WHAT DO CUSTOMERS WANT?

Thinking Outside In: *The Modern Approach to Creating*
Unforgettable Customer Experiences That Grow Revenue

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At the start of his career in high technology, Don held various product marketing and product management positions at Apple, including several leadership roles in the company's education business. He began his career selling securities for a major Wall Street bank.

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John started his career as a small business owner and started teaching people about digital marketing. He later built customer education programs for Constant Contact (IPO in 2007), and became an author. He wrote multiple "For Dummies" marketing books, became a contributor at Entrprepreneur.com, and also authored a few marketing training courses for Lynda.com (now LinkedIn Learning). He also served on the advisory board at Wildfire (acquired by Google in 2012). He later teamed up with the Mobile Marketing Association where he developed mobile marketing training programs to Fortune 100 brands.

He reentered the startup world when he joined Return Path as a sales trainer and then became their head of product marketing. He found his way to FullContact in January of 2015 and became their VP of marketing.

> *More than one-third of businesses will restructure to shift to customer-obsessed operations.*

– Forrester, 2017 Predictions: Dynamics That Will Shape The Future In The Age Of The Customer

Experience as a competitive advantage.

We are living in an experience-driven on-demand economy. As consumers, our judgements and behaviors are determined by the experiences we have with a company – whether we know it or not. As human beings, we rationalize decisions based on our memories, not our experiences. Yet it's often experiences that create the most lasting memories, according to Daniel Kahneman, psychologist, behavioral economist, and Nobel Prize winner.

For example, you could have a fantastic experience with a product or service, but when you look back on that company and what it offers, you only have bad memories. Say you head off on vacation, a 10-day cruise of wining and dining and beautiful sites. Your cabin is perfect. The service is top-of-the-line. The food is out of this world. However, when getting a massage by the cruise masseuse, the music was too loud, the masseuse was chatty and sloppy with the massage, and they cut it short. The entire massage was a wash. It was anything but relaxing.

Kahneman says that the odds are this one bad experience will degrade your memory of the cruise itself, no matter how picture perfect everything else may have been. If the masseuse ended up aggravating a muscle or causing something to be thrown off, the otherwise five-star cruise may not even be remembered.

This should be a lasting lesson for businesses across industries, and is the topic of this ebook. The consumers of today are more interested in deeper and more meaningful experiences in their interactions than with the products and services they buy. Without providing a great experience for your customers every single time they interact with your company, its products or services, an opportunity is lost to build loyalty, decrease customer churn, and grow bottom-line revenue.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Satisfying the needs of the part of our brain that craves experiences should be the cornerstone of customer experience in modern business, no matter what industry you're in or who your customers are. Human beings are driven by emotion, and it only makes sense for businesses to cater to that.

Whether you're in marketing, sales, product development, or customer service, this ebook will go into detail around how intangible yet memorable experiences are the key to modern business success.

"Companies are trying to become more proactive around providing a great customer experience and they're starting to see customer experience as something that has more of an expanded definition," says John Arnold, Head of Customer Experience and Strategy at Demandbase. "Everything that touches the customer is the customer experience. And while no one department at a company can claim that they own the customer experience, there needs to be something that brings everything together around the customer."

Great experiences hinge on meeting and exceeding your customer's expectations. And as CX industry expert and thought leader Don Field of AlienVault told us, "You need more these days."

Let's learn what "more" means.

CX should exist as a shared responsibility, not one that operates in silos.

While businesses are beginning to see the experiences they offer to customers may be one of the most valuable assets they have, many are still iffy about investing in the research needed to leverage CX as a competitive advantage; and one that has proven to drive a 20 percent increase in revenue.

Yet, all of the data you need to develop a sound CX strategy is right before your eyes. First lesson we've learned over the years, and one that Arnold echoed earlier, is that CX is not one person or one department's responsibility. No one has sole responsibility for CX; it should always be shared across the organization in a cross-collaborative approach. Every department or person your customers interact with contains invaluable implicit and explicit data on the experience that was offered.

