



# Walk in the Cloud

## S2E6: Accenture, Adobe and Currys: Building the experience renaissance

### **Ellen Bencard, Walk in the Cloud Host**

Ellen Bencard leads Accenture's marketing campaigns in the UK while also managing to nourish her journalistic roots as an established blogger on the arts, travel and fine dining. Her corporate work usually finds her behind the scenes, coaching her team to bring together big ideas, insightful commentators, exciting events and innovative channels in ways that inspire prospective clients. But this isn't the first time she's stepped into the limelight to show off her training as a reporter, writer and presenter. She's anchored a web-based YouTube series for BT called Top Tips for CIOs and was Northwestern University's on-site media spokesperson at the Royal Wedding of Prince Harry and fellow alumna Meghan Markle. Born and educated in the American Midwest, Ellen's lived in the UK since 1999 and is a proud dual citizen.

### **Katrina Harianto, Business & Data Strategy Director, Accenture**

Katrina specialises in defining and delivering transformation programmes to enable organisations to achieve their strategic goals. Embedding a data-centric culture and creating foundational customer experience capabilities to generate revenue and demand through digital, direct and partner channels. She takes organisations on a journey to change ways of working and optimise the colleague experience and programme return on investment.

Katrina is a customer data strategist at heart, and has been involved in over 30 technology & data management implementations around the globe. She helps clients to optimise the value from their customer experience platforms.

**Saul Lopes, Head of CRM,  
Personalisation & Loyalty, Currys**

Saul is the Head of CRM, Personalisation and Loyalty at Currys, the UK's leading technology omnichannel retailer. He has a strong background as a senior commercial marketer with over 15 years of international experience across private aviation, luxury hotels, airlines and retail. A truly data-driven innovator in customer experience with an extensive background in multi-million pound digital transformations throughout Product Development, Analytics, Customer Relationship Management and Loyalty.

He led Virgin Holidays on a revolutionary journey towards a customer centric growth strategy, including digital product adoption, customer experience redesign, business process change and overhaul of the entire communications strategy. Saul was part of the Virgin management team that increased profits four-fold, all whilst hitting record numbers of NPS and increasing customer experience scores by 25%.

Saul is now part of Currys management team and has driven large scale overhaul of its CRM & Loyalty programme into an omnichannel experience function. This has led to a threefold increase of CRM revenue whilst an improved focus on the customer, adopting ground-breaking AI technologies, activating the company's vast datasets, which has supported the company's online growth of 121%.

**Intro:** Walk in the Cloud.

**Ellen:** Welcome back to Walk in the Cloud. This is your host, Ellen Bencard. And today, I'm exploring a topic very close to my heart, customer experience. It's something everyone talks a lot about improving and there are some amazing technologies out there. But when we all put our consumer hats on, we may wonder if things are really getting any better. Today, I'm going to explore a partnership between Accenture, Adobe, and a great British retailer that can answer a definitive yes to that improvement question. I'm walking with Saul Lopes from the electronics giant, Currys. Hello, Saul.

**Saul:** Hi, how's it going?

**Ellen:** Excellent. And Accenture's Katrina Harianto. Hello, Katrina.

**Katrina:** Hi there, Ellen. Nice to hear you.

**Ellen:** And we'll be talking about how creating personalised experiences at the right moments can win customers for life. So delivering a great personalised customer experience might be rarer than we'd wish, but it's not anything new. Katrina, can you explain what's different about doing it today?

**Katrina:** Well, customer expectations continuously change and differ across industries. You know, personalisation is the act of tailoring an experience for an individual and an industry. And we do this by recognising, remembering and being relevant to our customers.

But things have really moved on from customers just expecting relevant advertising, to really now expecting businesses to be fully aware of their situation and to now anticipate their needs, and fundamentally remember the conversations that we're having with them. And we're always utilising all that knowledge that they're giving us and making it a really rich and compelling experience, at any single touchpoint.

**Ellen:** So Saul, I understand that personalisation was really a strategic objective from the top for you. How did you make that happen?

**Saul:** Well, actually the truth of it all is that personalisation wasn't at the top of our strategic objective, was actually creating customers for life. So we tend to sit in personalisation, always talk about personalisation like it's a destination that we want to get to, or it's a checkbox, that exercise saying that we wanna be a personalised business. Actually, what are the business problems that we're trying to solve?

