

# Digital People™ – The new customer journey in retail and eCommerce spaces

Adapt to evolving customer expectations;  
Migrate to hybrid retail spaces and the metaverse

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# Introduction

The past few years have shown that the mass migration to online shopping is here to stay. The abundance of information available on the web and social media has changed consumers' behavior in multiple ways: they do not necessarily buy where they find the information; they look past factors like features, prices, and lead times, and they want to know about the retailers' values, if the retailers care about their employees, are environmentally conscious, philanthropic, and innovative.

If brands want to build lasting relationships with their customers, they need to define and deliver a meaningful customer experience that their consumers can identify with. In particular, they have to meet several rising expectations: a seamless journey across online and in-store spaces, personalization, and a sense of belonging to a community. For this, retailers have to invest in modern technologies including omnichannel

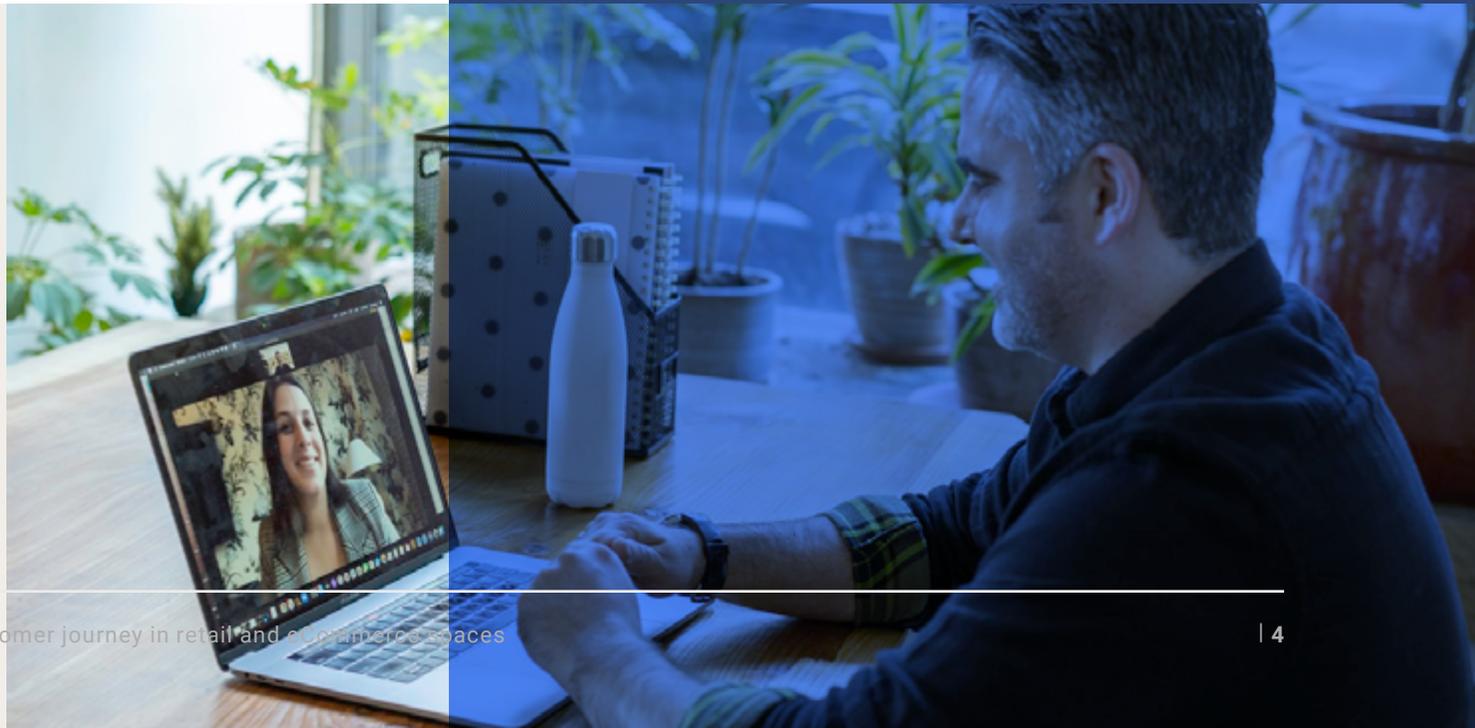


and efficient digital assistance at every step of the customer's journey. Despite the rising acceptance of chatbots and virtual assistants, they must consider that the human touch remains enormously important. According to a **pwc report**, 64% of U.S. consumers and 59% of all consumers feel companies have lost touch with the human element of customer experience. 71% of Americans would rather interact with a human than a chatbot or some other automated process.

# 59%

of all consumers feel  
companies have lost touch  
with the human element  
of customer experience.

– pwc



## Add human presence to your digital retail spaces

Soul Machines Digital People are poised perfectly to bridge the gap between a convenient and experiential CX, delivered in a human, empathetic way. They are hyper-realistic AI avatars that can hear, see, understand and respond in real-time with emotionally appropriate facial expressions and gestures. They are powered by a Digital Brain which drives their autonomous animation based on the context and intensity of the conversation as well as the emotions perceived through the facial coding of the customer.

Digital People establish eye contact with the viewer and the authenticity of their face and body language conveys that they are attentive and empathetic listeners yielding to deeper engagement, comfort, and trust. Their animation also extends to their motion within a user interface in the form of automatic camera cuts to retain the attention of the viewer. Context-aware displacement allows the Digital Person to make room for and point to visual cues such as images, videos, and other action items illustrating and guiding the conversation.



