



the journey to joy.

Embracing a Human-Centered Customer Experience
Framework for Strategic Advantage

Welcome to Second To None. Welcome to customer joy.

When it comes to truly delivering a consistent, intentional and differentiated Customer Experience (CX), most companies have either lost their way, or never really found their path in the first place.

Many organizations believe CX initiatives are either too resource and time-consuming to develop and implement, or CX as a competitive differentiator simply isn't a focus of senior leadership, and so it just doesn't surface as a strategic priority.

These viewpoints have been coupled with a significant shift to primarily measuring a brand's success through the lens of market share, conversions, transactions, and endless variations of key performance indicators and data points. On the surface, this seems all quite reasonable. Efficient. Predictable.

The danger is — and the reality has become — companies then adopt their way of interacting with customers through the very same lens: As conversions. As transactions. As data points. And before long, a company's touchpoints with its customers take on a similar look and feel. Data becomes the driving force in the company/customer relationship, while emotion, empathy, understanding, purpose, and meaning become secondary, falling by the wayside.

We believe — and our work has proven — there is a better way. A more balanced approach. It starts with companies recognizing that above all, their customers are people first. Humans. Real people with emotions, needs, and expectations.

Consumers not only yearn for a more human, empathetic, and understanding approach to how brands interact with them, but they will handsomely reward those who can deliver on such expectations, with their loyalty, spend, and social advocacy.



Customer Experience + Human Experience

CX represents the sum of all the interactions that a customer has with a company over the course of the relationship cycle, along with the customer's feelings, emotions, and perceptions of the brand over the course of those interactions.

Human-centered CX represents an experience design and management framework that meets the needs of customers by involving the human perspective in every step of experience delivery. It enhances brand sentiment by nurturing customer experiences focused on ease of interaction, reduced customer effort, and maximizing long-term satisfaction.

Human-centered CX is emerging as the next competitive advantage for companies and brands across industries. As parity emerges in products, quality, pricing, and availability, human-centered CX will be the singular area where a brand can create a differentiated, meaningful, and memorable experience. This new paradigm focuses on how brands interact with their customers as people, and design experiences to be consistent, intentional, authentic, and most importantly, human to human.

67%

**of customers
say they will
pay more
for a great
experience.**

- Salesforce



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Customer Expectations

Consumers are beginning to expect that all of their experiences, with every company or brand they choose to buy from, will be empathetic, easy, relevant, and well orchestrated.

Further, brands will only remain relevant if they are able to:

1. **Establish and articulate a meaningful purpose that gives both customers and employees a reason to believe in and support their brand;**
2. **Operate in a conscious, intentional manner with awareness and integrity that authentically reflects their mission;**
3. **Demonstrate an ability to understand and predict customer needs on an intuitive, emotional, and real-time level;**
4. **Adapt their business models to changing market demands, in a way that is apparent and valued by customers, employees, and stakeholders.**

- Sue Barrett

Let's be clear: CX is becoming the product. For every company, everywhere.

The expectations and table stakes of your company are now being set and informed by your customers through their most recent and best experiences with companies in any industry.

Increasingly, the companies and brands excelling at CX are relentlessly focused on pinpointing and mitigating areas of friction in experience execution.

74%

**of consumers
are likely to
switch brands
if they find the
purchasing
process too
complicated.**

- Salesforce

Step 1: Foundational Elements of CX Strategy

The Brand Promise/Leadership Connection

The journey begins with the ideal end state in mind, then designing CX interactions around that vision. Vision and design require alignment; alignment between a company's brand promise, executive leadership, and culture is crucial. It begins with a commitment to unlocking your organization's CX potential through a mindful approach to operation execution balanced with deep customer empathy.

Brand Promise

Delivering on your brand promise requires alignment between what you say you will do, what you actually do, and how your customers perceive what you are doing. A company's brand promise, when authentically grounded in purpose and meaning, can become a powerful differentiator in a crowded, overly-messaged market, but only if the organization has the strategy, tools, and people in place in order for the brand promise to come to life.

