Amplify Customer Experience to Propel Next-Level Growth

At a Glance

CIOs are challenged with connecting technology to customer experience. They can leverage enterprise transformation and modernization to improve customer experience if they:

- Anchor to brand purpose

- Use insights to improve customer experience

- Design for customer trust

- Implement change enablement

- Ensure comprehensive input

Customer experience (CX) plays a critical role in organizational success. Customers today are buying based on their experience with a company and whether a product or service aligns with their personal values, including access, inclusivity, sustainability and trust. Customer experience should play the starring role in decision-making and should be woven into technology initiatives.

To optimize technology for CX, CIOs must connect technology to customer value. They should think of technology in terms of customer experience rather than customer process.

Anchor to brand purpose

A company's brand purpose represents the reason a company exists beyond making money. It defines the company's mission and, often, how the company plans to improve the world for the better — and it is a powerful contributor to customer experience and loyalty. Organizations should understand their brand purpose and invest in the technologies that enable, align to and help project that purpose.

Customers can often have multiple varied experiences with an organization; negative ones can lead to customer attrition. Organizations should gather insights and map the customer journey to understand customer expectations so they can better identify which experiences are the most important and impactful. These journey maps can then inform technology investments and capabilities while building an ecosystem and technology portfolio that links back to customer and brand experience.

Companies that do not anchor to brand purpose run the risk of spending millions of dollars on technologies that do not align to what customers care about. When customers perceive poor experiences, they take their

dollars to the competition. CIOs who demand mapping customer experience to brand purpose support more than technology — they champion business longevity.

Use customer insights

CIOs who are continuously building a better customer experience know the importance of listening to the voice of customers. Customer insights come from many different sources, but data is the strongest foundation for critical decision-making. Organizations should use customer data feedback loops to improve CX.

To extract value from customer insights, CIOs should:

- Make technology decisions using customer experience insights as inputs
- Connect to the voice of the customer to understand customer experiences that matter
- Use data to glean a line of sight for investing in technologies that heighten CX

Design for customer trust

Today's business environment is overwhelmingly dynamic. CIOs and the C-suite must constantly navigate new regulatory demands, customer expectations and disruptive competition. Companies who can respond to change by implementing seamless technology gain an advantage by avoiding disruption to the customer experience and enabling customer trust.

CIOs should design technologies with customer trust in mind, thinking ahead and anticipating future changes as technology is built or designed so the customer experience is as seamless as possible. Organizations should incorporate as much flexibility into the design process as possible. Otherwise, organizations risk lags in response time, a shortfall in anticipating customer needs, a reduction in customer trust and damage to the CX.

Implement change enablement

Employees are an organization's most effective brand ambassadors, and they are the organization's internal customers. The more employees are equipped for and transitioned to new technology, the better the internal and external customer experience, making change enablement essential. A strong, comprehensive change enablement program brings a welcome shift in roles and responsibilities as new technology frees employees to perform higher-level tasks. Redeployments may enable critical resources to perform higher-priority tasks so other challenges can be addressed.

Change enablement programs transition employees to using new technology in the way it is intended. Innovative organizations understand that automation is not necessarily digital if it is being used in an analog manner. Using new technology in an outdated or obsolete way does not support digital transformation. Real automation requires a transition from a waterfall mindset to an Agile approach. When change enablement is implemented using an Agile mindset of experimenting, failing quickly, wire-prototyping, etc., efficiencies can be realized.

C-suite partnerships bring synergistic value

Successful collaboration requires technology and business leaders to work together. With the whole of the C-suite being greater than the sum of its members, each member should focus on applying unique value while working synergistically with the other members and departments of the organization.

The full scope of stakeholders should have a seat at the design table. Working closely as strategic partners, CIOs and C-suite members should promote collaborative planning norms and ensure all stakeholder voices are heard. Having the organization's business executives, compliance leadership and CISO at the decision-making table enables an organization to make appropriate, customer-connected decisions that are focused on outcomes.

A C-suite that understands the art of the possible builds an ecosystem that leverages capabilities, technologies and digital elements to push the organization towards continuous CX improvement. Each member of the team provides a unique contribution:

- **Chief marketing officer (CMO)** — The CMO works in partnership with the CIO and CDO to enable a seamless online and offline customer experience by leveraging technology through new digital products and services.

- **Chief customer officer (CCO) and chief experience officer (CXO)** — CCOs and CXOs work across the entire enterprise to champion the CX, leading the charge for innovation, reimagination and end-to-end improvement of customer experiences.

- **Chief digital officer (CDO)** — The CDO focuses on end-to-end automation and developing innovative or disruptive digital products and services that bring value to customers.

- **Chief risk officer (CRO)** — Ensuring that the customer experience is aligned with the organization's risk appetite is a critical role of the CRO, who also must help deliver experiences that protect the customer while aligning with industry requirements, standards and regulations — without adversely impacting the CX.

- **Chief financial officer (CFO)** — CFOs aim for customer growth, bringing CX value and prioritizing the organization's investment in the customer experience capabilities that will have the most significant impact.

What should companies do now to gain the greatest ROI?

To optimize ROI from enterprise transformation and elevate the customer experience, companies should:

- Align efforts across the organization and its budgets and priorities with a focus on value to the customer and the customer's end-to-end journey. CIOs should enable the optimal customer experience by building a technology road map that considers more than just the systems, incorporating data, privacy and regulatory compliance elements as well

- Ensure the CIO's team understands feedback related to the "voice of the customer" and leverages this feedback to empower investments in the highest-impact strategic initiatives that connect to the experience enhancements that customers value most

- Embrace and apply an Agile mindset to updating software development life cycles, budgetary processes, stage-gating and DevOps. Doing so enables organizations to optimally meet market, customer and employee needs for pace and speed for the most valued features and functions

CIOs and their organizations can have a significant effect to boost their customer experience, as they are uniquely positioned to implement innovative technologies that enable ongoing enhancements to the dynamic expectations of customers.

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