

# Promises, expectation and how to avoid the CX Gap

## The time for platitudes is over...

Just saying that you put the ‘customer at the heart of everything’ and that you are committed to delivering a great customer experience won’t cut it anymore. Anything other than a proactive and holistic approach to understanding what customers want and taking action to deliver products and services that meet that demand won’t help you to build a thriving business capable of long-term growth.

“The experience you deliver to your customers every day, through every transaction, direct and indirect, either builds value for your brand or destroys it.”

*Managing the Customer Experience: Turning Customers into Advocates,  
Shaun Smith & Joe Wheeler.*

# Keeping your word

We all know that competition to attract, delight and most importantly retain customers is tougher than ever. The myriad of physical and online channels and platforms that are now available to prospective and existing customers to seek, compare and make purchases not only adds a layer of complexity to the sales process. It also makes it harder for brands to listen and respond to an increasingly discerning customer base that not only knows 'what it wants' but 'wants it now' and won't tolerate any delays, damage, or diversion from what they asked for or were promised.

## A few key questions to ask:

- What do you promise internally & externally?
- Are these promises consistent across all communication channels?
- If you were the customer what would be your expectation of your promises?

### Deliver on promises

Delivering a great customer experience (CX) is ultimately all about the internal and external promises you make as an organisation and the reality of the experience for the customer.

### Mind the gap

It's worth stating the obvious. Delivering a great customer experience is ultimately all about the internal and external promises you make as an organisation and the reality of the experience for the customer. If there is any discrepancy or inconsistency between what you promise instore, online, via the call centre or in advertising and the expectation that raises, with what is experienced, you run the risk of creating what we call the 'CX Gap'.

The likelihood is that, at best, what you offer will be rejected and you may lose a sale.

### Reduce reputational risk

More importantly, you risk losing your customer's trust and their loyalty, resulting in them 'escaping' to another provider in the longer term.

You also risk potential damage to your reputation with negative reviews and 'word of mouth' feedback passed on by these 'lapsed' customers to prospects - either in person, online or via social media - which could impact new business.



# A question of maturity

Avoiding the 'CX Gap' requires a clear understanding about why you are considering customer experience as a business strategy and what you hope to achieve. Is it to improve operational efficiency, is it to differentiate yourselves from the competition, or for the benefit of your customers?

## A few key questions to ask:

- How CX mature is your organisation?
- Are internal staff aligned and knowledgeable about the promises and expectation levels you set?
- Are staff empowered to solve customer problems first time?

## Focus on excellence

Organisations with the most mature and effective customer experience cultures are absolutely clear about what they are offering and how they are going to deliver it consistently. They have a clear and documented definition of what 'excellence' looks like so that employees know what they should aim to deliver and customers know what they should expect to experience from a product, service or brand.

A Customer Service Charter is the most effective way to clearly define the promises being made so that staff understand and customers know what to expect.

## Consistency matters

It also involves being honest about how customer facing you are as an organisation and where you sit on the customer centricity maturity scale, from Uniformed to Learning, moving on to Enlightened to a fully Centric approach.

If the focus is on internal issues and priorities, with little or no interest in

***Be honest with yourself about how customer facing you are as an organisation and where you sit on the customer centricity maturity scale.***

gathering customer feedback or empowerment of employees to make a difference, it's more likely that customers will be frustrated by siloed teams that don't provide a consistent service and disappointed at multiple touchpoints.

Conversely, if everyone knows their role in improving satisfaction, communication of customer experience measures and achievements is 'standard practice', and all departments work together to provide a seamless experience, the overriding impression created for customers will be of an organisation that keeps its promises and is 'easy to do business with'.

# An evolutionary process

It's important therefore to recognise that becoming a customer centric organisation requires a holistic process of continuous improvement. It's not something that can either be achieved overnight or as a 'one-time' fix.

## A few key questions to ask:

- Has the CX maturity of your organisation improved in the last 12 months?
- What has changed in the competitive landscape that may impact your CX performance?
- Where are you in the continuous improvement cycle, and what should you revisit?

