my first day back in the office to be so significant. The first day I was able to see my colleagues in person, without having to tell someone they were on mute, made such a difference to both my productivity and my mood. Just having a face-to-face conversation with a colleague enabled us to brainstorm more easily and create solutions much faster than what I would have been able to on Teams. It also made me realise how lonely I had felt at times whilst working from home, with only receiving communications electronically. It is clearly not just me who has felt like this as the UK is facing the highest rates of loneliness ever seen. Red Cross UK reports that 41 per cent of British adults are lonelier than they were before the pandemic.



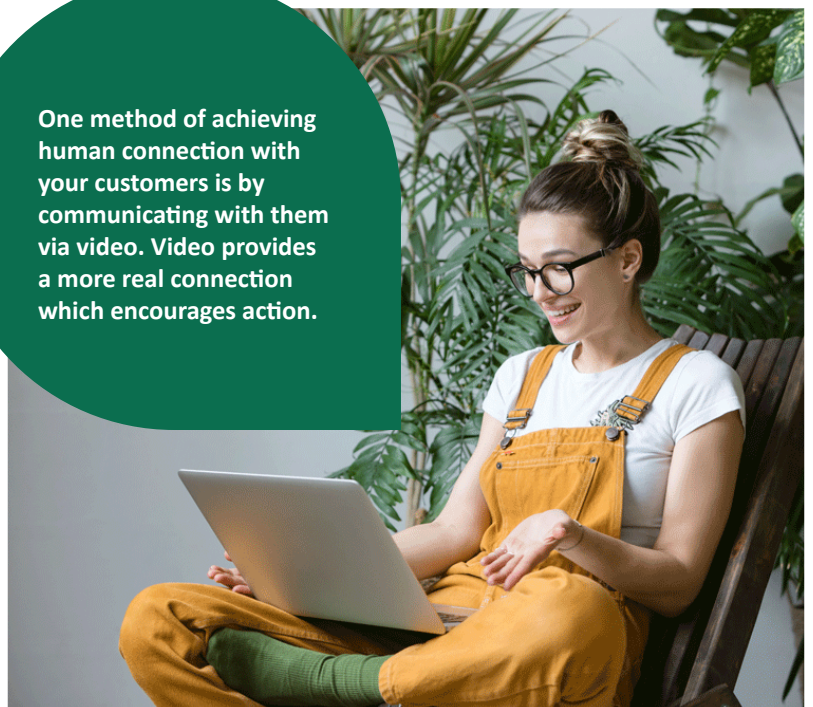
As we all gear up to re-enter our offices new questions must be asked:

- What can we get from connecting in person that we cannot get from a screen?
- What can we hear from the spoken word that we cannot read in the written one?
- What can we take away from a physical environment that we cannot from a virtual one?

Our business is all about loyalty and that must evolve in the same way as relationships have over the last 14 months. They need to evolve to embrace both the digital and the human connection. The human-to-human connection is powerful and we need to re-look at everything we do to make sure we are reaching out to people, bringing people into a culture, a community, a network and above all engaging with each other and strengthening relationships.

Loyalty programmes typically involve a points-based system with regular email communications, which will not leave the customer feeling like they have had a human connection at all. In B2B particularly customers often buy on relationships so how can your loyalty programme combine the best aspects of both virtual and physical connections.

One method of achieving human connection with your customers is by communicating with them via video. Video provides a more real connection which encourages action.



Using donotreply email addresses after registration leaves the customer feeling like just a number. Instead think about including text that welcomes customers and points them in the right direction should they have any queries. Have communications sent from someone they know in the business and offer them more than just email. With WhatsApp, Messenger and SMS all available make the communication channel personal and easy for your customer.