So if CX exists in silos right now at your organization, take the time to break them down first and get every key stakeholder from across departments on the same page and following the same marching orders. Without this consensus, the experience will become disjointed across the customer journey and it will come off to the customer as disorganized, at the very least.

"Thinking about the customer across the entire business is what is new for businesses and what makes that tricky for CX professionals is that you can't really own everything that affects the customer experience -- you have be an influencer and leader inside the company and own some of it, but you can't own the whole thing," says Arnold.

Silos are damaging no matter if it's in relation to experiences or any other aspect of your business. Breaking down silos include:

Motivate all employees to have a stake in the game by incentivizing experience-driven efforts and show them what is lost financially for the business and reputationally if customers are not delivered the experience they are looking for from your company.

Foster a collaborative environment by encouraging departments to work with each other, bringing in different expertise and opinions all in the name of improving and sustaining great experiences.

Broadening the perspective of CX by making your company customer-driven and customer-centric. This requires buy-in from the very top.

Develop a customer-first initiative across the organization.

A positive customer experience not only impacts reputation and revenue growth, but directly correlates with marketing-related outcomes such as customer satisfaction, loyalty, and word-of-mouth advertising.

Yet customer experience has historically been a rather limited source for enabling business due to the lack of "conceptual clarity, explained by a diverse set of theories, and founded upon divergent empirical conclusions," as mentioned in the article *The Multilevel Nature of Customer Experience Research: An Integrative Review and Research Agenda.*

According to Accenture...

23%	20%	57%
B2B companies achieve strong returns on their customer experience investments	Generate low or no return	Are surviving but not exactly thriving

One way to survive and thrive with CX is to offer consistently great experiences with an "all in or nothing" mentality. If only parts of the organization are committed to delivering a world-class experience for customers time and again, while other parts don't really bother -- it's wasted time, money, and energy all around.

For companies such as Demandbase, an account-based marketing software firm serving the B2B space, their approach to offering customers stellar experiences is part of a holistic customer-first initiative, says John Arnold, Head of Customer Experience and Strategy at Demandbase and author of numerous books in the "For Dummies" brand.

"At Demandbase, we have an initiative called customer-first and one of the things that we do is provide feedback loops and insights into customer journeys and we involve other departments in thinking customer-first when they create products or sales processes or buy technology – anything that they're going to do. You always want to justify things by revenue and ROI and impact on the business, but we also encourage every department to think customer-first," says Arnold.

Cultivations of a customer-centered culture across the organizations

A recognition that the strategy is largely interdependent on across functional groups.

The ability to generate and scale customer-generated marketing content

Word-of-mouth marketing is hands-down the most powerful. Invite customers to contribute to blog posts, videos, testimonials, case studies, etc.

Highly-effective self-service and social support that scales as you grow

The power of community is phenomenal. Give your customers as many channels to communicate with other customers as possible and the educational resources they need 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, without having to phone or email your support team.

Source: *Salesforce Blog*

Improved customer loyalty, brand perceptions and lifetime customer value

Hone marketing messaging and company positioning to communicate to the customer that they are not just buying a product or service, but they are investing in something more meaningful and lasting. Frame the company as being the customers trusted partner rather than just another vendor.

The incorporation of voice of the customer (VOC) into decision-making across the company

Include customers in everything the organization does. Post quotes throughout the office, read them at customer meetings, use customer's stories to power marketing and sales when they talk to potential customers. *Download our ebook to learn how to build a VOC program*.

CX Challenges

One of the greatest opportunities for companies with CX is also one of the greatest challenges companies face: thinking in a more modern and proactive way, says Adam Miller, CCXP, Director of Customer Experience Practice at Avoka.

"It's where a lot of companies lack imagination or freedom to think of what's best for their users – they tend to think more in terms of the business needs or what's better for the business and trying to make the customer experience fit into that," says Miller.

As consumers ourselves, we know that our preferences and expectations are in a constant flux. What we want out of customer service is a moving target as companies evolve and offer a variety of levels of service and experiences. Being on the other side of this relationship as an experience provider, hitting the moving target every single time and keeping up is a top challenge for many companies.