**Ellen:** Okay.

**Saul:** And we kind of took it back. And the business problem that we were trying to solve was actually, how do we create customers for life? And we had very much of the common problems and challenges that many businesses have. How do we get a better value for our high value customers? How do we reactivate disengaged ones?

How do we better say, I'm sorry, when actually things go wrong or how can we actually aid when customers are researching for a product? So by flipping it around and focusing more on what are the problems that we're trying to solve and how can personalisation help us achieve those problems. That's how we kind of tackled it at Currys.

**Ellen:** Okay. And then what was the next step and specifically, let me throw out a question to either of you or both. We can start with Katrina and then go to Saul. We call this podcast, Walk in the Cloud. Can you talk a little bit about how cloud technologies actually help you do things better? Katrina, over to you first.

**Katrina:** Yeah. So with cloud technology, it's really about harnessing data and creating actionable assets that can be recognised across the whole of the Adobe platform, which makes it easier, then when we're coming together to solve those problems in the business; to think about how we can streamline the process, how we can improve speed to market and how we can keep making sure there's consistent and compelling experiences going to market all the time.

**Ellen:** So, Saul, talk to me more about that data. I can tell you know about me from my dishwasher purchase and my small electronics purchase, you know, how do you make my life better knowing that stuff?

**Saul:** Yes. So, exactly that. So just as Katrina said, is like with that data and with the infrastructure, what we found is that we were really, really good at doing personalisation in our own channels. So CRM was doing great personalisation, website was doing great personalisation. The call centre was doing their own great personalisation. The gap that we found is actually, how do we create an end to end personalised experience and how to get all of the channels and all of the teams together? So as we started defining our big business problems, we got everyone together across the business. We're talking about CRM, e-comm, customer management centre, decision science insights, web, store. We got everyone together. We kind of came all together to say, how can we actually solve this business problem? What are data needs? Who is our audience, and what is that customer facing outcome that we want to generate? And we did that as a team, cause the whole objective from the start was not just to create in channel better personalisation, but how can we create end to end personalisation across that whole customer journey? Then very quickly we created that gap analysis and we found that, okay, so these are the data needs that we need. And these are actually the clouds that we need to connect in order to generate that experience. And then we kind of went slowly, starting with some quick wins. We slowly grew all of those use cases and started putting them to light.

**Ellen:** And I assume that yields benefits both internally and externally. So, you know, let me start internally. What got better when you all brought it all together like that?

**Saul:** I think it's just a cooperation between teams and getting everyone's engagement, everyone. It was such an amazing moment seeing everyone's lights and everyone's ideas coming up. Oh yes, we can improve this experience here. Oh, what if we did this in the store? And what if we did this online? Or what if we used this data model over here that we have over here? So actually, what we found out is that these ideas and these assets were already there, there just wasn't the central coordination of all of these activities and assets. So it was so good, and it was such a positive feeling, seeing everyone getting these ideas and putting all of these ideas together in order to get and improve a better customer experience.

**Ellen:** And how does my interaction with you change? How has it changed as a customer?

**Saul:** Well, my interaction with you changes. For example, if we end up failing you, if we end up not giving the type of customer experience that you expect from Currys, we do send you, and we do recognise the situation and we kind of explain to you how we are making things better and how we are recovering that situation. And that is also personalised by our various different customer groups.

So there could be certain customer groups that get a certain incentive in order to come back and certain customer groups that don't. So that's like one example on how we're trying to bring that personalisation to life, and how we are trying to give that single customer experience. And that example could be, imagine if you're a credit customer, and you have a credit account with Currys. How can I make sure, really simple use case that you see the monthly pricing when you actually land on their website, or you see that digital ad with the monthly pricing of your product. So it's for you, these tiny little use cases and these quick wins that I'm starting to change the experience for our customers.

**Ellen:** Okay. Katrina on this series of Walk in the Cloud, we've also been focusing on partnership. Now you're representing both Adobe and Accenture on our walk today. How did those two companies come together to offer Saul things that say he wouldn't have been able to get from Accenture alone?

**Katrina:** It's really about joining the dots. Yep. So together in partnership with Saul and Currys, it's really been looking at, Saul said, you know, people had ideas, had assets, have things, and actually we bring to life then how the cloud kept technology helps really connect the dot from a customer experience perspective, but from a colleague experience internally. The sum of the parts are so important.

