Deliver a customer experience that drives business growth
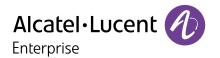
Alcatel·Lucent

Enterprise

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Customer experience is directly tied to business success

Today, businesses of all sizes and across industries face common challenges. They must meet the needs of increasingly demanding customers who expect support anytime, anywhere, using whatever means necessary. At the same time, businesses are struggling to meet growth targets in an uncertain economic environment that's fuelled by global strife and inflationary pressures that are out of their control.

With these challenges, providing an outstanding customer experience is more important than ever. Businesses must dedicate time, effort and resources to improvements that help them enhance the customer experience and meet rising expectations. Their success depends on it. According to a Salesforce report, nearly 90 percent of buyers say experience matters as much as products or services.[1]

Customers want fast, personalised interactions

Most businesses are already using digital technologies such as chatbots, interactive voice response systems and automated communications to streamline customer service. Unfortunately, many have inadvertently created an anonymous digital wall that can easily disappoint and repel customers.

Customers expect fast responses from the companies they do business with. In 2022:[2]

- 70 percent of U.S. consumers surveyed indicated they expected a response from a brand on the same day
- 46 percent expected a response by the next day
- Only 16 percent would be willing to wait three days

Those responses must be tailored for each customer's unique relationship with the company. According to the global management consulting firm, McKinsey & Company, the value of getting personalisation right — or wrong — is multiplying, and companies that excel at customer intimacy grow revenues faster than their peers.[3] Studies around the world confirm the vast majority of consumers expect personalised interactions, get frustrated when this doesn't happen[4] — and are less likely than ever to forgive a bad experience.[5] In 2022, Statista reported that "over 60 percent of surveyed online shoppers stated that brands delivering unpersonalised content would lose their loyalty."[6]

Businesses that can deliver the experience their customers expect have important new opportunities to drive business success. They can:

- **Reduce churn** by increasing satisfaction so customers aren't tempted to switch to a competitor
- **Increase loyalty and attract new customers** by enhancing their brand reputation in a world where experiences are widely shared
- **Grow revenues** by encouraging repeat purchases and referrals that result in new customers
- **Build market share** by delivering unique and personalised experiences that convince customers to choose their business over the competition

Companies recognise the business value of a great customer experience

In a 2022 study on the state of customer care, respondents said driving a simplified customer experience was a top-three priority.[7] Businesses also realise the crucial role technology plays in achieving customer experience goals. In another report, 79 percent of customer experience executives surveyed said digital customer experience is extremely or very important. The report also revealed that confidence in customer experience technologies and tools had reached new highs.[8]

1 Salesforce Report: Nearly 90% Of Buyers Say Experience a Company Provides Matters as Much as Products or Services. Salesforce News & Insights, May 2022.
2 Acceptable response time for customer service according to consumers in the United States as of June 2022. Statista, January 2023.
3 The value of getting personalization right—or wrong—is multiplying. McKinsey & Company, November 2021.
4 65% of consumers say personalisation earns loyalty in 2023. MarketingTech, January 2023.
5 The Dwindling Well of Forgiveness for Your Post-COVID Customer Experience. Gartner Blog, June 2021.
6 Marketing personalization worldwide - statistics & facts. Statista, January 2023.
7 The state of customer care in 2022. McKinsey & Company, July 2022.
8 CMSWire Releases The 2022 State of the Digital Customer Experience Report. CMSWire, October 2022.

Create a strategy to give customers the experience they want

To improve customer experience, businesses must first determine what a stellar experience looks like in their industry. A great experience at a hotel is very different from a great experience in healthcare, on public transportation, or attending a university. Defining that experience will guide decisions about the technology solutions needed to make it a reality.

While end-user experiences will be quite different in each case, there is a common set of requirements to improve customer experiences across industries.