# Delight and retain customers with memorable journeys

Customers want the ability to seek and discover content for themselves, but they also appreciate always-on assistance that can accelerate and customize their searches. With Digital People, brands can accompany their customers at each and every point of their journey with a face and a smile. They are accessible 24/7, efficient, consistent, and scalable, and unlike human beings, they do not tire, become upset, or have bad days. Their visibility can range and change from a discrete presence in a web widget to a virtual host occupying a full webpage.



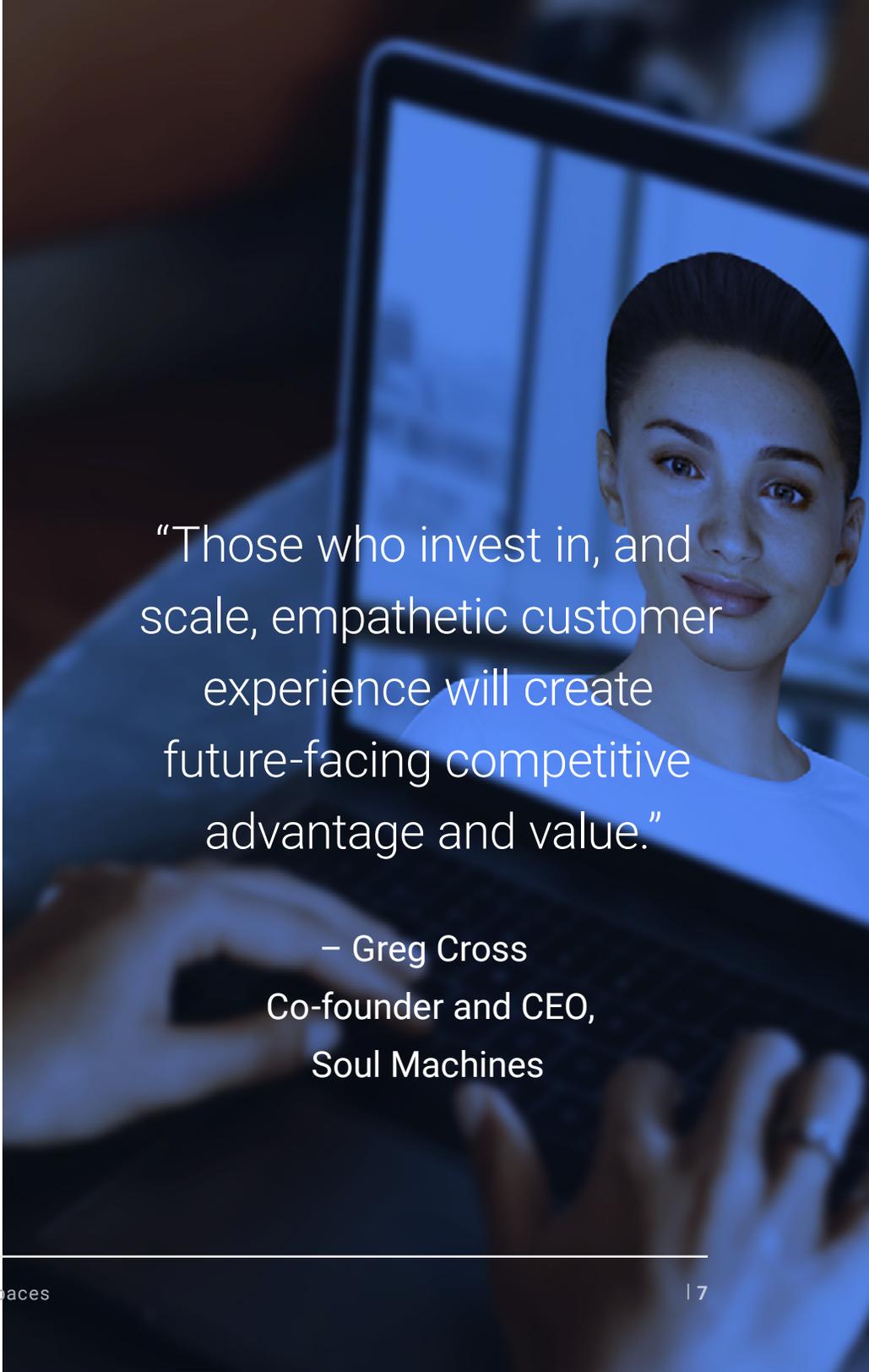
## Show empathy for a deeper engagement

Soul Machines Digital People are capable of guiding customers from a point of indifference toward a point of affection and loyalty thanks to their authentic expressions of empathy (refer to blog: **The 3-Levels of Empathy**)

- Cognitive empathy, or knowing what the customer wants
- Emotional empathy, or understanding how the customer feels
- Compassionate empathy, or wanting to act and help

Their real-time animation integrates three stimuli:

