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Elusive and Exclusive – the CX Opportunity

Avoiding Common Pitfalls and Leveraging Data-Driven Strategies
for Lasting Loyalty



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Elusive and Exclusive – the CX Opportunity

Talking about data-driven CX is a bit like talking about reversing backwards – if you're reversing, you're already going backwards. The same is true for CX; if you're talking about CX, it should be, by its very nature, data driven.

Let's talk about why CX became "a thing" in the first place. A relatively young discipline, CX only emerged in the early 2000s as a standalone practice as a means for big businesses to better differentiate themselves from the exponential swell of competition entering the market. Not really part of marketing; not really part of insights and not really part of product, CX's role in driving deep brand loyalty was as mysterious as it was sexy.

Elusive and exclusive, belonging only to the PowerPoint presentations of the hottest management consultants and the Silicon Valley c-suites, CX took some time to be understood well enough to be effectively leveraged for businesses to see true bottom line impact.

In the utopian scenario, a well-implemented CX strategy would result in the Care Bear customer, sharing the brand love with all they meet. It would consider all the journey states, episodes and customer-facing channels within the customer experience journey, from unaware and not on a customer journey with a brand, right through to brand love and advocacy – the holy grail of customer loyalty.

Seamlessly moving customers through the various stages of the journey requires a brand to understand a customer's pains and gains at each moment in the journey; which touchpoints they can best employ to mitigate pain points in advance or ride the proverbial wave of a customer's delight when they experience the brand.

Without representative customer insights and data about the brand experience, the CX game is a company's to lose. The road to hell is paved with good intentions – implementing CX but getting it wrong can be even worse than not having it at all. Here are some ways businesses fail.

(CX) Culture eats (product) Strategy for Breakfast

You can't half-arse CX. Simple as that. If a business chooses to adopt a truly customer-centric approach, the egos of product experience must be left at the door. This is an especially bitter pill to swallow for brands that have ploughed time and dollars into slick product development and testing, only to hear that their shiny diamonds are simply lumps of coal in the eyes of the consumer.

Steven Covey's "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People's" first rule is to start with the end in mind; I would venture to say that the first rule of developing highly effective products is to start with the customer in mind, and to do that, investing in consumer data is critical.

Sample of One Syndrome

We've all come across those Brand Managers that metamorphosise into the human embodiment of the brand itself. They know the brand so well because they are, in fact... the brand *assume

zen-like pose*. As much as this may seem to be the ultimate commitment to a brand, an often unintentional consequence of this is that they think they understand their target audience so well (because they feel they are the persona of said target audience) that they forget to ask their actual customers if their assumptions about the brand experience is truly representative.

It is important to flesh out the characteristics of a brand's target personas based on well-gathered data, to gain a robust understanding of the consumer's actual wants and needs. Without the depth and colour to customers' culture, language and nuance, brands may appear inauthentic to their target audience and even alienate customers – brand suicide.

The Experience Handicap

“I have worked here for years. I know our customers better than anyone.”

If you've heard this before, please say “aye.” Marketers and CX professionals make this mistake over and over again, thinking that because they once knew what their customers wanted, that they still do, without considering the voice of the consumer afresh. This results in a two-dimensional, stale customer experience and opens the door for competitors who truly have their finger on the pulse of consumer needs to weasel their way in.

CX is also never finished. It is not something that can be “marked as complete” on an Asana board or closed off as a project. Customer Experience is a living, breathing way of working that continues in perpetuity, as long as the business has customers who live and breathe. Brands and businesses are at risk of the Experience Handicap if they don't adopt a continuous improvement approach to their customer experience, because there is always someone around the corner who is just about to do it better.

He Said, She Said

Anecdotal feedback can be a blessing, but when uncategorised and not adequately weighted, can lead to a skewed or subjective conclusion. Just because two customers have made a similar comment on a brand's Instagram page, does not mean that this is the customers' number one pain point.

It is important to understand how those comments stack up against all the other consumer pain points so that appropriate action might be taken. Perhaps it's something new that requires further investigation; maybe it's a new light on existing issues customers face in that particular journey state that does need to be addressed. If there is no system or process in place to manage the data inputs appropriately, who really knows? It can be a costly and unnecessarily time-consuming exercise to down-tools on existing work pieces to “fight fires,” so it's important to know the extent of how new, anecdotal feedback could affect the business.

Customer verbatims and qualitative NPS responses are very important for businesses to understand the nuances of how a customer experiences the brand, to really get into the mind of the customer so that they can take a more well-rounded approach to addressing it when they do.

Assumption is the...

We all know it, but we all do it. Just because it seems obvious to us, doesn't mean it's obvious to our customers. Because we know our own brand so well, brand people can experience some sort of brand myopia – a narrow-minded approach to communication and engagement which largely rides off the assumption that our customers know as much as we do about what our products have to offer. Assumption about customer experience runs so deep that we may not even think that what we are communicating might not resonate with a customer, hence we should take our touchpoints and key messages out and test them with our customers, in the same way someone might take a rug outside and beat it with a broom – vigorously!

The One Customer View

The unicorn for any business is to have one customer view. No one will say it out loud, but this is also an elusive concept for many CX and marketing pros.

I may be applying a few of the CX errors mentioned above by making this assumption, but I am sure that some of these points resonate with you if you have ever worked in CX, marketing or customer support:

- Our data sources are fragmented. How do we consolidate it?
- We have data from so many touchpoints. How do we integrate them?
- It's difficult to visualise and analyse the data to draw accurate conclusions about our customers.
- Are we collecting the right data for the customer task we have at hand?

The list goes on.

CX can be a tricky business but there are a few tricks that businesses can use to make the right calls early on.

1. Know Thyself

Investing in MarTech can be a bit like a dog chasing a car – once they catch it, they don't actually know what to do with it. I would recommend spending some time assessing your business needs and plot out a requirements document before diving headfirst into a tech stack that looks sexy on the shelf, but might be far too complex (and expensive) for your business' needs. I have seen it time and time again, where companies invest heavily into a MarTech stack that becomes obsolete because it either takes too long to implement; it takes employees a long time to get a handle on it; and the existing tech was just simpler to use, feeling more effective. Don't let your MarTech become bigger than you.

2. Garbage In; Garbage Out

You can have the best systems in place, but it's the trifecta of systems, people and process that delivers CX gold. It's your people who put the data in and it's your process that makes sure it's put in correctly. Give some attention to this upfront to ensure that you have the right people (who

understand what good data is), the right process (that ensures that data is handled and assessed appropriately) and the right system (that works for your business needs).

3. AI AI, Captain

It's the topic on everybody's lips, so it would be remiss not to mention AI for CX. There are many AI tools that work wonders for improving a customer experience journey, if the AI is fed accurate data. So – my advice in this regard would be – GO FOR IT, but make sure you've done the solid groundwork mentioned before so that AI works for you and your customer.