

❤️ #DoingSomethingGreat

**It's Time to Get Personal
with Your Marketing.**



**THIS MONTH'S NEWS
AND UPDATES:**

**Building successful
brands by
delivering great
integrated
customer
experiences**

It's Time to Get Personal with Your Marketing

On the 9th of June we will be hosting a webinar on this topic and will unpack AI-Powered personalisation and how to use digital touchpoints and create a personalised customer experiences that maximise customer conversions.

In preparation and in the spirit of getting personal with marketing, I thought I would share a little about my personal journey.

In customer experience, we talk about relationship marketing and how important it is to get to know the customer and tap into their real motivation. This way, we can personalise the experience with the brand based on the customer preference so we can increase the level of "permission" and get to know them even better over time which should yield a long-term relationship and maximum lifetime value.

is a Hebrew name (יָרוֹן :Hebrew) As you know, my name is Yaron meaning "is full of joy", "will be full of joy" and I hope that you feel that (-; live up to my name and I bring you lots of joy

My nickname by South Africans who often battle to pronounce my name correctly is Yarona which means in SePedi "ours" or in SeTswana 'from the community so either way it seems like my destiny is to be part of the African community.

I was amazed with the synchronicity of "Yaron" street and "Yaron" Avenue in Johannesburg confirming that I belong here ;-)

I was born in Watford, UK, and grew up in Israel from 3 to 15 and we arrived as a family in South Africa in 1985. At that time, being in South Africa wasn't easy primarily because of the ongoing atrocities of apartheid. Something so new and strange to me, it felt that the country was backwards and very much restricted

After completing my school at the American International School of Johannesburg in 1988, I went to Wits which was a real "riot" at the time. I got arrested a handful of times during the demonstrations and, I felt imprisoned as a whole, and so, I packed up and left for the U.S. and later the UK.

In 1992, I came to visit my father who was still living in SA, and I decided to come back because I was positively surprised by the winds of change. It was a South Africa filled with possibilities, a new and omnipotent place.

As Mahatma Gandhi said, **"Be the change you wish to see in the world."**

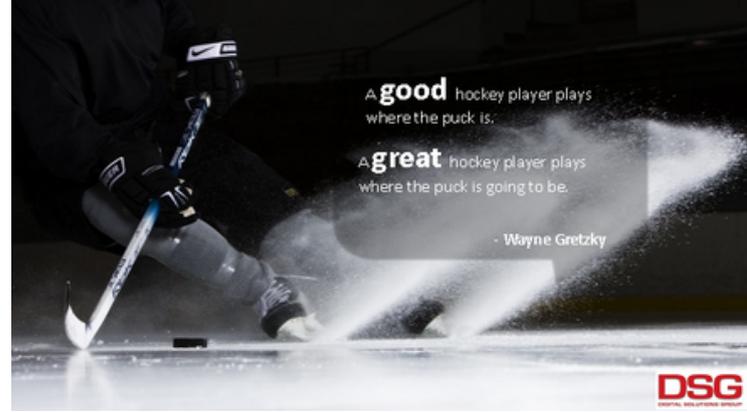


After a few years of working for corporates in ICT and then running my own consulting business, I founded DigitalMall.com in 1998 in order to stop selling time and with the aim of "making money while I sleep"

I bought a book on Amazon, and it was a great experience to get the book that was just published in the US within a few days in South Africa I knew that global commerce would change forever with the advent of the internet.

There was very low internet penetration in South Africa in the late 90's, so it made sense to build a single infrastructure to be shared by many retailers or what we called it at the time CSP (Commerce Service Provider)

The internet at the time was very much dial-up, so slow and cumbersome experience compared to fast internet today. Our first advert in print promoting online shopping stated that "if you cannot bring Muhammed to the mountain give him a modem" www.digitalmall.com 'our world is your basket'



We served multiple retailers from Incredible Connection, Makro, Toys R Us, Ster Kinekor, Furniture City, Look and listen (who no longer exist as music digitally transformed and moved completely online), Toys R Us, and many more ... we even sold sushi online with Yo Sushi.