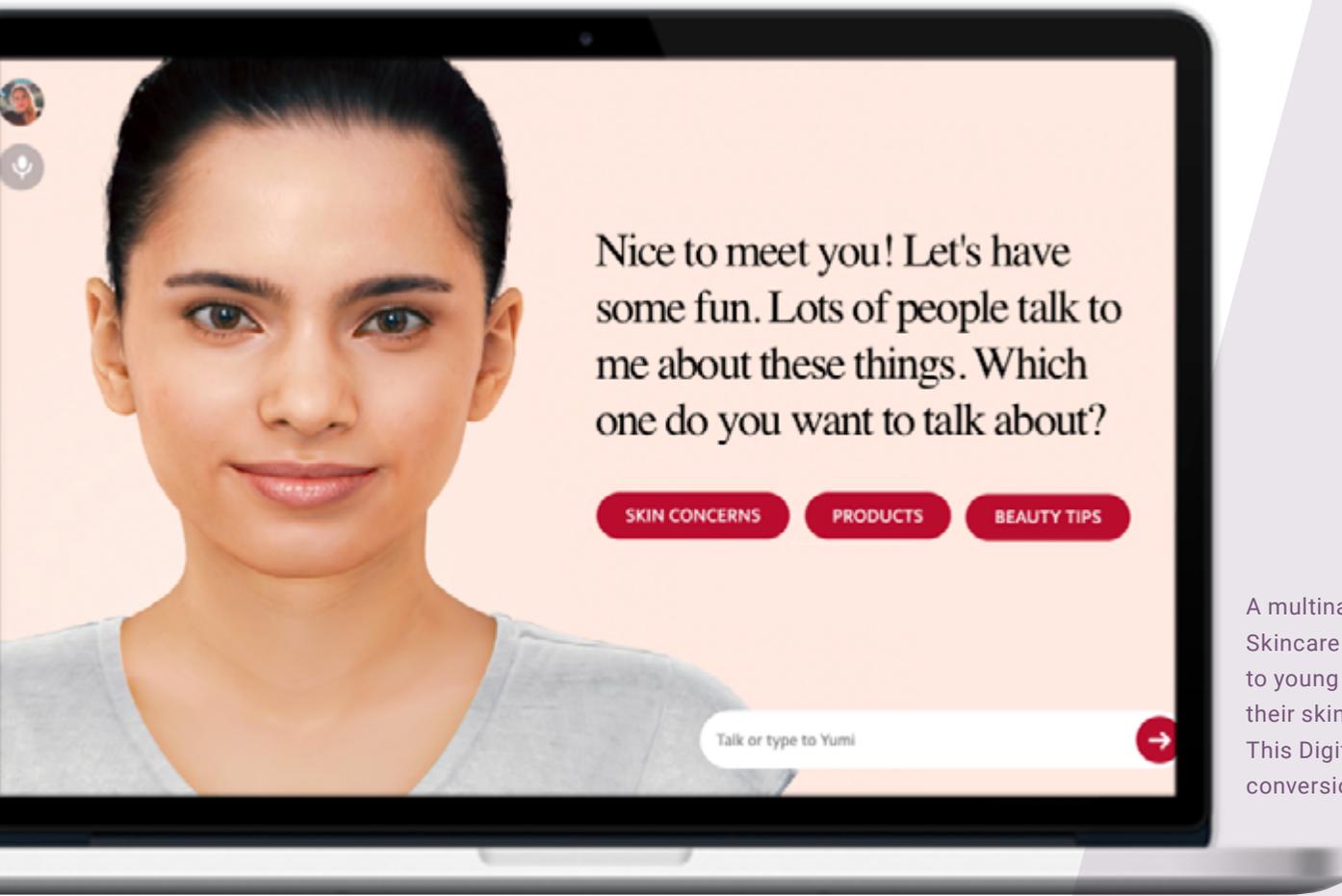
- What do they have to say given the context and the intensity of the words
- Which emotional state of the customer do they perceive (if the camera is activated)
- Which personality was attributed to them by their designer at the time of creation (friendly, bubbly, free-spirited, conscientious, shy, and troubled)



“Those who invest in, and scale, empathetic customer experience will create future-facing competitive advantage and value.”

– Greg Cross  
Co-founder and CEO,  
Soul Machines

For example, a Digital Person with a bubbly personality can provide high-energy responses and trigger a mirror response from the customer. But if it detects that the customer is confused, it can adapt the conversation by asking how the customer feels about the experience instead of attempting to upsell them with new product information.



A multinational CPG Company has created a Digital Skincare Consultant and Brand Ambassador relatable to young women so they feel comfortable discussing their skin concerns and problems and ask for advice. This Digital Ambassador has increased website conversions by a factor of 4.6x.

