



Future Ready Manufacturing
Thriving Beyond ERP
and into Digital CX



As digital transformation sweeps across the business landscape, Australia's manufacturers face many challenges and opportunities, from the need to secure upstream supply chains through to better servicing their downstream customers and consumers. Knowing where to invest their limited resources was the key topic of a recent roundtable discussion hosted by 6 Degrees Media and supported by Sitecore. The Executive General Manager for Transformation, Technology, and Digital at CSR Limited, **Cameron Webb**, was joined by Deloitte Digital Australia Partner **John BouAntoun** and Sitecore's President for Commerce **Mark Johnson**, along with leading CXOs from Australian manufacturers, to discuss the possibilities and share success stories in the customer-facing world beyond ERP.



Top (left to right): Cameron Webb, Executive General Manager, Transformation, Technology and Digital, CSR Limited; John BouAntoun, Partner, Commerce, Deloitte. **Bottom (left to right):** Mark Johnson, President, Commerce, Sitecore; Brad Howarth, Journalist/Moderator.

As a traditionally business-to-business industry, manufacturers have historically given little consideration to their relationships with consumers. But in an era where people want to know more about their suppliers, and where B2B buyers are also expecting improved service levels, concepts such as personalisation and enhanced communication are becoming prominent in the thinking of manufacturing CXOs.

These are definitely topics on the mind of Cameron Webb, the Executive General Manager for Transformation, Technology, and Digital at the construction products maker CSR Limited.

According to Webb, there were three factors that manufacturers needed to consider if they wanted to achieve great personalisation.

"The first one is probably pretty obvious – understanding the customer," Webb said. "What's not so obvious is that we often fall into the trap of thinking we know what the customer wants. In my mind it actually means deep research and deep understanding of the customers' needs, because ultimately that's how we build a relationship."

The second factor was to understand the true value that the manufacturer could bring to the customer.

“Whether it's information or service or proximity or content - whatever it is - we've got to be mindful of the capabilities that we have and the way in which we can meet the customer needs,” Webb said.

The third and most critical factor was the ability to orchestrate all of this within the organisation. Webb said for CSR, taking this step had meant distinguishing between selling channels and fulfilment channels.

“In bricks and mortar most of the time you sell and fulfil in that one channel,” Webb said. “But with online channels you get the opportunity to play around with that. We needed to think about the difference between those two channels and the opportunity it gave us.”

Webb said his team had successfully brought these ideas together in the way it delivered product specifications to customers. “We had to rethink the way in which we provisioned our digital tools and the way that we provided information, because historically they'd been separate, and that created a very disparate customer experience,” Walsh said.

“And so we had to do research, understand the pain, and set a course to fix that up and make it a much more consistent experience that delivered what they needed in the format that they needed, and in a mechanism that made sense for them.”

While many manufacturers were focused on personalisation in the sales journey and brand experience, Deloitte Digital Australia Partner John BouAntoun suggested manufacturers had an ace up their sleeves. “Those manufacturers that can incorporate personalisation further up the supply chain are much better at it,” BouAntoun said.

“Auto manufacturers are doing this really well. The ability to change the way a purchase happens so the object is manufactured to a personalised standard is probably the most exciting thing at the moment.”

Aligning Stakeholders

One of the critical elements of transformation that attendees discussed was the need to gain alignment from the various stakeholders involved.

Cameron said that while this was not always easy, 18 months in to CSR's transformation journey he was pleased that the leadership team was clear about what they wanted to achieve and how they were going to go about it.

“It helps make decisions, it helps allocate resource, it helps be clear about where you want to go,” Cameron said. “The challenge that I've experienced is that when you sit down and tackle a topic like customer experience and say we want to create a great customer experience, it is hard to get a description about what that might look like that everyone understands, can subscribe to and more importantly, change to.”

“But we continue to work it through because we know where we want to get to.”

BouAntoun said building alignment remained one of the great challenges of transformation for all businesses, but it could be achieved if the needs of all stakeholders were considered, all the way down to the bottom rungs of the organisation.

“It's a multi-layered change,” BouAntoun said. “Work out what your layers are and work out the nuances for each.”



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Sitecore’s President for Commerce Mark Johnson cited Estée Lauder as an example of an organisation that had built strong alignment for transformation down into its specific brand layers. He spoke about the example of its Aveda brand, which had a need to connect more closely with the stylists who ordered its products.