We shared the risk and success with our retail customers on a single platform now known as Cloud - those days we called it ASP or CSP.

We also provided 4PL, Contact Centre for quality assurance & ironically, consumers were scared to enter their credit card details online but were happy to do it on the phone



We created "HANNAH" the virtual shopping assistant who won IT personality of the year in 2000, ahead of WATSON, SIRI, ALEXA, CORTANA and GOOGLE ASSISTANT.

Our first Online store Virtual Florist was profitable within 9 months and we partnered with the biggest flower retailer Flowerite .



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- Black Lace
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- Digital Mail

Happy Valentine's Day, *Handwritten signature*

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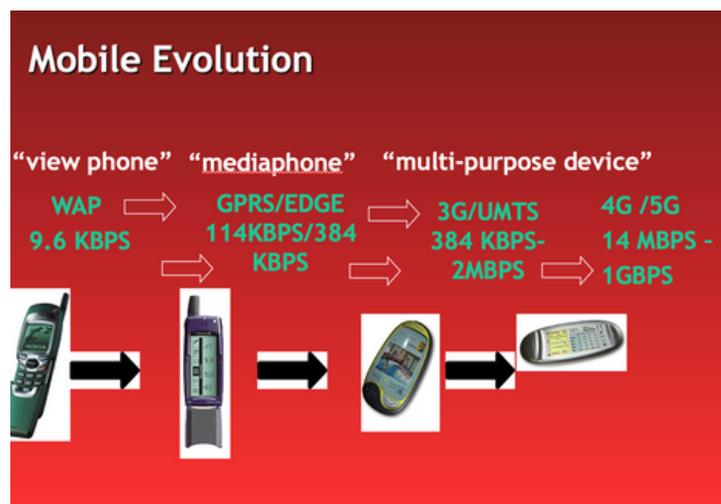
In 2000 we sold a 50.01 % to iTouch prior to an IPO on the FTSE in the same year.

iTouch wanted to capture the future of mobile commerce, so my team wrote software that generated the first mobile commerce transaction in the world on Vodacom's WAP (Wireless Application Protocol) gateway we launched mywap.digitalmall.com in March 2000.

WAP was very slow @ 9.6 KBPS and the devices were black and white so it was limited to selling products and services that were known and simple like share trading, mobile betting, and flowers & gifts.



The vision was incredible, and we forecasted the growth in this market when it was in its infancy. Today with high-speed internet on mobile, m-commerce is huge and it was fun being the pioneers (who returned with a few arrows in our back ;-)) but managed to pull them out and continue to re-invent ourselves and digitally transform.



The innovation led to a very successful IPO and we raised 42.5 million pounds for 20% of iTouch and used the capital raised to open offices in UK Australia, New Zealand, and Israel.

Unfortunately, the famous dot com crash led to my management team and I decided to do a management buyout in 2001 and refocus our business on Africa.

We paid great "school fees" and gained some amazing experiences from the roller coaster ride but we realized that adoption will take some time and therefore decided to take our unique skills and not just focus on e-commerce but provide unique solutions in the digital arena which led to the foundation of Digital Solutions Group (DSG).



One of the biggest lessons I've learned about being an entrepreneur is that you must fail to succeed.

And while at this stage in my entrepreneurial journey we had faced a handful of hurdles, I was fortunate enough to be surrounded by a team of innovative thinkers, who were resilient and had the vision needed to grow the business.

Africa needs innovation, and it is up to us to bring innovations to life and be part of the change.
"If you don't like change, you're going to like irrelevance, even less" – General Eric Shinseki, Chief of Staff. U.S. Army

Amongst a selection of key learnings together with life experience, my journey has taught me that it is better to be a soldier in the field than a critic on the stand. And, to do something great means just that: doing.

No matter how one may measure the reward, reaping the many benefits from acting, showing up, and making an impact is what an entrepreneurial spirit is all about.

I will share more details about the journey my team and I had in future newsletters so please share this with whomever you feel could benefit and please also remember to join us for an interactive virtual discussion titled "It's time to get personal with your marketing."

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I hope to see you on the 9th of June!

♥ [hashtag#DoingSomethingGreat](#)