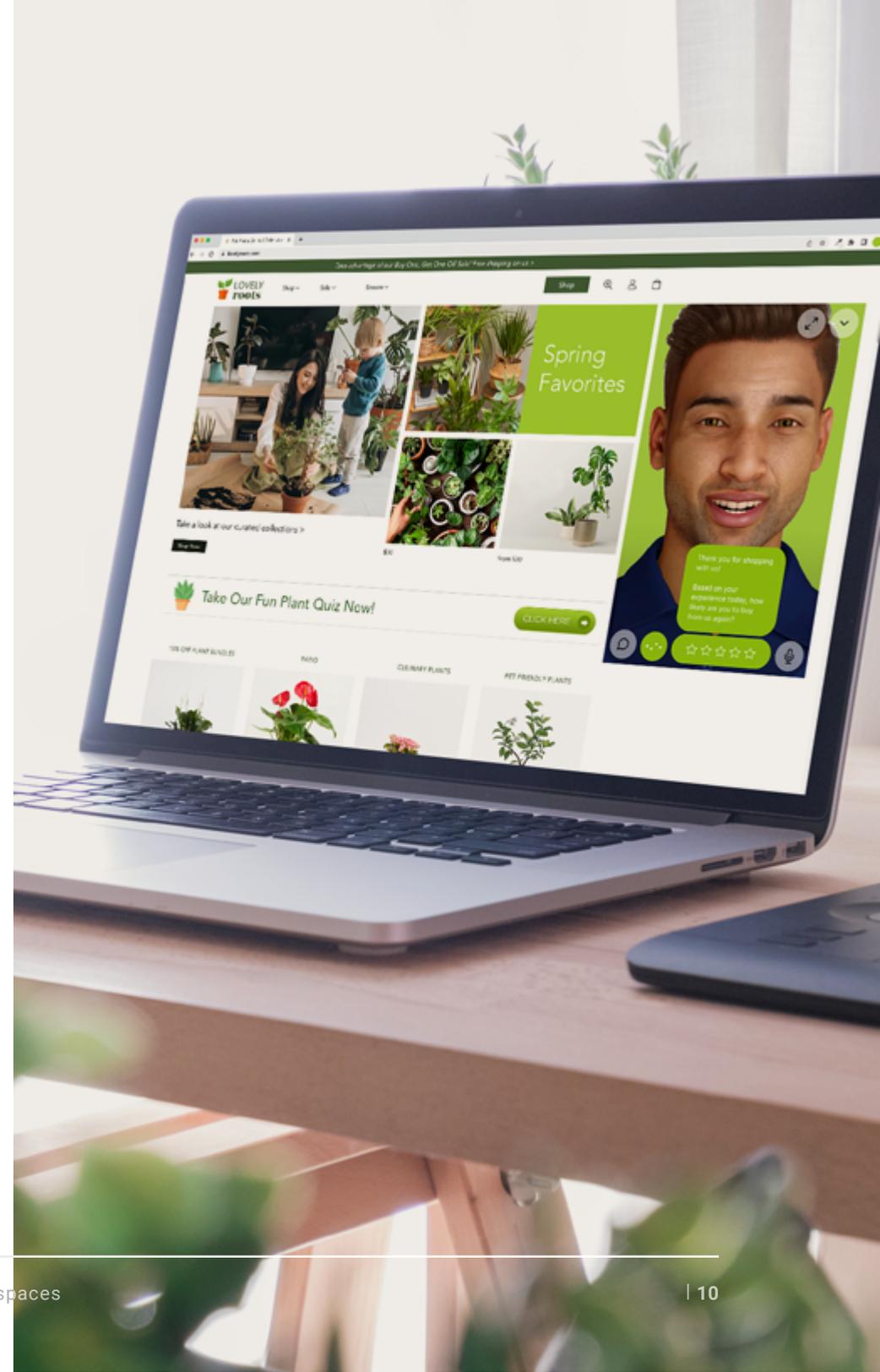
## Demonstrate that you care with personalization and VOC attention

While today's consumers expect brands to make a greater effort to reach and engage with them on a personal level, what personalization means to both parties does not always match. Asking for too much personal data can make consumers feel stalked and they are more likely to abandon brands that "over-personalize" the experience, compared to brands that fail to personalize enough (**The Future of Commerce Trend Report 2022, Shopify**). Digital People can strike the perfect balance between personalization and privacy through meaningful and empathetic interactions adapting to the conversational flow and the emotional state of the consumer.



Soul Machines Digital People can be trained to deliver product information, but also have a memory of the customer's past activity and preferences, which can lead to helpful and personalized recommendations. They can help customers locate hard-to-find items with their correct size, favorite brand, and color, and inform the customer about specials on products they have purchased and liked in the past.

Asking for customer feedback is important for the retailer's business intelligence and shows its care and commitment to improving the shopping experience. Digital People can do this conveniently by asking a few questions at the right time, such as before the customer exits the shopping cart. They can collect zero-party data and capture spontaneous user scores, verbatim, and emotional responses. In the case of a negative experience, this acknowledgment of the voice of the customer can make the difference between the customer choosing another brand, or taking a second look. Digital People give the retailer the opportunity to take corrective actions by linking these valuable insights to sales data.



# Re-invigorate your brand with modern CX

Digital People give you more potential than just serving and making your customers happy. They demonstrate your leadership in CX, management strategies, and technical innovations. Digital People can become your very own digital influencers, a digital workforce augmenting your employees, and digital avatars humanizing your virtual spaces in the metaverse.