> *For example, as a bank, you can't just look at what other banks are doing," says Miller. "You need to look at the big picture in terms of customer experience. What is Amazon doing? What is Southwest doing? Your customers aren't going to view you in a vacuum, so you shouldn't view yourself or your company this way either.*

Gather useful data through assessing the current customer experience.

CX assessments allow organizations to analyze how consumers experiences with the company and/or products and services may evolve over time. The approach identifies how customer satisfaction accumulates throughout the entire customer journey and provides a holistic framework to base decisions from via longitudinal research studies.

Although it sounds trite, and frankly rather obvious, learning about the current experience your customers receive starts by talking directly with them, says Don Field, VP of Customer Experience at AlienVault with experience working for brands such as Microsoft, Cisco, and Apple.

Field's Five-Step CX Assessment Process

1	2	3	4	5
Measure and listen what is currently going on (such as talking directly with your customers)	Identify any areas of friction your customers may be facing	Find the root cause to the friction	Fix the root case	Measure and listen again

More often than not, Field says, customers want your product to succeed so it benefits them in the long-term, and they're usually happy to share their feedback. Anecdotal insight can be more helpful in getting to the root cause of any friction that may exist in the experience. Get your hands on any kind of data from any department that can help tell the current narrative of CX at your company.

Have the right people with the right skills delivering the right kind of customer experiences

The saying, "fake it until you make it" cannot apply to the concept of customer experience. It's a business aspect that is either there or it isn't, and one of the very first things that a consumer can sniff out from the first time they interact with your business. Don't settle for mediocrity as nearly _57 percent_ of B2B companies do, in this area. If you do, you risk losing what would otherwise be brand advocates and loyal returning consumers.

Map out your customer's journey to improve CX
Analyze the customer experience from end-to-end

Research shows that it takes 12 positive experiences to repair the damage caused by one lingering negative one. And we all know that one grumpy or unsatisfied customer will go ring those social media networks the loudest they possibly can. "To that end, brands need to serve up nothing short of stellar customer experiences throughout the purchase journey and even beyond," says _Daniel Newman_, a principal analyst of Futurum Research and CEO of Broadsuite Media group.

Mapping out the complete customer journey is the first essential step of improving the experience you deliver to your customers. At its core, customer journey maps are simple and certainly not a new idea. However, using this approach has been an effective starting point for many companies that lead the CX space today.

"Internally, just about every part of the company touches customers," says Field. "That means that just about every part of our company gets to see and hear what our customers are saying and are thinking. Gathering internal perspective and feedback is helpful because folks internally will see the customer experience from a different light."

To gain insight into the complete journey, start by mapping the the path your customers take from the very first time they interact to the end of the sales process.

Maps that outline the path your customer takes can no doubt get complicated, but regardless, it's necessary to capture those complexities to holistically understand the entire process of your customers. How well you truly understand the process reflects how great the experience you offer them is.

> **"** *The more touchpoints you have, the more complicated – but necessary – such a map becomes", says Adam Richardson, author of Innovation X: Why a Company's Toughest Problems are its Greatest Advantage. "Sometimes customer journey maps are cradle to grave, looking at the entire arc of engagement.* **"**

Walk through the existing CX. Start things off by identifying the touch points where your customer interacts with your company, it's products, or services.