Interact with customers on their preferred channel

Every business must interact with customers in the way their customers want with a seamless experience across channels. By supporting the full range of voice, email, chat, instant messaging, video and social media channels, businesses can support customers of all ages using their preferred method of communications to increase first-contact resolution rates. They also have the flexibility to switch between non-real-time and real-time channels to accelerate responses while maintaining a consistent experience.

Social media is a particularly important channel as the entire world can potentially see the good and bad experiences shared on these platforms. When social media is used effectively, it offers a significant opportunity to engage with and help customers in a highly public way. If neglected, these platforms can quickly turn into public escalation channels for frustrated customers.

Personalise interactions

Each interaction with customers must be tailored for their unique needs and preferences, no matter which touchpoint they're using. The challenge is to identify and understand what customers want and need from the business. The good news is many of the answers lie in data the company already has in its business systems or can easily acquire through customer surveys, feedback requests and publicly shared experiences.

Businesses that collect and analyse customer data, listen to customer feedback, and truly understand customer pain points are in the best position to engage in the right interactions at the right time, using the right channel.

Accelerate response times

Providing fast, accurate responses to customer issues and questions 24/7 shows customers they're important to the business. When those responses include information that reflects knowledge of personal details, the history of exchanges, customer preferences and insight that's specific to the issue at hand, the customer's importance and value to the company is magnified.

For maximum impact, businesses must accelerate simple, routine interactions — especially those that occur after regular working hours — differently than complex interactions and interactions with premium customers.

Provide a human connection

Automation helps businesses communicate more efficiently with more customers at lower cost. However, no matter how smart robotic communications may be, they must be balanced with the human touch customers crave, and sometimes need, to get the information they're looking for.

Almost everyone has experienced the frustration that occurs when automated systems provide inadequate responses and there's no opportunity to connect with a human. When businesses provide a variety of automated and human touchpoints, the company side of the conversation can be quickly escalated to a person when it becomes clear automated responses are not sufficient. The company representative can then combine information from the real-time exchange and from corporate systems to further personalise the interaction, accelerate responses and provide answers that include more context and insight.

The human touch is often the best starting point for customer queries or situations that are complex and for interactions with high-value customers. Customers immediately recognise they are important to the company, and the business can eliminate the potential for frustration due to automated responses.

Consider the internal side of your customer experience strategy

As businesses develop their enhanced customer experience strategy, they must also consider how they will reinforce it internally, sustain the targeted level of service delivery, and continue to improve customer experience over time. Every customer experience strategy must include plans to:

- Share the enhanced customer satisfaction strategy throughout the organisation and ensure it is understood, accepted, and followed by all employees
- Meet peak demand periods for customer service without using temporary resources who are not as aware of, or engaged in, the company's approach to the customer experience
- Stay up to date with the latest trends in customer experience and choose where to invest resources to maintain a differentiated experience

Eberhardt
MARQUE DE CONFIANCE

Eberhardt personalises customer service, improves customer relationships
Eberhardt, a household and professional appliance distributor in France, is using our omnichannel contact centre in a subscription model to cost effectively centralise information and engage customers in more authentic, personalised relationships.

Connect everything to deliver a truly stand-out customer experience

To deliver the timely and personalised interactions customers are looking for, businesses must look beyond the chatbots, voice assistants, contact centres and other technologies customers interface with. While these technologies are important, they're not enough to provide a stand-out experience.

The technologies customers interface with rely on behind-the-scenes connections across people, objects and applications to deliver the right information at the right time. If those connections are not in place, customer interactions remain generic, information may be irrelevant or out-of-date, and important explanations may be slow to arrive.

Only businesses with a secure and reliable company-wide network infrastructure can ensure the people and systems that influence customers' perception of the business have non-stop access to real-time information. The network is the foundation that connects everyone and everything so businesses can accelerate processes, collect and analyse customer data, and provide consistent, personalised interactions across multiple channels.

Every technology selected must help to drive the company's customer experience strategy and contribute to its success in a measurable way.

