

Improving the Customer Experience

As technology moves at hyper speed and companies seek to stay competitive, improving the Customer Experience (CX) has never been more important.

In today's experience economy, consumers interact with brands in a variety of ways and across multiple channels. Customer Experience, often referred to as "CX," is defined as all interactions between a customer and a brand. Increasingly, with so much of daily life taking place online, these interactions are digital. Customer perceptions of your brand are based less on face-to-face interactions and more on interactions with your contact center — and by extension, email, text, social media and instant messaging.

For companies, the experience economy also means you're only as good as someone's last best customer experience with you, wherever that takes place.

To compound things, people are often making cross-industry comparisons. For example, customers may judge their experience with an insurance company to be poor based on a "wow" experience they've had with Amazon or Best Buy.

According to a recent Forbes article, 96% of customers who have a bad experience are gone. In fact, when it comes to CX in general, nearly 61% of respondents said they'd be very willing to switch brands or companies to have a better customer experience.

A key area of frustration for customers is inconsistency across customer service channels. Outdated systems and technologies that don't talk to each other mean customers have to work harder to make their needs known and get them resolved. For example, a customer might visit a company's website to check the



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status of a refund. First they research their situation on an FAQ page. Next they try to get help through live chat or texting. Then they might start over again with a live representative — assuming they can get through the automated phone maze — meant to assist them, but which too often feels like a roadblock to a helpful human. Each step only further frustrates the customer's efforts to get answers and solve their problem.

Studies show 65% of customers are frustrated by inconsistent, disconnected experiences across brand channels. Going deeper, 89% say they get frustrated

having to repeat their issues to multiple representatives, only 7% are extremely satisfied with omni-channel customer service and a whopping 87% feel brands need to work harder to create a seamless customer experience.

Many companies are sympathetic to their customers' frustration and also believe CX is the primary way to differentiate themselves from competitors. Now more than ever, they're seeing more value in their contact centers, which have become a lifeline to — and perhaps the only way to communicate with — their customers. Many companies also want to capitalize

on the flexibility offered by moving customer data from an on-premise to a cloud environment.

Unfortunately, many customer contact centers don't have integrated technology that allows this to happen. While often companies may have all the technology pieces in place, only 20% have an executable CX strategy that lets all those pieces talk to one another and as a result, helps customers who interact with the company feel understood, appreciated and satisfied.

According to George Demou, CEO of Avtex Solutions, "Many companies are unable to provide a great customer experience because their contact centers are hamstrung by technologies that aren't updated or integrated and because the company doesn't have the 'crystal ball' of customer experience data." He continued, "The simplest point is knowing who your customer is, valuing them and helping them. Having that knowledge and data about the client is mission critical."

Avtex is headquartered in KBS' Northland Center in Bloomington, Minnesota, and helps clients on the front end to understand what their CX strategy is. It does this in part by doing Persona ID, journey mapping, future journey mapping, and voice of customer analysis. Then it aligns the findings with a strategic road map that ultimately makes it possible for a company to deliver moments where customers say, "Wow! That was a great experience!"

To bring it all about, Avtex has a group of CX consultants who design and develop that plan, including a digital transformation group that helps with digital transformation, a contact center group to help modernize the client's contact center and an IT organization that integrates the different components to other peripherals within the organization so that all client systems can work as one to provide a ubiquitous customer experience.



The goal is to establish an overarching CX strategy and then align technologies to it. Companies that are benefiting from the Avtex 360 approach span several industries: financial institutions, insurance and real estate companies, grocery, apparel, and sporting gear brands and behavioral health care providers. Avtex clients include American Family Insurance, Edina Realty, Nautilus, Red Wing Shoes, Northern Tool + Equipment, Truliant Federal Credit Union, Schwan's Home Delivery and Sportsman's Guide.

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George Demou, CEO, Avtex

How has better CX transformed and improved customer service for these companies? Demou shares, "Sportsman's Guide has been very progressive, modernizing its contact center. They're bringing applications into the cloud, integrating them and developing a single golden customer record. Similarly, Truliant Federal Credit Union is very excited to modernize their member experience."

He continues, "Northern Tool + Equipment is using CX to create a competitive differentiation when it comes to online retailing. And thanks to its improved CX, language access and telehealth provider Cloudbreak has saved lives by pivoting over 10,000 translation services video endpoints to provide physician assessment and treatment plans to COVID-19 patients."

Yes, we live in an experience economy. But it's also one that's changing at the hyper speed of technology. Companies that want to succeed need a plan to create exceptional customer experiences — to over-deliver at every touchpoint — and to set those plans in motion.

As Demou points out, "Companies today need to lean on digital interaction. There's a whole new population of customers who are really going to be leveraging digital opportunities to do business rather than going into a store or getting on a phone call. The customer journey has changed — and companies that pay attention to it are the ones that are going to thrive. We're here to help those companies leverage their technology and deliver a better customer experience."