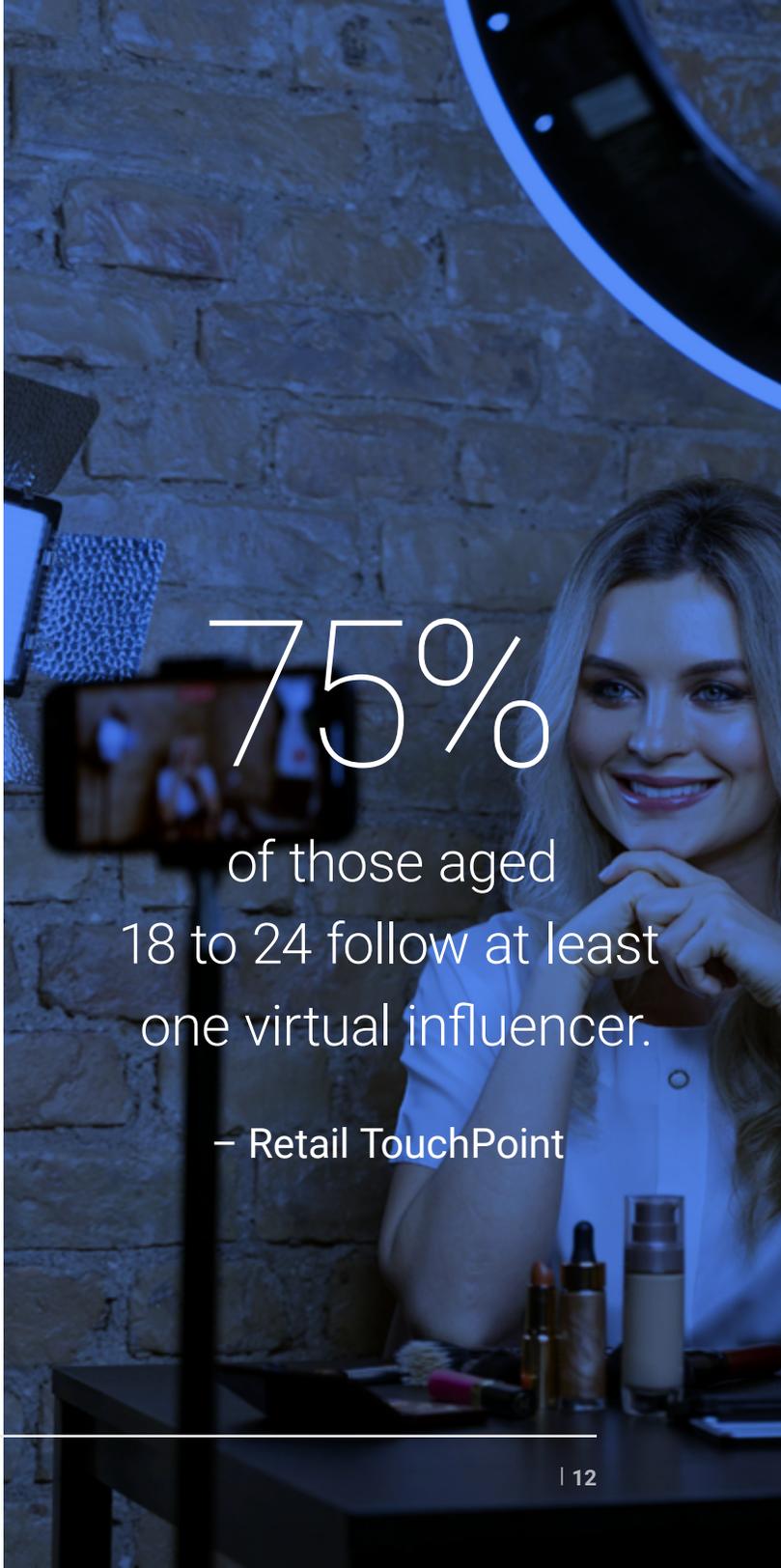


## Build a brand community with digital influencers

Consumers have become skeptical of traditional marketing with staged and sponsored content, and now want authenticity from brand ambassadors and influencers. A recent survey in **Retail TouchPoint** reports that 75% of those aged 18 to 24 follow at least one virtual influencer; 24.1% of those who are not following at least one virtual influencer state they did not know virtual influencers existed; 45% of respondents aged 35 to 44 have bought a product or service promoted by a virtual influencer.

Digital influencers offer the advantage of being 100% controllable, they do not have to travel or earn commissions, and they can have an impact as messengers of shared values within communities: brand lovers, sustainability, environment, teens, young parents, LGBT, pet lovers, handy people, techies, etc.

Soul Machines Digital People empower brands to create their own digital influencers and ambassadors. They can give them an appearance that aligns with their offering, aesthetics, and values. Using the Digital DNA Studio platform, creators can define the physical traits of their Digital Person through an interactive UI, design their wardrobe and hairstyles, and choose a personality matching their role out of a library of behavioral styles. Once trained with a base conversation and customized with Smart Skills, Digital People can speak multiple languages to reach a broader customer base.



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– Retail TouchPoint

## Establish your leadership in EX for better CX

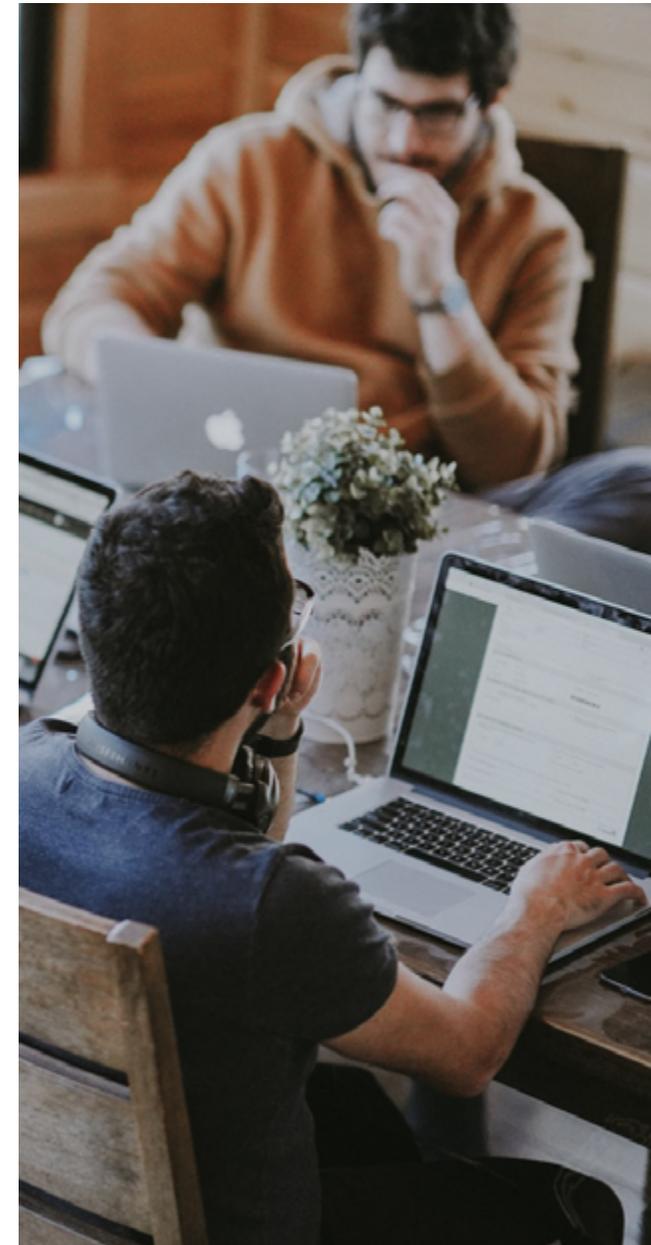
A recent KPMG **US Customer Experience Excellence** report states that the index-leading companies they surveyed inextricably link the employee experience to the customer experience, and dedicate as much time to the design of both experiences because a well trained and happy workforce leads to satisfied customers.

