

# The Connected Digital Journey



The relentless march of technology is leaving its footprint on all industries, without exception. The evolution of the digital economy promises to create new, improved and innovative services at an unprecedented rate. As global citizens, we are all enjoying the benefits of being plugged in to this process of change. It improves our customer experience and makes our digital lives easier.

The age of mobile ubiquity has pushed customer expectations swiftly past 'good enough' into the realms of "if this is not great, then I'll find a competitor's version which is." If your digital proposition is not satisfying increasingly-demanding customer expectations, then you need to improve it or join the long list of companies who did not and became footnotes in history. The challenge becomes even greater once you understand the small window of opportunity identified in a Comscore survey<sup>(1)</sup> which suggests that mobile app users spend 75% of all app time with their 4 favorites.

To justify that leap onto the screens of more connected customers you must ensure your offering is consistent, coherent, relevant and intelligent across all channels, devices and operating systems; whether they are at home, at work, or increasingly, on the move. A well-connected, digitally-driven journey serves as a prime illustration of what the future holds and should deliver useful tools to support travelers in constant motion. Whether it is simmering anger over reclining airline seats, twice sold tickets, or currency conversion rackets, all travelers understand the nightmares that can spoil a journey and yearn for a day when technology is able to smooth out the rough edges and keep them in a temperate 'holiday zone' throughout.

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One tenet of the digital economy is the blistering pace of innovation needed to stay ahead of the market. Facing this reality, many companies feel they cannot move as fast as they would like or indeed as fast as their customers expect. They frequently complain that there are so many legacy technology and inefficient process issues to address that they cannot focus on a clear-headed methodical approach to remove one obstacle at a time.

McKinsey has described the need for a 2 speed approach to IT<sup>(2)</sup> comprised of “a *fast speed* for functions that address evolving customer experiences and must change rapidly, and a *transaction speed* for the remaining functions, where the pace of adjustment can remain more measured.”

In an age where all large companies interact with their customers through digital channels, all brands must now be considered software companies as software underpins the market's digital touch point for brand engagement.<sup>(3)</sup> However, many companies have core capabilities that are not software and

technology, and they have never thought about themselves in those terms. They will need to embrace outside help to push the organization forward and tackle these challenges.

In the connected digital economy, companies must solve the problems of legacy platforms that do not communicate through universal APIs, require multiple different sign-on credentials, and cannot be configured for total release management control across the globe. They must address the problems inherent in a user experience thrown together initially by engineers or internal resources who did not survey the competitive landscape or road test assumptions on real users. They must also surface data intelligently to leverage the knowledge accumulated from previous interactions.

The Connected Journey we are describing addresses the digital touch points experienced by a modern traveler with the latest consumer technology at their disposal, but the themes are common across industries, sectors and every nook and cranny of the enterprise.

## Portrait of The Modern Traveler

The travel journey starts with some awareness of a need, followed by inspiration. It may be the opportunity for a family holiday or the necessity of a business trip.

The former will include web search, social recommendations and the almost perfect price transparency and comparison that the Internet has brought to our lives. Increasingly these moments are impulsive mobile moments, which allow us to travel the world with minimum preparation. Indeed, Hotels.com (one of the most downloaded travel apps in the world).

In the business travel case, the hand off will often be to a travel agency on the company procurement list. When a booking can be made by email, with options that intelligently study the best fit to your calendar – then so much the better. If the traveler's acceptance triggers an integrated update to a mobile travel app that organizes your documents, schedule and availability for business or social meetings, then that traveler is truly benefiting from organized and integrated digital intelligence. Finally, if the app can also personalize relevant offers like seat upgrades, easy parking, car hire or accommodation and restaurant reservations, then the journey becomes

even smoother. For the business paying the travel bills, all this intelligent, traceable, digitized behavior has a dramatic financial benefit. Whenever a traveler ‘goes rogue’ and chooses to expense his trip rather than use preferred suppliers (for reasons of choice and convenience), a nightmare for the finance team is sure to ensue. Businesses need to eliminate that rogue element to save time and money.

Where an end-to-end journey benefits from an understanding of the user's previous search behavior and social activity, we get into the realms of the Google Now experience which attempts to bring together data on location, search and email history, personal preferences (and those of your travel partners) to present relevant information before you have to ask for it. Understandably, not all commercial enterprises are keen to hand over their data to Google, but they all understand the size of the commercial opportunity and may well attempt to launch their own version of Google Now's intelligent journey planning (as far as their access to the user across many platforms, geographies and standards of sharing personal or anonymized data will allow).

