

# My Candid Consumer Journey

And What Brands Can Learn From Braces

by Allie Feinstein | 3.3.19

The direct-to-consumer model has rattled industries. From Dollar Shave Club to Casper to Warby Parker, companies have disrupted incumbents by cutting out the middle man, building modern brands, and delivering on specific consumer needs. These vertically integrated businesses own the entire consumer journey and, along with it, valuable data to enable hyper-personalized experiences.

Once you've gone direct, it's hard to go back. I witnessed this first hand when I was looking to get braces. One day, I was considering getting ClearCorrect invisible aligners through my dentist and, within two days, I was intending to purchase a competitive product from new-comer, Candid.

How did Candid, a two-year old company, beat out ClearCorrect, a 13-year old brand trusted by dental professionals around the world, and a dozen other competitive players? The answers point to best practices every brand can apply.



The alignment of two of my teeth were starting to cause severe pain. My dentist informed me that invisible aligners could offer a solution. The downside? These babies come with a \$6,000 price tag and require you to get a mold of your teeth made before you even know if this is right for you or how long you'll have to wear the aligners.

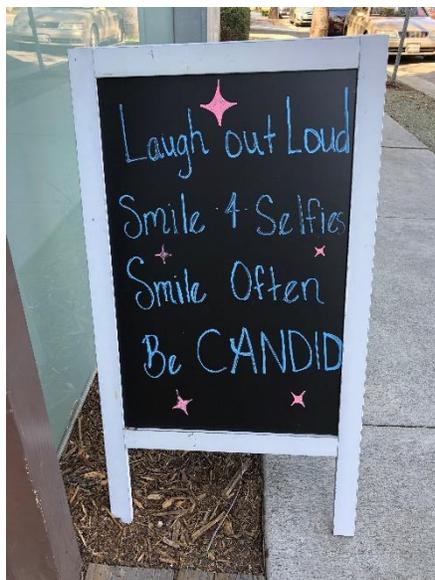
I went home to think over this overpriced, inconvenient option. Weighing what was worse – dealing with the pain or forking over \$6k and wearing these aligners for anywhere from 3 to 12 months.

The next day, I got served an ad on Instagram for invisible aligners that were **a third of the cost** and didn't require any molding. In fact, you could come in to their office get a 3D scan of your mouth, then get a virtual treatment plan, showing a 3D model of how your teeth will shift over time, BEFORE you commit to anything.



Without dwelling too much on how Instagram knew to serve me this ad in the first place (coincidentally right after I had been speaking about getting braces), I *happily* clicked on it because it was highly relevant, solved a problem, and offered a convenient, more affordable solution.

Within minutes, I had scheduled an in-person visit at their Santa Monica location.



The next day, I was greeted at the door by a friendly chalkboard sign, prompting me to “Laugh Out Loud, Smile 4 Selfies, Smile Often, Be Candid”. The office couldn't have contrasted more with that of my dentist. Cool blue walls surrounded a hip, open space with bright, soft light and modern furniture. Aesop products and greenery sprinkled throughout the room. A girl at the front desk checked me in and handed me an eco-friendly, bamboo toothbrush, to keep. This was paired with a flyer about Candid's partnership with Smile Train, a non-profit that provides free dental surgery for children in need, around the world. Signaling the company's deeper purpose and setting the tone for the experience.

After I brushed, one of the associates used a Carestream device to take a 3D scan of my mouth and, within minutes, produced a 3D model I could see and move around on the screen. This was a welcome process compared to biting down on strawberry flavored putty and waiting weeks for the mold. I kept reflecting on how much easier all of this was compared to the process with my dentist.

7 days later, I received an email with a 3D rendering of my teeth shifting over time. Produced by a qualified orthodontist. From there, I would just need to place my order (under \$2k, with payment plans available) and my full set of aligners would be mailed to me. No office visits needed.

Hours after my office visit, I got an email requesting me to complete a short survey about my experience, in exchange for a \$30 Amazon gift card. Quickly reminding me they valued by time and understood what incentives would be effective – after all, who doesn't want an Amazon gift card?

Candid shows us how **price, convenience, and branding** can be transformative in differentiating a product or service. They masterfully move the consumer from acquisition to purchase and streamline everything from the marketing to the service itself. Most importantly, they demonstrate a strong understanding of their customer. They “got me”, knew what mattered to me, and ultimately, won me over.

More and more incumbents are recognizing the need to shift thinking in order to stay ahead. Even Align Technology, leaders in the space who pioneered invisible braces with Invisalign, recently invested in Candid competitor, Smile Direct Club, hedging their bets against disruption. Dental offices are also starting to adopt new technologies like the 3D scanning. Investing in or partnering with the right emerging startups can infuse your long-standing organization with new ways of thinking and doing and drive significant results.



#### Diagnostic Questions

- Is your brand top of mind at the right place, right time?
- Is it easy to buy?
- What are you doing to streamline the customer experience?
- Is your brand purpose clear? Does it align with your consumer’s values?
- Is your brand evolving with changing consumer tastes?
- Do you understand what motivates your consumers?
- Are you looking outside of your organization for new thinking?

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