Soul Machines Digital People can improve the employee experience across multiple sectors in the retail and eCommerce industry:

**In Customer Service and Customer Support**, Digital People can unburden human agents from low-value and repetitive tasks which contribute to employee burnout due to inflexible hours, overload, and stress. They will never experience boredom which is another factor decreasing employee retention.

**In Claim Processing or Payment Collection**, Digital People can perform better than human agents for some unpleasant tasks where it is critical to stay calm, courteous, and empathetic. In a recent study titled “**Bad News? Send an AI. Good News? Send a Human,**” the American Marketing Association demonstrated that in the case of a product or service offer that is worse than expected, consumers respond better, feel more satisfied, and are more likely to repurchase when dealing with an AI agent.

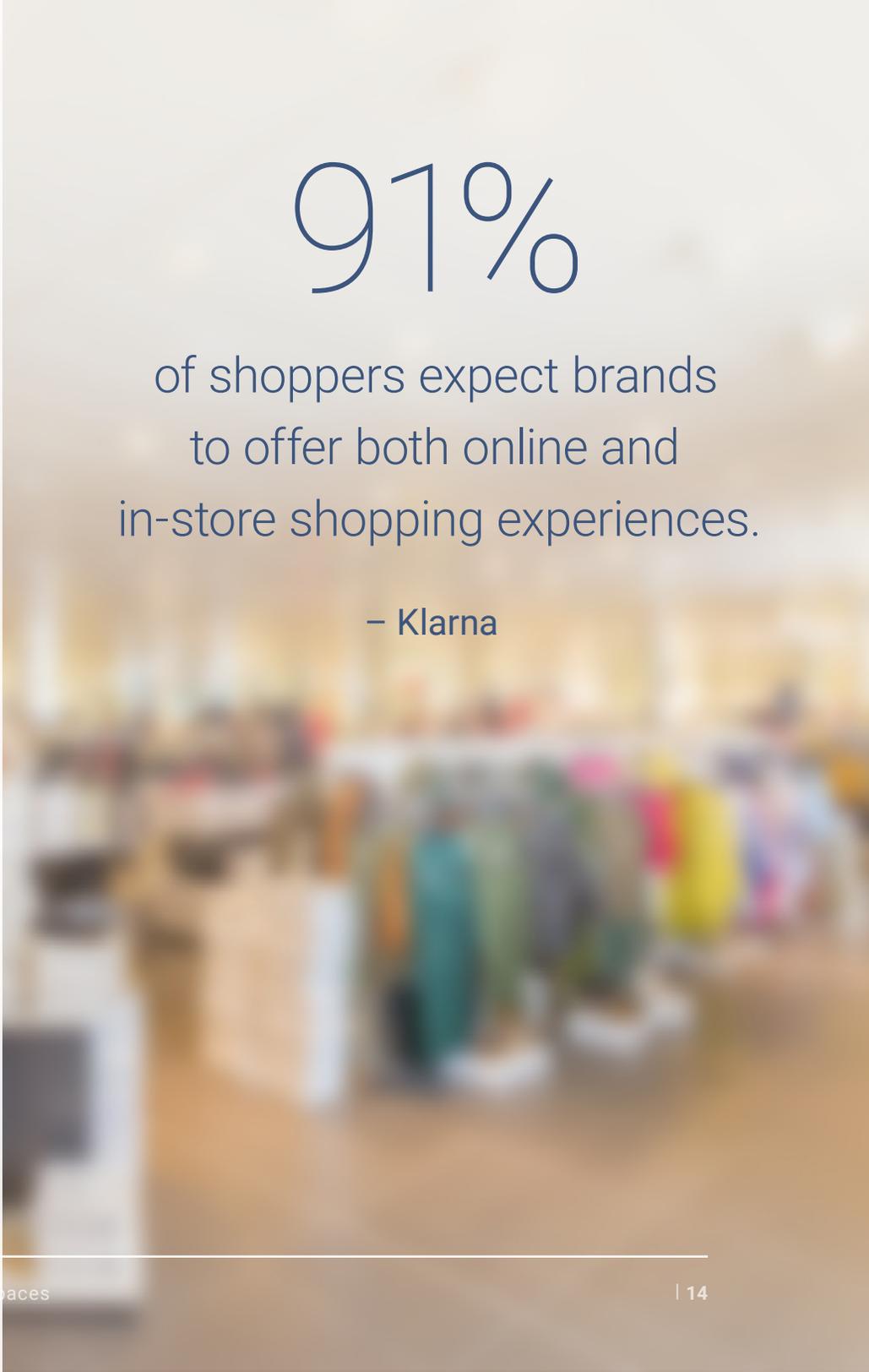
**In Learning and Development**, Digital People can be part of educational initiatives to motivate and increase employee productivity and retention. They can have the persona of educators and counselors, provide self-onboarding guidance, teach how to react to challenging situations, explain how to demonstrate new products, and more.