Leadership

The leadership ethos of a company, as it relates to its CX philosophy and vision, significantly influences how well the organization embraces and succeeds around CX. High-performing brands universally have advocates of CX at the very top of the leadership structure. Those companies who consistently outperform their peers in customer satisfaction, Net Promoter, and market share almost always benefit from an executive team that solidly believes in the importance of a CX strategy, and that consistently communicates and evangelizes these priorities throughout the entire organization.

Strategy

An effective CX strategy must be aligned to and measurably actualize the business strategy. It is a plan that guides the activities and resource allocation required to deliver intended experiences that in turn meet or exceed customer expectations, according to the goals of the organization. CX strategy emerges from a brand-rooted vision that in itself sets the course for the goals of the company.

A solid CX strategy should:

1. Flow from the overarching business goals;
2. Guide the activities and investments of the organization;
3. Address the gap between customer expectations and internal capabilities.

6 Key Components of Strategy

1. Clear Vision
2. The Customer
3. Understanding Gaps
4. A Roadmap
5. Accountability
6. KPIs

- Forrester

THE GAP

91% of companies believe they are effectively competing on customer experience.

9% of consumers believe customer experiences are meeting their needs.

- Gartner



How do you close the gap and set your organization on the path to customer joy?

Step 2: Understanding Your Customer

Start by informing your CX strategy with an internal and external understanding of the needs, perceptions, expectations, and preferences of your customers and employees.

Full stakeholder input allows you to develop a clear, focused, consistent, and shared understanding of who your customers are — and who your brand intends to serve.

Customer expectations are often assumed and internally defined, and unfortunately, the result is an inaccurate reflection of true customer needs.

Today, customer expectations are influenced by your competitors and non-competitors alike. Every brand that is best in class in its industry, and with whom your customers interact, has incredible influence on the expectations customers have of you.

Truly customer-centric brands create personas of the customers they intend to deliver experiences to, and these archetypes guide decisions around product or service features, interactions and design — building a shared understanding of customer types, while bringing clarity to your key CX initiatives.

Infusing actual customer feedback, the customer voice — a core part of coming to understand your customer — is paramount.

Companies that continue to take false comfort in their confidence of understanding their customers' expectations — expectations that have been substantially defined from the inside out — are sliding into irrelevancy faster than ever.

64%

of people are more likely to recommend a brand if it offers a simple experience.

- Siegel+Gale



Step 3: Experience Design & Innovation

Intentionally and mindfully unearthed customer needs and expectations translate into a solid, confident framework on which to envision and define customer interactions that can consistently meet and exceed expectations.

Experiences (touchpoints and interactions across channels) can be clearly defined along the customer journey, creating a strategy outcome supportive of differentiated experiences positioned to be enhanced, corrected, and optimized over time.

Closed-loop feedback is critical to iterative improvement, allowing the organization to identify issue root causes, pinpoint areas of friction, and understand where, when, and how to make the customer experience as effortless and harmonious as possible.

5 Essential Decisions Related to CX Design Transformation:

1. **Determine where across the customer journey CX can have the most impact.**
2. **Agree upon your brand's level of urgency in embracing CX design, in order to understand how quickly and how much to invest.**
3. **Recommit to your guiding CX vision, designing each experience component in a way to support desired business outcomes.**
4. **Set your organization's target level for CX maturity. Are you looking for baseline competencies or something more advanced?**
5. **Define the intentional sequencing of CX standards and expectations in order to nurture adoption, understanding, and execution.**



Today's customers have the power to demand experiences on their terms. They readily influence others to buy (or not buy). They invest in brands they believe in, and through their words and actions, can provide insights enabling companies to refine their competitive agility — so long as the customer experience meets their expectations.

- Accenture

Step 4: Metrics, Measurement & ROI

Ongoing performance measures, aligned to CX standards, deliver the critical intelligence and insights necessary for course correction, mentoring, and continual improvement.

Integrate KPI reporting into the organization in a manner that supports every stakeholder with real-time, decision-making data.