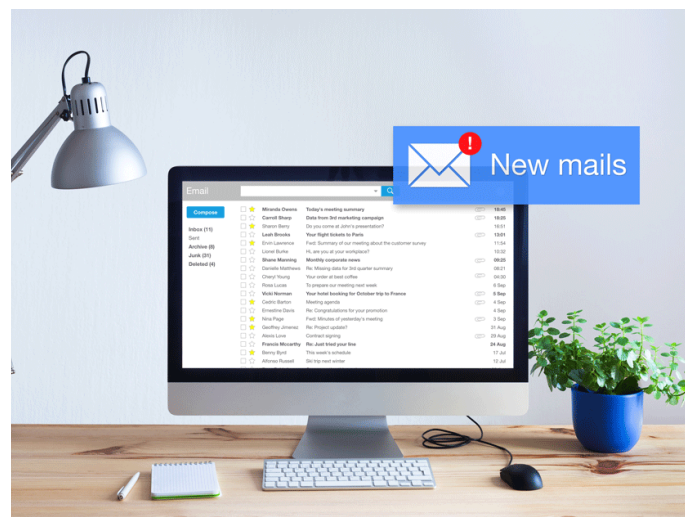
Allow a space for customers to give suggestions on how they believe your programme could be improved. This could be via a page on your website or having a dedicated inbox for their suggestions. Acknowledging their suggestions and confirming whether they are being considered will allow you to develop the human connection so that your customers don't feel that they are dealing with loyalty robots.



Use your social media to show who your company truly is. Sometimes social feeds can become caught up in a world of corporate content, becoming dry and faceless. Use your feed to show that you are made up of real people and create content that is important to you and your brand.

When sending customers regular communications, remember to include their name and create content that they will engage in. Creating a human connection with your customers can be easier than you think, for example sending customer discounts for the month of their birthday. I was recently shopping in Nike and scanned my Nike Plus Pass only to discover that I received an additional 10% off all shops during the month of my birthday. By doing this Nike allowed me to feel like a valued customer and has definitely made an impact on my future shopping habits.

Creating a human connection with your customers can be as simple as changing your language, instead of using 'how can we help' consider changing your language to 'how can I help you', those two simple words hold a great deal of impact as they show your customer that they are the focus and that an individual is waiting to deal with their query on the other side.



Have you considered using your loyalty programme to offer your customers the chance to try new products they might be interested in? By recommending products that you think they would like, it shows that you are invested in their buying journey and you want them to help them get it right.




There are many things you can do to create a more human to human connection, from personalised language to a range of communication channels to different types of content, but the most powerful way of delivering a message is to have it delivered by your brand advocates. In the first instance this is your team, your tribe, your employees, your fans. Loyalty starts from within; get them involved, get them engaged and ask them to help you reach the right customers at the right time.

Trust has been a game changer throughout this pandemic both in terms of the trust employers have had to put in their employees and vice versa. Keep that level of trust going and embrace it. Provide the right support and guidance but ultimately trust your employees to deliver the right message in their own personal way. Give them the tools to help customers, to advise, to promote and to assist with relevant aspects of the loyalty programme. These people are your eyes and ears on the ground, they know how your customers feel and what your customers want, so listen to them, take their advice, and weave it into the fabric of your programme so you are delivering a united front company wide. I love the impact we can have on the business here at Stream and how an idea I have can help the company grow, help improve the service for a particular client or improve the environment for the team. This is loyalty, feeling valued, feeling heard and feeling trusted.

About the Author



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Nairne began her career with Stream in March 2020 gaining unparalleled experience in the loyalty space. She is on a mission to use her wealth of knowledge to educate others.

We love talking about all things loyalty – if you fancy a loyalty chat, we'd love to hear from you!

About Stream

Stream are passionate about loyalty – we are the experts after all!

As a tech-enabled consultancy, we seek to understand your business challenges and your audience and work with you to craft a loyalty solution that delivers value. We are both consultants and implementers and use our extensive expertise and software capability to deliver proven, lasting results.

Loyalty is not 'one size fits all' and our team of commercial experts work to ensure that your loyalty strategy is right for you.

Whether you need to increase revenue, grow breadth of spend, or create a referrer programme, we have the experience to help sculpt the right solution. Our proprietary loyalty software- LoyaltyStream® helps to: retain customers, change buying behaviours, build brand loyalty and drive referrals.

Our LoyaltyStream® software is deployed globally, helping our clients to build trust that delivers brand loyalty and commercial rewards.

We guarantee to be able to help you Keep, Grow and Win customers for life.



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