## Innovate with hybrid retail spaces

While there is no doubt that the retail landscape has become predominantly digital-first, retailers should not discard the value of their in-store experience. According to a recent **Klarna survey**, 91% of shoppers expect brands to offer both online and in-store shopping experiences, and 87% expect brands to have a mobile app.

Brick and mortar and eCommerce are not separate channels, and today's insatiable consumers want both. For retailers to be successful in hybrid spaces and retain customer loyalty, they must create a seamless journey, and provide personalization at every touchpoint. They must make their customers feel special and not have to wait or repeat themselves as they move between online shopping and in-store visits.



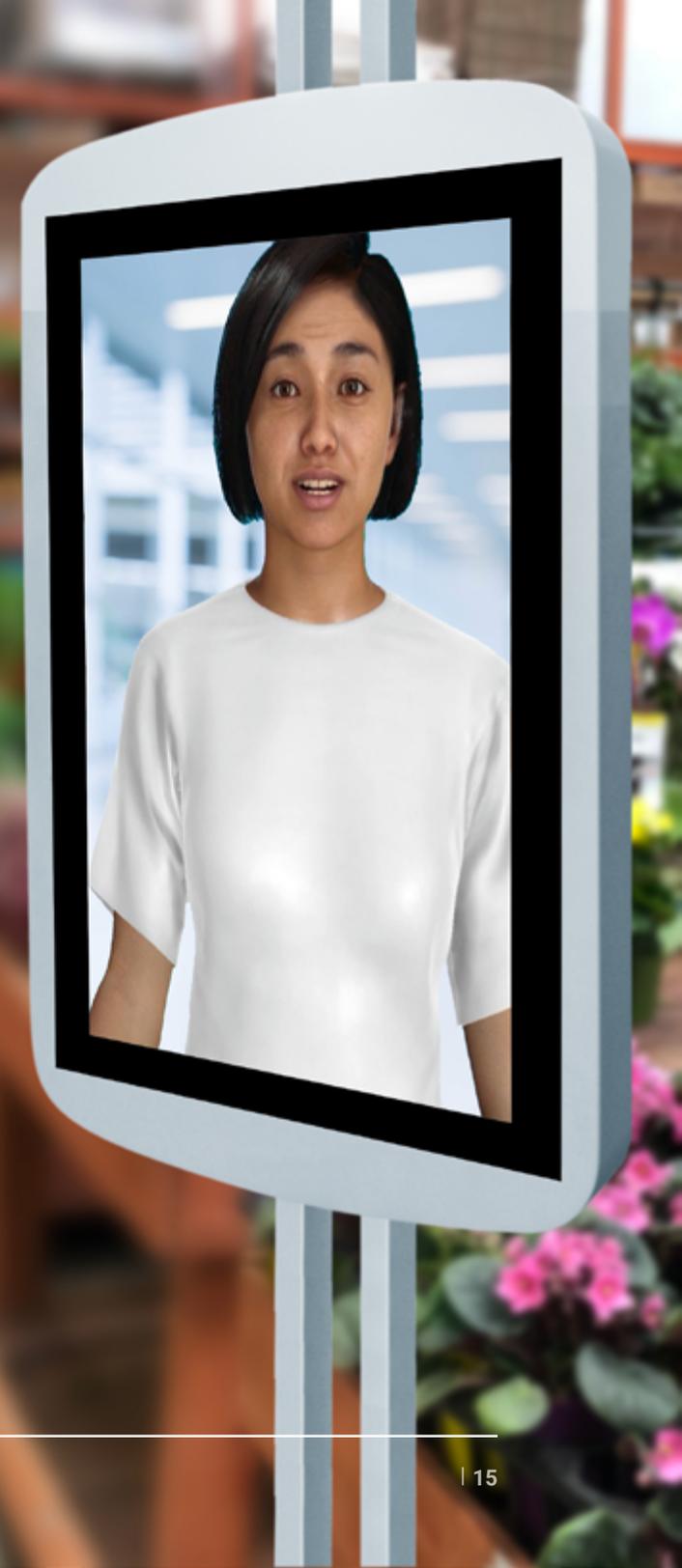
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– Klarna

If shoppers want the convenience of searching for products in the comfort of their home, they miss the physical elements of the in-store experience like seeing the real item, touching fabrics, fitting, and demo rooms. Shoppers also have new concerns around safety and contactless transactions. Retailers need to adapt their in-store experience to resonate with these expectations. Digital People available in kiosks throughout a store can deliver numerous services through contactless and empathetic interactions such as greeting and orienting the customer in the store, arranging a pick-up, offering access to a fitting room, or scheduling an in-person consultation.

To successfully end this journey, the retailer's digital assistant, on a mobile app, would know if and what the customer purchased as well as the preferences they expressed while shopping. Given the purchase of some fitness apparel, the digital assistant can suggest cleaning and care instructions, some free online fitness classes, or offer an opportunity to join an online community of yoga fans.