“Aveda is a half a billion-dollar business with 5,000 salons and 5,000 salon managers and roughly 40,000 salon stylists and millions of customers that come into those salons every day,” Johnson said. “What they did really effectively was to reverse-engineer the orientation associated with all the stakeholders. They wanted the stylists to order, so they adopted an orientation of understanding what the stylists were looking for.

“For the first time in their history they had a way to communicate effectively, in real time, with their buyer. This was a major transformation.”

Data with Destiny

Johnson said one of the keys to Estee Lauder’s success was its use of data. Johnson said that if a brand was honest about its desire to know its customers, then it had to be prepared to listen to them.

“You need a good mix of quantitative data and qualitative data, and so that means getting out and about and asking questions,” Johnson said. “The critical thing to understand is, what’s the pain that we create, what’s the friction that we create for customers in performing their task?”

It was not just consumers that were craving better experiences, with one attendee noting that B2B buyers now had similar expectations. “It’s quite a challenge because the experience that someone has

in their day-to-day life is now the same experience that they want in B2B. It comes down to return on investment and turning around to the CFO and saying we need to invest in technology, and we need to invest in experience, just to meet expectations.”

Johnson said solving for this need again came back to having the right data and analytics capabilities, but he added that turning data into useable insights was a new skill for many manufacturers. “It really becomes a focus on strategy,” Johnson said. “What are you trying to accomplish from a digital strategy perspective, and is customer experience at the forefront of it?”

Johnson cited the US-based water, hygiene, and infection prevention solutions and services company Ecolab as an example of a business that had brought this thinking to life for customers.

“What Ecolab did was to think about the fact that with the right technology and the right investment in their content they could provide all users with a very specific landing page experience based on where they logged in from,” Johnson said. “And from a B2B perspective that becomes very important, because you’re looking at different products, different price lists, different ordering, and buying experiences associated with all of them.”

This theme was also explored by BouAnton, who noted that while manufacturers had a wide variety of data tools available to them to achieve their goals, they often lacked the skills to use them effectively. For example, said that while AI and ML represented powerful concepts for helping manufacturers pursue their consumer-focused transformation agendas, what they lacked the ability to apply these technologies across the entire customer lifecycle.

The Sustainable Advantage

A key topic of discussion was the rising importance of sustainability initiatives in customer communications. Attendees spoke of their own actions to bring greater sustainability into their organisations, such as switching to eco-friendly consumables and paying more attention to the environmental credentials of their suppliers.

However, many conceded they struggled to introduce sustainable processes if they were more expensive than current options.

Webb suggested sometimes making a change came down to having the conviction that it was the right thing to do.

"If I can build a financial case out of it, well great," Webb said. "But if not, is it the right thing to do? That one to me is an obvious one and something that you should pursue with vigour.

"To me sustainability is a CX topic. Know your customer and understand what's important and figure out how you can help them act in a sustainable way by the products and services that you sell."

As one attendee pointed out however, customers do not always make it easy for manufacturers to go green.

"Consumers expect progress in improving sustainability for products, but they won't be prepared to pay anything more for it, and that's always been just something that's been a challenge in the industry."

Meeting the needs of consumers for more sustainable products also meant looking further up into supply chains, said BouAntoun.

"Sustainability is about longevity, and sustainability should be at the forefront of the kind of service we are delivering to our suppliers and contributors so that they can fulfil that promise all the way down," BouAntoun said. "It's something that needs to go multiple levels up."

Digital-First Economy

As manufacturers looked to the future, Johnson recommended that attendees focused on ensuring their digital and transformation strategies were aligned and alive.

"It's not a one-and-done sort of process," Johnson said. "Then the second thing that I would really encourage when it comes to technology is to invest more in flexibility than in features. Flexibility is going to provide you with the capability to create the best ecosystem around your brand and around the way that you want to go to market. It's going to allow you the capability to own your roadmap."

While attendees faced many choices, Webb said the most important was to simply get started.

"If you want to make change, have a crack at it," Webb said. "You've just got to build an argument for it. Get in there and do it,"

His final piece advice was to bring clear descriptions to what needed to be done.

"If an organisation is going to make a change, the leadership has to align behind a strategy," Webb said. "And whether it's your team having a strategy or whether it's the organisation, you've definitely got to be able to describe where you're trying to get to."



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– Cameron Webb, CSR Limited



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