Mapping A Data-Driven customer Journey

DOES YOUR TEAM HAVE A COMPLETE VIEW OF CUSTOMERS?

Companies rely on superior customer experiences to fuel growth, but too often consumers find their interactions with brands and companies lacking. According to Forrester's U.S. 2018 Customer Experience Index (CX) Index™, U.S. brands remain unexceptional when it comes to providing quality customer experiences, continuing a three-year downward trend.

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According to a recent Argyle Executive Forum survey conducted in partnership with Huron, only 47% of customer experience leaders believe their customer experience processes have been optimized to deliver maximum return on their customer relationship management (CRM) investment. A similar minority (45%) reported that their organization is achieving the fullest possible value from their CRM solution.

Many organizations are looking to elevate customer interactions with the help of CRM tools, which are primarily focused on tracking sales activities and forecasting. But customer experience data and processes can be the catalyst for a shift in mindset that has the potential to add significant value to the customer journey.

Modern customer experience (CX) platforms support a 360-degree view of the customer. This near real-time view of customer engagement helps marketing, customer service, sales and other stakeholders make informed decisions to improve the customer experience. Customer experience platforms can be leveraged to organize, automate and synchronize business processes for stakeholders in customer-facing roles, which in today's business environment means nearly every employee.

While deploying an advanced customer experience platform can be expensive and disruptive, it is essential to elevating every stage of the customer

journey. If you aren't tracking customer relationships from the beginning and at every step along the way, you aren't capturing all the data needed to evaluate the customer experience as a whole. Without that insight, there is no benchmark for success and no ability to adjust.

Organizations are willing to make the investment in time and resources if there is a clear benefit to customers as well as internal stakeholders. Yet too often executives get excited at the potential of a customer experience solution, but fall short when it comes to adoption and utilization.

As with any major transformation, a successful CX tool rollout requires extensive planning and strong change management capabilities. Simply recreating manual processes using automated systems without understanding the organization's customer lifecycle and current hurdles will not provide the much-needed return on investment (ROI).

A CX solution is only as powerful as the work done upfront to ensure that it delivers maximum value to the executive team and all stakeholders. There are also business capabilities that organizations must master before they can deploy the technology. Whether you already have a CRM system or are contemplating the acquisition of one, it is essential that you create mature and effective business processes that can be the foundation of a robust customer journey.

This white paper will explore the challenges that CX executives face, how they can evaluate performance at each stage of the customer journey and the benefits of modern solutions to bolster the customer experience.

Defining the Issues Facing CX Executives

Two of the biggest challenges facing CX professionals: a lack of real-time customer insight and difficulties operationalizing the experience. That's according to the Solving for CX, 2018 Customer Experience Survey, which surveyed 200 senior U.S.-

based decision-makers with involvement in the CX journey at their organizations.

To understand what the organization needs from a CRM solution, it is critical to fully appreciate the customer lifecycle — reach, acquire, develop, retain and inspire — and identify the most important areas for growth. Most companies focus on the lead-to-sale portion of the customer lifecycle and give limited attention to the rest of the journey.

Determining business needs and desired outcomes will drive decisions surrounding customer experience solutions. Customer interactions today are happening across channels, devices and even partners. To truly impact the customer experience, data must be captured and meaningfully contextualized across inputs, including payments, physical locations, websites, mobile apps, sensors and voice-activated assistants.

Today's customers — from digital natives to those who have only recently adopted technology for their personal and professional interactions with companies — expect a consistent experience and that their demand issues are going to be handled efficiently. A negative experience at any point in the customer journey can cause significant damage to the relationship.

Evaluating Each Stage of the Customer Journey

In an effort to better align customer expectations with performance, companies need to adopt new customer experience platforms. To support the case for a new direction and investment, CX executives need to pivot in how they think about the customer experience. They need to evaluate how each stage impacts the entire journey.

Not all stages of the lifecycle are universal, but there are some standard stages that encompass the typical customer journey. The challenge for CX executives is to leverage tools and platforms

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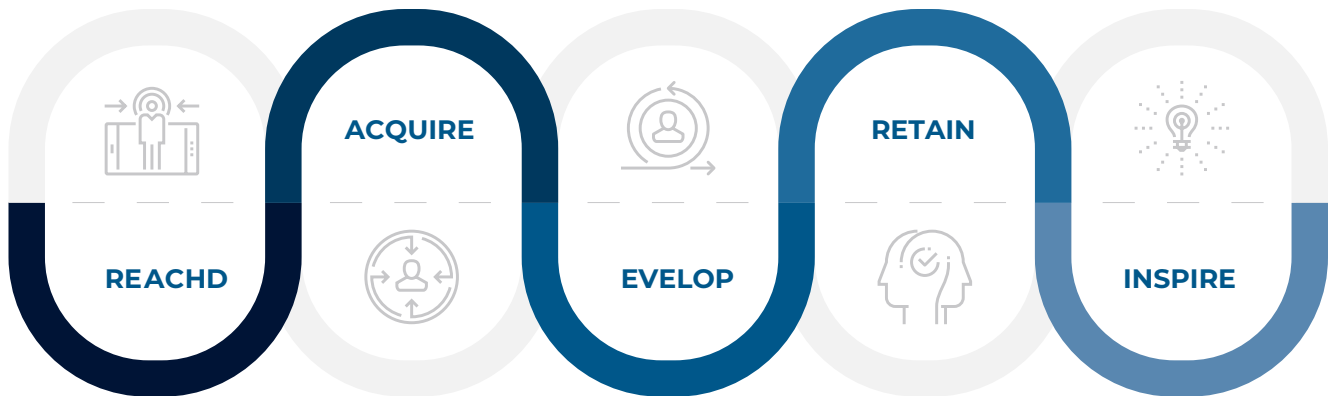
to understand how each stage of the customer experience could impact their business and adjust.