You were saying, Ellen, you know, what's different for me now? But it is that recognition. It is that ability to serve a treatment that's relevant to you, to talk to you about things that you love and understand the things that you don't love. And actually to deliver your piece of content, you think, great, I've just gotta share that with somebody else. And again, the Adobe platform is a home for all of that. And then you've got the ways of working, which is actually, you know, everybody's excited and all would love to use the technology. So how do we then build the knowledge and expertise with Saul and the teams at Currys, so they can do it themselves and quickly improve and continuously feel as though they're constantly empowered and not relying on some kind of support partner. Cause that's not what we are. You know, we are strategic partners in growing that knowledge and driving that benefit outcome both to make everybody look good to the exec, cause there's lots of big goals there for customers to life, but also for people to feel good at their job every day.

**Ellen:** Yeah, I love the way this is essentially a very, very old fashioned story. We may be using the latest and greatest technology, but ultimately this is about bringing people together. Whether it's the partners who were working on it, all these Currys internal teams or me as a customer to Currys as my partner in buying cool stuff. So not every company is this far along on the journey.

I'd love to hear from each of you on what you would do first, if someone has a challenge in customer service, and wants to start on the kind of journey you've been on. Saul, let me start with you.

**Saul:** I think the very first thing is, what is the problem the business is trying to solve? And then is personalisation the right answer for that problem? It could be certain situations where not personalisation, isn't the answer. It could be just adding more agents to your call centre. It could be personalisations aren't always the answer for every single problem. So, what I would say is focus on the business problem first, how you're going to solve it, and is personalisation a good way to solve that problem? And a second area that I would also emphasise is don't try to do too much all at once. Start with your quick wins. Like we all talk about these platforms that are going to arise in 12 or 18 month's time. And we just sit there waiting for the platform, the famous platform to arrive, but there's so much that you could do. And so much you can execute just on the ground by like by connecting, by putting all these people together. So just start with those quick wins and actually just get something out the door as quickly as possible. At the end of the day, we're not running clinical trials here. This is just content personalisation on our website. So we don't need to be in pursuit of that perfection. We just need to get stuff out there and you know what? If it didn't work for five or ten percent of the population, let's make that better, let's quickly improve.

**Ellen:** Got it. How about you Katrina?

**Katrina:** Just building on that really, it's just don't think take investment first. Really revisit the art of the possible that you have with your cloud technology and especially Adobe toolkits. Sometimes we stumble, we start doing things when we implement it. And then we forget about all the other reasons why we were excited when we bought it. And so sometimes it's about demystifying with leaders and with others across the business. About what it can do and then really bring that to life around it's going to support some of those key value drivers, those key things that you want to learn now, in order to know that actually personalisation really works. Cause sometimes it won't work for a situation like Saul was saying. Sometime it's the icing on the cake and customer satisfaction goes up through the roof, conversion goes up through the roof and brand reputation overall is great. And people keep coming back to your brand. And do think content investment, though. Often people will think, oh right yeah, let's do all this great stuff with data and analytics, I've got some smart cookies here that can action all these interactions, but actually content's important. So just before thinking about how much you're going to spend, appreciate the knowledge and the assets that are in your business. It's amazing what you can reuse, whether it be a blog, whether it be a banner, whether it be, you know, some product information what's, you know, really interesting is actually it's a relevant product info that really drives an outcome, right?

So, you know, you won't find actually that you've gotta create a lot more, but you will need to then harness it in the cloud and make it accessible to more people. And finally, I'd say about two things, actually keep the drum beating across the whole business. You know, everybody's really keen to understand what's working, what's not working and it is continuous improvement. So make sure you're shouting about the things that you're learning. As Saul says, you know, it's about what works, what doesn't. And help us all stay on the journey of continuous improvement, but fundamentally stay relevant to your customers. Don't overcomplicate things, you know, sometimes, there is a simple one about actually saying, I'm sorry. Gee, we really need to get complicated about that when all we need to do is recognise that you've had a problem. Remember you've had a problem, yep. And be relevant. So if you walked into the store and you're having a store appointment, what's wrong with saying, hey Ellen, sorry about last week, we didn't get your delivery right. Even though you did get an email last week. It's again, it's a personal thing. It's compelling experiences.

**Ellen:** Treat me well and I will love you forever. Thank you very much to both of you. And thank you listeners for walking with us. I hope you are getting the kind of customer service we just talked about from your favourite brands. And if you're not, point them to this podcast and tell them to be more like Currys.

Next time, we're going to be going from front of the house to behind the scenes with a topic that has surged in importance in recent years, supply chains. I hope you'll join us.

**Outro:** Walk in the Cloud.