# Conclusion

⋮ *Embrace the metaverse  
commerce now*

Retail is shifting towards a world where immersive digital experiences are readily available. While the metaverse is neither simple nor fully defined at present, brands need to recognize what new capabilities and markets these technologies are opening, as well as the new values and expectations that accompany them. Digital People sit at the heart of that ecosystem, bridging the gap between human and machine, physical and digital, convenient and experiential, omnichannel and metaverse.

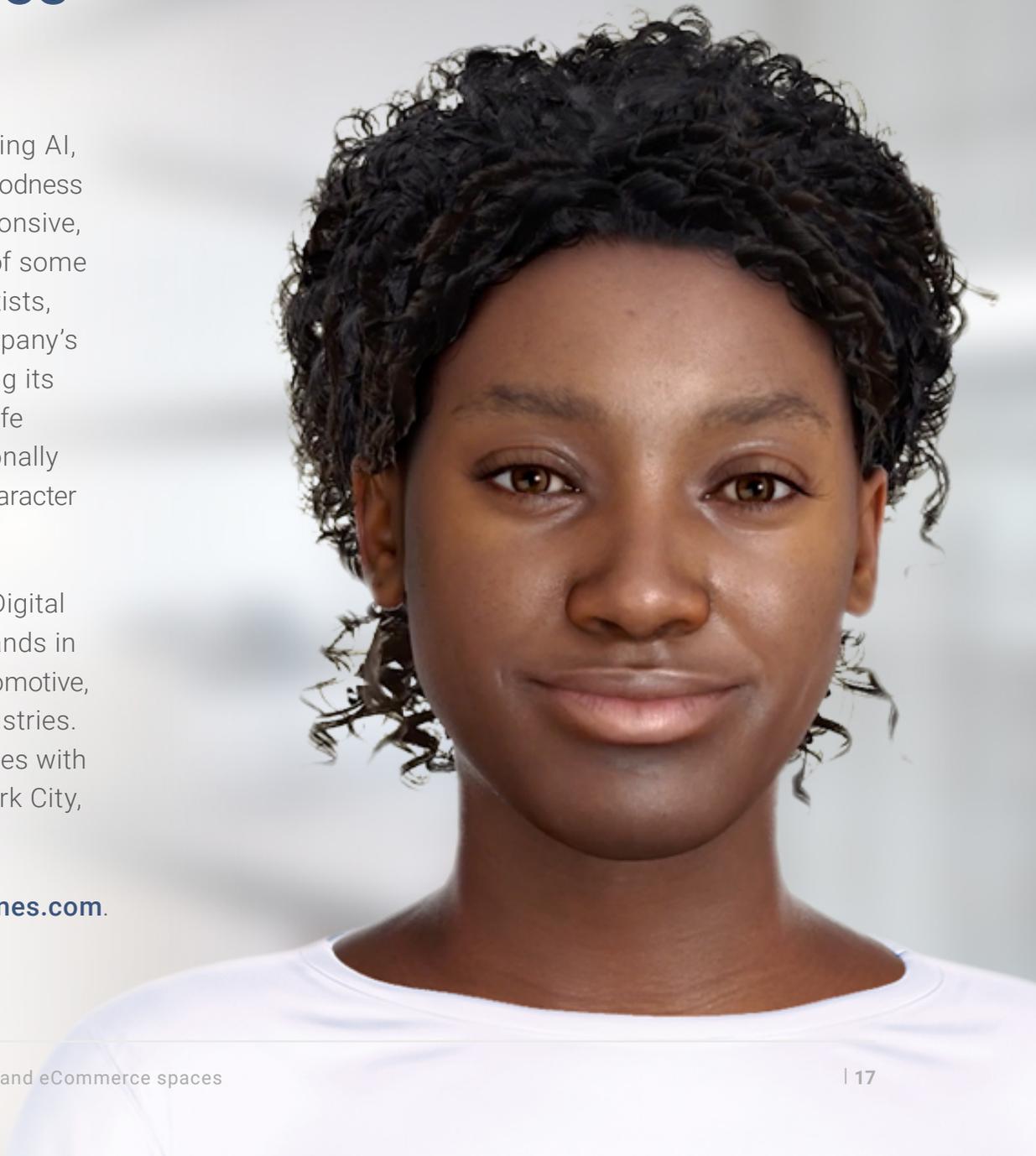


# About Soul Machines™

Soul Machines is a global pioneer in humanizing AI, dedicated to delivering the full capabilities and goodness of human and machine collaboration in a responsive, relatable and unprecedented way. Composed of some of the world's best AI researchers, neuroscientists, psychologists and innovative thinkers the company's unparalleled autonomous animation – featuring its patented Digital Brain – brings technology to life by creating dynamically interactive and emotionally responsive Digital People with personality and character that allow machines to talk to us face-to-face.

Soul Machines has deployed the world's first Digital People with some of the biggest corporate brands in the world in Financial Services, Technology, Automotive, Healthcare, Entertainment, and Education industries. Soul Machines currently has over 200 employees with offices in San Francisco, Los Angeles, New York City, London, Tokyo, Melbourne and Auckland.

For more about Soul Machines, visit [soulmachines.com](https://soulmachines.com).



“Digital People can overcome cultural, language, and geographical limitations, and implicit bias, creating ideal, personalized, empathic, and relatable customer-service experiences. They are virtual helpers acting in the real world to enhance actual, tangible productivity. They enable us to reach beyond our normal constraints.”

Greg Cross, CEO, Soul Machines

Request a Demo ▶



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