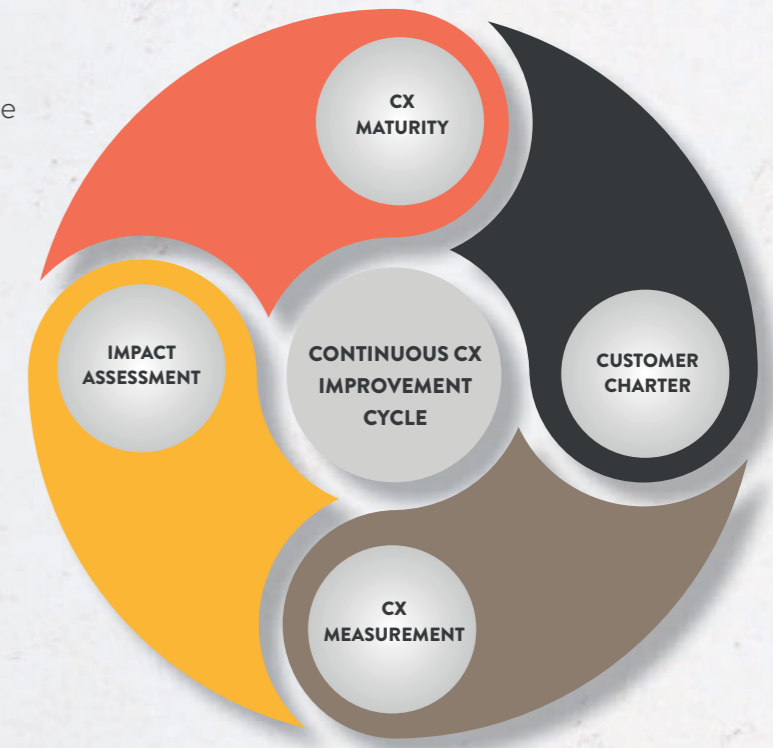
## Constant review and renewal

Ensuring that all employees are 'living' the Customer Service Charter will require clear messaging, communication and training. Understanding where gaps exist throughout the customer journey needs careful assessment and measurement using a variety of CX metrics. It requires action planning to remedy and enhance processes that will improve problem resolution, reduce attrition, and ultimately lead to improved customer satisfaction and loyalty. Perhaps most important of all, it requires acknowledgement that customer experience management needs constant review and renewal.

## Aligned with business objectives

Customer centric organisations that are applauded for the success of their CX programmes are not only able to demonstrate that they are aligned with long-term business objectives, make a significant impact on the business and deliver maximum return on investment (ROI).

They secure commitment from the C Suite, establish key performance indicators (KPIs), empower employees, and understand the vital role played by a 'CX Champion' in sharing best practice and lessons learned.



## Driving change

In practice, customer centric organisations engage, listen and gather feedback from customers, employees and other stakeholders using a variety of methodology and technology-agnostic insight and research studies to better understand attitudes, behaviours, and 'moments of truth' during the customer journey.

They use innovative ways to share insight and direction across the business, to aid better decision making and enable action to be taken, whether this be via real-time reporting dashboards, infographic storytelling, video messaging, or regular internal information sharing.

# Metrics matter

It's crucial that the right metrics are chosen to both establish the status quo and to track the impact of action taken to support continuous improvement. Different metrics suit different situations and should support your overall business objectives. Be wary of jumping on the metaphorical metric bandwagon and choosing a metric just because others have.

## A few key questions to ask:

- For your organisation, what is the optimal balance of volume versus depth of data in your CX programme?
- Why are you using, or plan to use, the metric you have chosen?
- Does, or will, the feedback you gather actually tell you anything that you can action?

## Using data to prioritise action

If you want to track Promoters and Detractors, Net Promoter Score (NPS) is ideal but if you want to monitor how easy it is for customers to deal with you, Customer Effort Score (CES) will be more appropriate.

If your goal is to reduce customer frustrations during peak call times, other measures such as first response and average handling times will be useful. A common trap that organisations can fall into when measuring customer experience is to fail to consider the balance between volume versus richness of data. Many organisations collect large volumes of 'thin' CX data but struggle to understand the 'why' behind the data or to prioritise what to action.

Choosing the right metric and defining both the depth and volume of data is essential. So is recognition that there is no 'one size fits all' approach to CX measurement.

## Measuring progress

The aim is to understand what is driving satisfaction or dissatisfaction. This may come in customer verbatims on social channels, emails via text analytics, or by advanced analytical techniques. What is key is striking the right balance for the

*Organisations that adopt the cyclical improvement process are better able to move the 'dial' on CX maturity.*

uniqueness of your organisation, so that you can measure outcomes effectively, benchmark progress against earlier findings and develop an action planning framework that will enable you to identify priority issues or areas.

## Check and reset

In our experience, organisations that adopt the cyclical improvement process are better able to move the 'dial' on CX maturity and to demonstrate their progress along the customer centricity scale.

The 'check and reset' approach to promises made, expectations set and experience provided is not only the most effective way to minimise the 'CX Gap' by driving culture change. It's also the best way to deliver tangible return on investment.

# Beehive Research

Beehive helps Customer Experience, Insight, and Executive decision makers listen to and understand their customers and prospects. We provide clear and succinct insights that our clients use to make informed decisions on how to improve the commercial performance of their business. We are specialists in the 'premium products and services' marketplace, helping these brands understand their customers and prospects across the entire product lifecycle; from product & service development to marketing & communication messaging, and measurement of their customer's experience (CX, Voc, & CSat). That's why we've been trusted partners to so many leading multinational companies across the globe.

If you'd like to find out more about Beehive's approach to Avoiding the CX Gap, contact us on:

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