Determine the multiple paths of entry. Did the customer hear about you from an online ad? Did they search for your company online? Did they download a piece of content from your website and request a demo or call with sales? Did they hear about it from a friend or colleague? What happened after that? This is where things can get complicated.
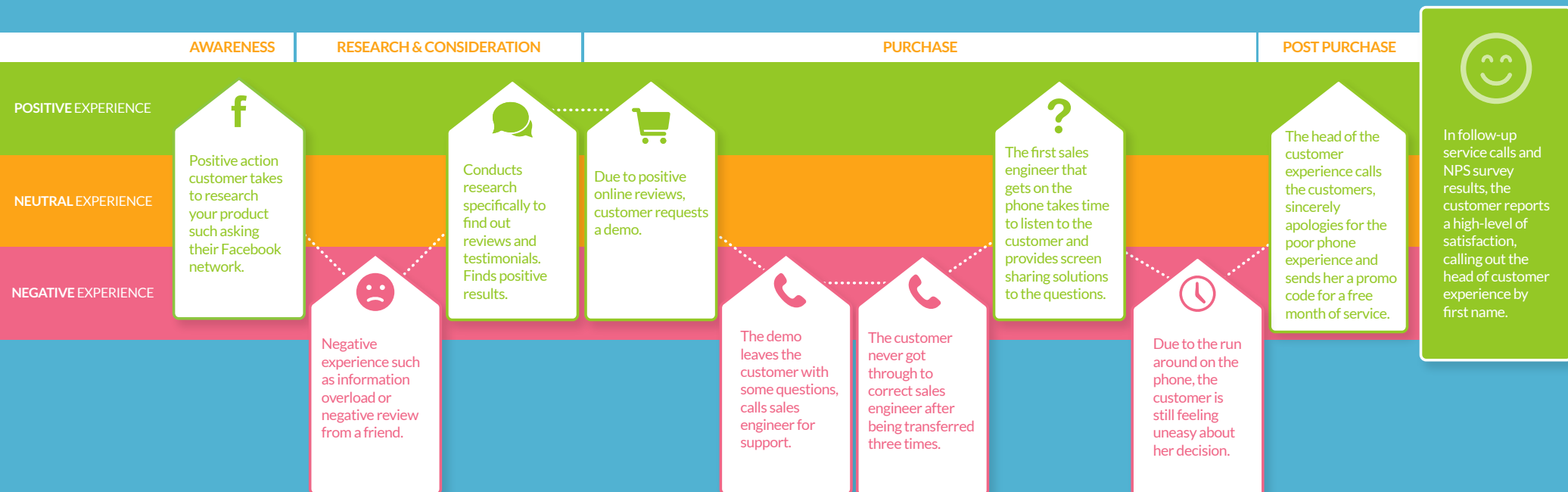
Get feedback from all levels. Talk with and document as much as possible with key stakeholders throughout the organization to learn how they interact with the customers, how often, and what they gather from their interactions.

CUSTOMER JOURNEY MAP

This is a generic representation of the ways in which a customer moves through the buying journey. Print this out and make it your own.
We recommend having a few variations that display different points of entry. Share with key stakeholders to determine areas to improve and optimize.

This is your target customer and represents how she or he enters your buying cycle and describes the problem they are looking to solve.

| | AWARENESS | RESEARCH & CONSIDERATION | | PURCHASE | | | | POST PURCHASE | |

POSITIVE EXPERIENCE

NEUTRAL EXPERIENCE

NEGATIVE EXPERIENCE

Positive action customer takes to research your product such asking their Facebook network.

Negative experience such as information overload or negative review from a friend.

Conducts research specifically to find out reviews and testimonials. Finds positive results.

Due to positive online reviews, customer requests a demo.

The demo leaves the customer with some questions, calls sales engineer for support.

The customer never got through to correct sales engineer after being transferred three times.

The first sales engineer that gets on the phone takes time to listen to the customer and provides screen sharing solutions to the questions.

Due to the run around on the phone, the customer is still feeling uneasy about her decision.

The head of the customer experience calls the customers, sincerely apologies for the poor phone experience and sends her a promo code for a free month of service.

In follow-up service calls and NPS survey results, the customer reports a high-level of satisfaction, calling out the head of customer experience by first name.

How to Drive Actionable CX Change Using Customer Feedback: A Use Case from AlienVault

AlienVault offers a flagship five-day training class, live, and online. Field told us about the following scenario where he saw an anomaly in the data that helped change the way the company offers a popular product and improve the experience of the training.

We had a customer who signed up to take the live online class that was scheduled for Central European Time (CET). What we found out was that this customer was actually taking the training in Pennsylvania. That meant that he was taking the class from 3 a.m. - 11 a.m. ET for five straight days. We thought that was quite fascinating, so we ended up reaching out to him to understand why was he was taking the class at those hours.