A systematic method for monitoring and collecting performance measures and feedback, cascaded throughout the organization in such a manner that it can be understood and acted upon, is fundamental to your CX strategy having a quantifiable impact on business outcomes.

Metrics can be collected across multiple channels and customer touchpoints, making it imperative your reporting and insights platform can ingest and integrate disparate data streams in such a manner that the stories in the data readily surface.

Metrics and KPIs define success when evaluating the contribution CX programs have on the overarching business and business units. It is important to correlate and align each KPI to a relevant goal or objective, in order to illustrate progress over time.

According to Forrester, just 34% of companies review their CX program statuses and metrics on a regular basis. One of the best ways to overcome this inertia is to embed CX metrics into executive dashboards.

- Forrester



Step 5: Organizational Adoption & Accountability

Proactive, disciplined management of CX measures and outcomes will enable your brand to drive positive change, react to emerging trends, and take corrective action in a nimble manner.

High-performing organizations focus on always aligning CX to business goals.

Optimal adoption of the CX strategy, measurement tools, and line of visibility to reporting results in role clarity to responsibilities, while instilling cross-company accountability as to what is working well and where performance improvement opportunities exist.

Regular review of CX metrics by channel, business unit, and critical touchpoints builds a culture of empowerment to affect change.

81%

**of marketers
today expect
to compete
mostly or
completely
on the basis
of Customer
Experience by
2025.**

- Gartner



**Experience-
Driven Businesses
experience 1.3x
— 1.5x greater
personal, team
and department
satisfaction and
engagement
than companies
lacking a formal
CX strategy.**

- Forrester & Adobe

Step 6: The Culture Imperative

To fully commit to improving CX, decision makers need to genuinely believe in their brand, their mission, their values, their people, and that the effort is worth their while.

CX success begins and ends with culture.

Is your culture one that inspires, that supports, that empowers, and that sees the potential waiting to be unleashed? Are your leaders enthusiastic, strategic, empathetic, and willing to bring emotional intelligence into the workplace?

Building a sustainable CX framework is indelibly tied to an organization's ability to embed and engage systems of shared values that encourage, empower, and enable all employees in delivering consistent, intentional, and authentic customer experiences.

A healthy culture enables leaders to identify and develop CX champions — the visible, vocal, and influential advocates who are instrumental to introducing CX as a strategic imperative, helping to design and launch CX initiatives, and most importantly, continually nurture CX performance measure systems in order to spark widespread action and improvement across the organization.

67%

**of consumers
will pay more
for a product
or service if
the customer
experience is
great.**

- Salesforce



**\$1.6 trillion in
business value is
lost every year in
the US as a result
of poor customer
experiences.**

- Accenture

Closing: CX Success: 4 Key Qualities

Companies who outperform their competitors and remain relevant and sustainable over the long-term tend to show four core qualities:

1. These brands exhibit an authentic level of empathy with their customers in every interaction, whether online, on-site, or over the phone.
2. They make it easy for customers to sense real value from their interactions.
3. These companies are focused on seeing that their products, services, communications, and experiences are relevant and meaningful to the customers' wants and needs.
4. They orchestrate all of the above across each touchpoint and channel in a highly consistent manner.

Today's high-performing organizations, and those emerging to become tomorrow's brand leaders, are able to craft a human, emotionally rich experience for their customers, and in turn, outperform their peers and the market.

Every journey begins with a first step.

Embrace whatever the level of CX readiness you find within your organization. Start where you are, from a place of vision and confidence, making progress one step at a time. Adopt a CX strategy appropriate to your organization, then begin building on capacity and competencies.

At Second To None, we believe your customers are human. Not pieces of data. They are stories. Not transactions. And they are your future. Not simply a moment in time.

We believe your customers' daily interactions represent your greatest opportunities. That is why wherever they are, we are. Listening to real-time feedback to help you know, understand, act, and improve.

We are Second To None. Be more human. Be more informed. Be more exceptional.



second to none 

welcome to customer joy.

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