



SM2 Strategic, Inc.  
E-Letter

## *Dad, what's an album?"*

By Shareef Mahdavi  
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My son, who received an iPod last Christmas, innocently blurted this question as I was searching for specific music to load onto the device. Wow, how fast the world has changed! Indeed, it was a bit sobering for me to explain how recorded music has shifted from LP (long play) records to cassette tapes and now CDs. It was a mini-history lesson that was probably lost on him but really hit home with me. Today's kids and young adults have never known a world without a personal computer, cell phone, DVDs, video games and even the iPod (at least for the 7 year-olds like my son). They absorb technology like no generation before them; my kids routinely beat me on the Wii, and my daughter effortlessly set up my new MacBook laptop. I'm sure it's the same for many of you as well.

As great as all this technology and gadgetry is, there's a hidden cost emerging among all the podcasting and texting and video gaming that's going on around us. It's creating a lack of interaction skills where people actually talk and listen to other people. And it's being felt throughout retailing and in any environment that requires customer service. Let me explain.

According to Customer Service authority John DiJulius, today we have 1/20th the human interaction we had just twenty years ago. Think about it: we used to go to the movies, now we use Netflix. Full service gas stations have been replaced by pay-at-the-pump. Bookstores are being supplanted by Amazon.com, and bank tellers have given way to ATMs and online banking.

DiJulius summarizes it this way: twenty years ago we had workers with excellent people skills using marginal technology. Today we have workers with marginal people skills using excellent technology.

The problem results in an interesting dilemma. Today, we can't automatically expect younger workers to know what it means to give world class customer service because they've never been trained in the "software" skills required to deliver it. They may understand the "hardware" (e.g., how to take an order) but lack the basic communication skills required to truly elevate the experience for the customer. Our kids may not know what a record album is (or was), but they and all younger workers need help developing the knowledge and talent to be able to provide world class service in their jobs and careers.

DiJulius' latest book, "What's the Secret? To Providing a World Class Customer Experience," is an [amazon.com](http://amazon.com) best seller and worth the read to learn how he addresses this problem with clients and in his own top-ranked salons. It's an eye-opening account of the crisis in customer service and the revolution taking place among world-class companies to expand customer loyalty.

### **About [SM2 Strategic](#)**

Shareef Mahdavi is president of SM2 Strategic, based in Pleasanton, California, a consulting firm that works with medical device manufacturers and physicians to create demand for new technologies and procedures. He has more than 20 years of experience in marketing and sales for medical device companies.