

Do you know what clients want? What they really, really want?

The BBC series 'Turn Back Time' ended recently and with it a fascinating experiment proved that we used to want a personalised, expert, service, we then wanted the convenience of self-service and now we want a combination of the two.

The idea of the series was to find out what customers want from their shopping experience. The high street shopping experience was recreated through the ages from the Victorian era to present day over the course of 6 episodes.

Each week a different period was brought to life by the sponsored families who gamely dressed up, took over authentic period shops and grafted for their livelihoods often in very difficult circumstances. The unsuspecting residents of Shepton Mallet watched on and eventually joined in.

The shopkeepers who proved successful overcame many barriers including limited product lines, third rate machinery, rationing during WWII and price fixing by the large manufacturers. They beat all the odds and their competition with smart marketing strategies.

The series reminded us that customer service was developed by the Edwardians and killed off by 'self-service in the 1970's'. Most lawyers can cast their minds back to law school and remember the Boots self-service test case as a useful lesson in 'offer and acceptance'. But, beyond the courtroom this case heralded a new social era of interest to marketeers. They realised that it was an era in which we liked to help ourselves.

The irony is, that as this series discovered, years later we now miss all that old fashioned, labour intensive pampering. As consumers, we are very sorry we took personal service for granted and we want to feel 'special' again. 'Stuff the conveyor belt and self-service check out' and spoil me' says today's consumer who has aspirations to celebrity rather than anonymity!

But it would be a mistake to think that personal service in the new millennium means no more than paternalistic hand holding. It doesn't. Most clients want the convenience of modern technology backed up by a personal relationship with an expert.

You can download your free copy of the "Pain Free Marketing Report" written for Lawyers by myself and Ian Brodie to help you develop pain free marketing strategies for growing your practice in the millennium. <http://www.painfreereport.co.uk>

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