We also see the opportunity for additional solutions to help travelers manage information relating to passports, immunizations, insurance, access to their money, battery charging options for their devices and inexpensive access to international voice and data services. No one wants to feel alone, isolated or ripped-off in foreign fields. Therein lies commercial gold.

Any company attempting to make inroads into the Connected Journey market will have to create and deliver easy-to-understand tools for the modern traveler. These tools depend on integrated technology frameworks that automatically interact with each other at high speed and observe global standards on access, privacy and security. They need to interpret where you are and establish the context of your immediate and short-term needs to offer relevant and personalized information just before you need it. For many companies that ambition is a tall order, but this is the expectation of today's customers. Tomorrow's customers will be even more demanding.

*One digital economy activist is Disney. They have spent over \$1bn on their MagicBand wearable to help make their in-park experience ever-more efficient through data collection. A smart combination of sensors, data, RFID and radio triangulation means that Disney employees know your name when you arrive in a Disney resort restaurant and what food you ordered ahead of time, so that it arrives quickly. You can also avoid queuing or other inefficient non-spending, non-enjoyment time. The MagicBand means you will not need a wallet; you will not even need to hire a car, or check-in at the Disney hotel, or explain where to take your luggage. It has all been intelligently accounted for ahead of time and it is fiendishly clever. (What is most magical is the way it effortlessly reduces your bank balance every time your child indicates they like something.)*

## Connecting the Journey for The Modern Traveler

In describing the many obstacles the digital traveler faces, we can identify scenarios where commercial opportunities are surfaced by the combination of need, access, data, insight and connectivity.

### The cancelled train opportunity

What if your train operating company was able to send you an alert that there was a delay to the service you were booked on – and they were offering a coffee and a sandwich at a nearby café by way of an apology? That would feel like good customer service.

If the delay became longer, they could refund or credit your account proactively in order to comply with service level agreements attached to their operating license. A cancellation would trigger an alert offering a seat on a later train, a refund or a booking with a competing travel company (a private car or a flight maybe). That would be an intelligent use case blending connected technology with seamless customer service.

The option to talk with an associate would always be available, but the pre-emptive offer of alternatives keeps the needs of the traveler (rather than the company) at the heart of the journey. It is an

enhanced version of the ‘customer is always right’ and fits squarely in the user-centered digital universe where the data connects the need with the customer.

### The lost wallet opportunity

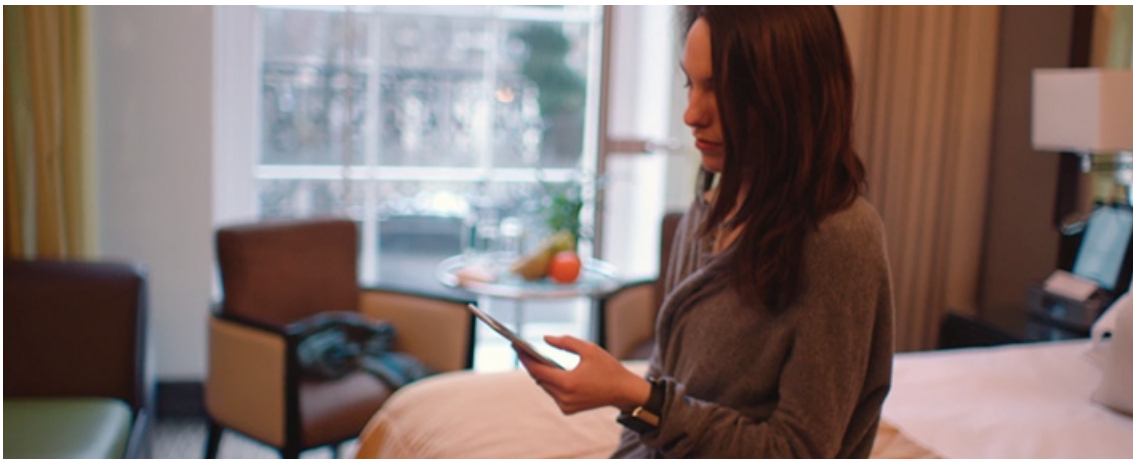
Imagine that you lost your wallet while on holiday and you were able to press an emergency ‘help me’ button on your credit card mobile app, which put you straight through to a helpdesk where the call handler was able to

- cancel and re-order all your cards
- alert your bank and approve emergency cover for costs due to be incurred by cancelling the cards before your recent hotel and restaurant payments have gone through
- enable an emergency PIN number to withdraw local currency from an ATM

If the digital footprints can be followed, the traveler themselves should not have to piece the story together over a number of stressful hours and (still expensive) phone calls, while a restless family waits in suspense for the outcome of the investigation. The solution should add value by carrying that load.