He told us a story that was not uncommon for our customers. Our product is a security product. Although we sell to organizations of all sizes, our customers don't tend to have huge security departments. He told us that he couldn't afford to be away from his desk for a whole week at a time because he is the person making sure the organization stays secure. He took the class in CET so he could complete his training very early in the morning and still get work done in the afternoon before doing it all over again the next morning.

I said that the key to providing great CX is to find the root cause and fix it. In this case, he was very happy with the class, and we could have said there is no issue here, but in fact, there was an issue. I started talking to our sales people who said this is not an uncommon scenario

they are running into and it's actually constraining sales of training classes. They said we know there are some customers that would benefit from training but the customer is telling us, "A five day class? There's just no way. I'm not going to buy it from you because I can't afford five days."

We looked at the various ways we could handle this because we realized that in order to be really successful with our product, customers needed the five days. But this wasn't working for our customers, no matter how efficient the class is in comparison to what others in the market offer.

We now offer anybody who signs up for our class what we call the "2-day-3-day split." What that means is that they can take the Monday and the Tuesday class one week and take the Wednesday, Thursday, Friday classes a later week. We don't charge any differently for that; we just give people flexibility to handle it so they don't have to be out of the office for a week at a time. We've seen a significant number of our customers take advantage of this and thank us for it. The sales team is saying there are a significant number of sales that go through to closed won only because we offer the 2-day-3-day split training.

MEASUREMENT

Track CX over time to get a tangible performance metric.

Measuring experience, something that is otherwise intangible, is a combination of factors.

Demandbase, for example, uses a cumulative sum to determine customer satisfaction – the key indicator of experience – of the following as they trend over time:

- Net promoter score (NPS)

- Survey data

- Product usage

- Time spent with service

- Number of open support tickets

- Participation in thought leadership and training

- Email clicks and other marketing engagement metrics such as website traffic and contact requests

You may also include customer acquisition cost, sentiment on social media channels, customer churn rates, renewals, and customer referral rates.

However you track CX performance, remember to measure it the best way possible for your organization, industry, and goals. To track experience over time can be a powerful metric and tell an insightful story of business success, brand reputation, and revenue growth.

CONCLUSION

Trust is the most valued business currency. You build trust by offering a consistently delightful experience to each and every customer day in and day out.

As Forrester points out in its 2017 predictions report, "Today's customers reward or punish companies based on a single experience -- a single moment in time." And that bad experience can bring those customers to the doors of your competitors -- increasing customer acquisition costs for your business, tarnish the brand's reputation, and devalue its products and services.

Throughout this ebook we highlighted the aspect that emotional connections drive consumers to buy, make decisions, and become loyal to your brand. Combined with statistical and empirical research conducted on a regular basis cross collaboratively, customers will begin to see and feel a holistically high-touch experience that leaves them craving more.

Now is the time to lay the groundwork for a world-class customer experience and knowing on the very granular level what drives your customers decisions. By identifying the moments that matter most to them is two-fold, according to Forrester:

- Critical steps in journeys where customers are paying the most attention, are most anxious, or appreciate the most.

- Distinct opportunities to deliver the best and most authentic part of your brand so a single moment can easily extend to the larger brand.

We will continue to see brands that offer exceptional experiences time and again survive and thrive in comparison to those that lag behind. Start setting the pace by honing an experience your customers seek you out for. Beat out the competition by staying agile, offering solutions that solve deep and painful problems, and deliver experiences people actually write home about.

ABOUT

Founded in 2006, SurveyGizmo is a powerful, survey and data insights platform that empowers business professionals to make informed decisions. Through high-powered application software, it offers user-friendly data collection tools for understanding your customers, markets, and employees in real time and communicating this information across an organization. It provides data insights in over 205 countries, with 50,000 new surveys created and 7.5 million responses collected every week, for customers like Fedex, Microsoft, Bloomberg Television and GE.

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