



Highly Effective Customer Experience Strategies

It's sometimes easy to get lost in a sea of jargon and acronyms when talking business technology, but these two submissions to this month's Best Practices installment cut right to the chase, with brevity and clarity. Setting goals, using an incremental approach, investing in the right technology, and actually acting on voice-of-the-customer insights are at the heart of any successful customer experience (CX) strategy.

As you read through the following pages, think about your own organization and how your approach compares to the recommendations offered by our contributors. No doubt you are already pursuing at least some of these strategies, but striving for continuous CX improvement is the actual goal.

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CX Strategies to Win in the Experience Economy

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We are entering an experience economy where exceptional customer experience (CX) is a true competitive differentiator; more than product and price. Today's customers are not just looking to get the right service at the right time and right channel. They are looking for an experience that is immersive, engaging and proactive. With exceptional CX, customers stay longer with the brand, buy more and bring more customers via word of mouth, all resulting in a direct revenue uplift. But what does it take to go from where you are now to delivering CX your customers expect?

Here are four simple steps for transforming your CX:

1. Set a CX goal; work on incremental and continuous improvements

Improving CX is an iterative and incremental process. Start by envisioning your goal—what best in class looks like—and then follow a maturity model to move one step at a time. Contact Center is definitely a critical piece in achieving CX since it facilitates and impacts customer interactions across the buyer journey.

A CX maturity model could include the following levels:

- **Customer-Negligent:** At the bottom of the maturity model, the company fails to value customers as assets, and technology set up is minimal
- **Customer-Curious:** Aware of the importance of CX but doesn't take steps to implement improvements. They might have a few basic technologies around support.
- **Customer-Aware:** Company goes beyond CX "talk" by designing a centralized and coordinated initiative, with tools for multi-channel customer interactions
- **Customer-Centric:** An established CX initiative underway with buy-in across the organization. True omni channel contact center technologies and Voice of customer tools in place.

- **Customer-Champion:** Consistently delivering outstanding CX. Customer value infused into contact center which embraces newer technologies like AI and analytics for proactive and immersive experience

While advancing through the maturity model, focus on a positive employee experience, voice of the customer and the right toolset to build that exceptional CX.

2. Orchestrate people, process and technology within the contact center

Focus on your prime CX influence—contact center. Delivering exceptional CX involves aligning key aspects pertinent to contact center—agents, customers and real-time operations.

Create personalized experiences across channels that matter the most for your customers—it could just be a select few and not all channels. Ensure, there is seamless cross channel elevation to resolve issues faster and better.

Happy agents make happy customers. Ensure your agents are engaged and empowered with the right tools that show customer 360 and journey analytics in an efficient single desktop.

Ensure there is a continuous measurement and monitoring of customer satisfaction, employee satisfaction and KPIs to drive correlated actions and next steps as it relates to CX.

Lastly, think about the right technology platform that can help achieve these with ease.

3. Build for the future

Choose a technology to build for the future—one that is open, extensible and scalable. Cloud native outweighs other cloud options here.

- Designed for scalability and agility, companies can quickly adjust to changing customer and business needs in real-time without specialist resource or expensive, complex upgrades to an on-premises solution

- Open architecture provides flexibility and future-proofs your technology investment. Not just that it preserves investments in existing technology with easy integrations
- Open application programming interfaces (APIs) enable easy application extensions, spurring innovation and driving business success. It gets easier to build add-ons with newer technologies like Artificial Intelligence (AI), where an AI chatbot not only fields questions on behalf of the agent but can also learn and provide context-rich, real time insights when transferring customers over to an agent
- Access to cloud provider experts frees your staff to focus on other CX improvement projects

4. Build a business case to invest more in contact centers

Today's contact center executives have a larger role to play in driving revenue and market share, not just optimizing costs. Contact center remains the epicenter for customer interactions, all through the customer journey from awareness to purchase, service and advocacy. Build a strong business case for investment in a robust contact center and quantify values of CX improvement through automation, migration to new technology and better KPI all of which not just drives costs down but improves CX. And, you can use those savings to fund your CX improvements.

Improving CX is not a big bang approach. It involves continuous planning with incremental improvements focusing on your frontline employees, customers, effective operations, right processes and technologies. A future-proof cloud native CX platform proves to be a critical and foundational element in achieving and exceeding your CX goals. ■

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Highly Effective CX Strategies: Ask Less, Act More

Customer experience (CX) professionals always want to know more. It's in our nature. What are customers thinking? What do they want more of? Did they like our staff? Were they disappointed? The list of questions can get out of hand quickly. With attention spans short and too many surveys for customers to respond to, we need to reign ourselves in a bit and look at what we already have right in front of our noses.

The need to act upon available data can sometimes get lost in new digital innovations and a steady stream of more data rolling in. Organizations that are looking to improve the customer experience oftentimes get too wrapped up in the technical side of it – focusing heavily on shiny new technologies, while constantly pushing out new surveys and collecting more data. However, it's important that businesses leverage the data already available to them, rather than wasting customers' time and good will to collect more. To do this, organizations must act on the data available and make sure they close the loop, getting back to customers to show they're really listening.

Grab a pen and make a note. What data do you already have? Contact center records, emails, complaints processes, CRM databases....do you NEED more? Sure? Don't ask questions if you already have the information. And certainly don't ask if you won't be acting on it.

ACT ON AVAILABLE DATA, THEN CLOSE THE LOOP

Listening to the Voice of the Customer is core to any CX strategy. But more measurement isn't always the answer. In fact, more data can just muddy the

waters because what you need is not necessarily the data itself, but what the data is *telling* you. By translating the data into actionable insight, you'll then have a deeper understanding into the customer experience throughout the entire buyer journey.

If you have decided to put forth a survey, only do so if you plan to close the loop and you need the additional insight you are asking for. This means assessing the data, acting on the data, and then letting the customer(s) or employee(s) who were part of the survey process know what you did based on what they provided.

Customer feedback is important. It can provide early warning signs of dissatisfied and at-risk customers, and can also help you spot broken processes or issues with specific employees. Often, however, companies don't act on customer problems or complaints until it's too late. One way to combat this is by setting up an action management process that enables you to analyze customer feedback as soon you receive it and set alerts to immediately respond to issues and problems. This gives you the opportunity to proactively close the loop and positively influence customer retention. Also, if possible, use the information you get from your customer survey to retrain employees or investigate potential defects in your systems.

USE WORDS, NOT NUMBERS

Numbers are important – and there are many numbers you should be paying attention to as a CX professional. Net Promoter Score® (NPS) is great, and so is Customer Effort Score (CES), for example. But they are only

measurements, not results. What are you doing with those numbers after you have them? What can your team do with the numbers to improve the customer experience?

All too often, we see companies chasing the metric, whichever one they choose, and trying to figure out how to move the number rather than appreciating it for what it is – a number.

To combat this, it's essential to start speaking in words again. Storytelling is becoming recognized as a key skill for CX teams now, not only to tell the customers what you've done with their feedback, but to shore up internal support too. By all means, get the data together and analyze it, but then add color by talking about the real-life customer experience and the action your business is taking to drive change.

WHAT NEXT?

Designing a CX program should never be a “one size fits all” process. What makes sense for your organization might not make sense for the next. What is important is making sure you're truly listening to the Voice of the Customer – listening and acting upon it and using it to drive culture change internally.

Don't just send out another survey because you have the technology to do so; only send out the survey because you want to (and are ready to) enhance the customer experience by squeezing out every bit of insight that comes back with each response. ■