## Hotel and Hospitality

Our vision for the immediate future of the hotel and hospitality industry is that a two-day business trip will soon be more about the business and the social elements around it and less about the historic, non-digital pain points of queueing, keeping track of paper, losing room keys and asking the main desk to turn the air conditioning down. The push to digitize and mobilize the check-in process has advanced to the point where a majority of travelers agree that



proliferate. Running a wonderful airline with great food and attentive staff is one thing; being part of a seamless travel experience from one door to another is a different challenge, but one that can no longer be ignored. These joined-up applications should follow the sweep of your life through house-buying, marriage and children to keep information intelligently relevant. There are times when the attraction of a \$50 chip at a Casino is a welcome

they would choose a hotel that allows them to open their room with a digital device than a hotel that does not.<sup>(4)</sup>

From the hotel perspective, there is huge potential for upselling contextually relevant ancillary products and forming partnerships with complementary brands. Mandarin Oriental already partners with British Airways Executive Club and Etihad Guest amongst others, but we imagine a day when the truly connected journey offers seamless booking and billing between car, plane, taxi, restaurant and hotel, with accumulated loyalty points towards the next journey visible on your mobile travel dashboard. The brands that embrace the challenge of fitting in to a Connected Customer Journey will be the brands that stay relevant, succeed and

benefit of loyalty, and times where a family pass to a theme park is more appropriate.

There are additional commercial opportunities surrounding connected sensors, wearables and the much-trumpeted Internet of Everything. There is a great ecological benefit (and the associated profitability and PR upside) available to hotels that can manage the cost on the demand side of their energy requirements more intelligently. They can reduce costs and improve planning strategy with real-time access to the granular data being collected in rooms by sensors, switches, security systems and the human workforce armed with the applications that monitor these networks.

## Summary

There is no doubt that there are travel applications and solutions to suit every taste in app stores and online already.

- Airlines such as British Airways offer the ability to check-in via mobile and upgrade your seat before you arrive at the airport. Lufthansa allows you to watch airline entertainment content on your own mobile device.
- Hotel applications let you confirm arrival times,

add additional nights and book a spa session without speaking to anyone.

- Cover (“Dine without waiting for the check”) takes the Uber experience to restaurants by allowing you to make direct mobile payments through them rather than waiting to pay the waiter.
- Even straightforward listing and review applications such as OpenTable, TripAdvisor and Yelp have become vital tools for the innocent abroad.

But how can they be more connected? Travelers do not want the overhead of managing ten different mobile apps. They want one app to rule them all.

Each offering needs to make a decision on its proposition to the wider market. Does it federate its data and open up an API to appear in other useful tools? Does it form a consortia of like-minded partners? Does it acquire its way to travel nirvana?

There is a definite market opportunity for a Bank, a Credit Card provider, or a smart mix of travel companies to gain market share and attract millions of customers.

Companies with the footprint in travel and the internal abilities, skillset, knowledge of digital

behaviors and aptitude for innovating at speed are few and far between. Those companies with the ambition will need to import the expertise of digital product partners to capitalize on the opportunity in front of them; building an experienced and efficient team takes too long and the moment will be missed. They will need access to experts in consistent user experience strategies (or Experience Engineering), who are able to mine insights from incredible volumes of real-time data and deliver robust technology solutions at enormous scale.

The requirements for success are plain, and the benefits for succeeding will be enormous. Who is willing to capture the moment, trigger tectonic disruption and seize the day?

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*Mark has a digital agency background and is well used to solving user problems at speed. Within Ness he is a spokesman for user experience and how it drives change within the technology sector. He is also tuned in to the opportunities created, as David Foster Wallace observed, of “being aware of the water.”*

## About Ness Digital Engineering

*Ness Digital Engineering designs, builds, and integrates digital platforms and enterprise software that help organizations engage customers, differentiate their brands, and drive profitable growth. Our customer experience designers, software engineers, data experts, and business consultants partner with clients to develop roadmaps that identify ongoing opportunities to increase the value of their digital solutions and enterprise systems. Through agile development of minimum viable products (MVPs), our clients can test new ideas in the market and continually adapt to changing business conditions—giving our clients the leverage to lead market disruption in their industries and compete more effectively to grow their business.*

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