Here is a look at some of the stages and how companies view their capabilities during the customer journey:

· **Reach** — the first stage of the customer journey — involves making initial contact with customers and creating awareness. Respondents to the Argyle and Huron survey rated their performance at this stage as 3.6 out of 5. Most current customer experience platforms are equipped to handle and measure success at this initial point in the customer journey.

· **Acquire** is the second stage of the journey, where the odds of a prospect becoming a customer are significantly enhanced through direct, personalized communication. As in the first stage, respondents to the survey felt they were doing an adequate job at 3.4 out of 5 using standard CRM tools.

· The **Develop** stage of the journey is where the process can begin to break down using standard CRM tools and processes. This is where you work to gain the trust of customers after the initial sale to build a long-term mutually beneficial relationship. Companies are often lacking the analytics and predictive tools to understand why customers made the initial purchase and what else they might purchase to expand their relationship with the company. There is a drop-off at this stage

among survey respondents, with a 3.1 out of 5.

· **Retain** is a critical juncture in the customer journey, as it takes more to obtain a new customer than it does to deepen a relationship with an existing buyer and develop a level of trust. To succeed in keeping customers engaged, sellers need a complete view of the relationship, which is a feature of modern customer experience platforms. Respondents to the Argyle and Huron survey felt they were doing an adequate job of retention at 3.5 out of 5.

· **Inspire** is the most challenging step of the customer lifecycle, as it can be tough to get customers to be an advocate for your brand. The Argyle and Huron survey respondents reported that they need to improve in this area, giving their performance only a 3.0 out of 5.

A Roadmap to A Successful Customer Journey Transformation

Simply automating current processes that impact the customer experience is not enough. CX executives have to think broadly about how they can align the organization's goals with customer expectations. Companies need to think big, start small and move fast to drive ROI.

The process starts with a discussion — with a high level of senior management involvement — about what a successful customer journey looks like and where the transformation should begin. This process is unique to each company.

The team should come out of the brainstorming session with ideas for success. Some examples of objectives include:

· Better target prospects.

· Increase volume at the top of the funnel.

· Make a stronger connection with prospects.

· Improve consistency in how the company markets to prospects.

· Smooth the onboarding process for new clients.

· Improve the ability to market differently to existing clients.

· Meet or exceed service level agreements, including resolving issues within specified timeframes.

Every organization aims to invest in initiatives that will provide significant ROI. It is important to focus on the goals that can move the needle in the most significant way.

Companies also need to evaluate the impact an initiative will have on the entire customer journey. For example, if a company is able to get 10% more prospects — an achievable goal — how many additional deals will the team be able to close based on the current ratio of prospects to closed deals?

In addition, the team needs to evaluate why a particular project has not been tackled previously. Determine whether the issue centers around technology, processes, culture or a combination.

Once the goals for improving the customer journey have been established, it is time to prioritize the projects:

· Those with the highest business value and a low level of complexity move to the top of the list. These are quick wins that can increase confidence and build momentum for the more challenging tasks ahead.

· The next set of goals to undertake are those that will yield significant results but are going to take more time, resources and experience to achieve. Maintenance items should also be on the list.

· Inevitably, there will be items that are out of scope and should be prioritized at a later time. This could include the company lacking the technology or resources or the company having to overcome cultural barriers before making an item a priority.

As you finalize your goals, remember to keep the plan flexible once implementation begins. What you expect to happen in terms of customer engagement may differ from what happens once you try to move the needle at a certain stage in the customer journey.

Putting the right customer experience tools in place, integrating them with current systems, and providing access are essential to a successful transformation. Without sophisticated tools, gathering information on customers to better facilitate a working relationship can be a difficult task. Everyone in the organization needs access to customer data, including transactions and preferences, to support a relationship that goes beyond the most recent transaction.

While engaging prospects and turning them into customers is critical to profitability, organizations must not lose sight of the complete customer lifecycle. Repeat customers are a valuable commodity, and customers stick with companies that provide an exceptional experience. According to Customer-Centricity: The Rules of Engagement, 31% of the time customers switch brands because they found a new company with better prices. However, more than one-third of the time, 34%, they switch because they are dissatisfied with the service at the old company.

Ultimately, improving the customer experience is a process, not a one-and-done approach. Technology and data are enablers, but continuous improvement and evaluation of the customer journey is essential.

Conclusion

A CRM system alone is not going to improve your customer experience management. It takes detailed preparation and analysis of your organization's people, technology, and processes to implement a solution that will be embraced by stakeholders and deliver value.

A CX solution is more than just a sales activities tracker. It provides essential insights to help shape every touchpoint in a customer's interaction with an organization. This is vital information to deepen and strengthen the customer relationship throughout the lifecycle.

With a clear focus and alignment of systems capabilities and business needs, a customer experience platform can be a hub of profitability.

Key Takeaways

- Many customers are not satisfied with the customer journey, as they see companies take a transactional view of their interactions rather than building long-term relationships.

- Customers today expect seamless interactions at every point in their engagement, and CX leaders recognize that they need to adapt their platforms and strategies to provide a 360-view of each customer.

- A successful plan begins with an open discussion of the company's current customer experience challenges and future objectives. Prioritizing initiatives that will provide value quickly but have a low level of complexity will provide a catalyst for more challenging tasks.

- With a vision of how to influence the customer experience — leveraging a combination of people, processes and technology — companies can engage and retain customers by anticipating their needs and exceeding their expectations.

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