Focus on seven key technologies to improve customer experience

While there is no one-size-fits-all approach to choosing technologies that improve customer experience, there are seven that are key to delivering a differentiated customer experience in any industry:

1. **Omnichannel communications** allow customers to interact with the business in the way that works best for them in any given situation, whether they're looking for real-time assistance or have a less time-sensitive request or question. For maximum ability to support customers' communications channel and device preferences, businesses must support voice, video, email, chat, SMS and social media communications.

2. **Data analytics** allow businesses to collect and analyse customer data to gain insight into customer behaviours and preferences. They can then use this insight to ensure each conversation is relevant and adapted to the customer's unique situation to increase satisfaction and loyalty.

3. **Automation** for routine customer-related tasks frees employees to focus on more challenging customer situations and interactions with premium customers. As a result, businesses can improve response times and work more efficiently to meet all types of customer needs.

4. **Artificial intelligence and machine learning** bring new intelligence to automated customer interactions and enable businesses to offer fully personalised self-service options. Businesses can create sophisticated voice assistants and chatbots that can handle more involved customer conversations and offer customised recommendations and interactions 24/7 to accelerate response times and improve customer satisfaction.

Cantabrian Health Service improves patient care with telehealth services To ensure it could continue delivering care to patients in any circumstances, the Spanish health provider implemented a cloud-based video conferencing solution and intuitive mobile application for patients. The secure teleconsultation system allows 6,000 healthcare professionals to more efficiently manage patient consultations and deliver consistent, informed care with no need for patients to travel.

5. **IoT technologies** allow businesses to implement capabilities that enhance the in-person experience. For example, in:

   - Hospitality, IoT solutions can be used to automate door locks to simplify room entry and to optimise temperature and lighting throughout the facility for maximum personal comfort
   - Healthcare, IoT solutions help staff quickly locate medical equipment to accelerate patient care and improve outcomes
   - Transportation, IoT solutions support automated fare collection and real-time schedule updates to help passengers enjoy a safer, more efficient travel experience
   - Education, IoT solutions enable new safety and security mechanisms that help students and staff feel protected and confident while on campus

6. **Wi-Fi** quality is also key to improving the in-person customer experience. In our always-connected world, people expect access to fast and reliable wireless connectivity wherever they go — indoors and out. When customers can seamlessly continue communicating, working, planning their lives, and accessing entertainment while they're on business premises, they're less likely to leave prematurely or share their frustrating experience with others.

7. **Customer relationship management (CRM) systems** allow businesses to track customer interactions, gain insights into customer behaviour and personalise interactions. Businesses can then use this information and data to manage communications with customers more effectively and strengthen their relationship.

Tie technology decisions to business needs

In addition to providing the capabilities needed to support the company's customer experience strategy, technologies must also meet a range of broader business requirements, including:

Cost and return on investment (ROI): Look beyond the initial purchase price to evaluate the full total cost of ownership (TCO) associated with deploying, supporting and maintaining new technologies today and over time to confirm the ROI timeline. Ask technology providers to specify exactly what's included in the purchase price — training, licenses, upgrades, maintenance and support services — to ensure there are no unplanned costs.

Integration: Ensure new technologies will integrate seamlessly with existing systems and processes to reduce deployment complexity and costs and enable a consistently high-quality customer experience across all channels — automated and non-automated, real-time and non-real-time.

Scalability and flexibility: Choose technologies that will scale with the business in a smooth and cost-effective way as the company grows and adapts to meet increasing and changing customer demands. Otherwise, the solution may need to be replaced before the business achieves ROI.

Availability and reliability: Ask for availability and reliability data to ensure the business can rely on the solution to meet customer expectations at all times.

Security: Get a complete list of the security and industry standards and best practices each technology solution implements, that prove it is designed from the ground up to prevent, protect against and mitigate the effects of unauthorised activities.

Compliance: Verify that technologies comply with relevant data privacy laws and regulations, such as the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in the European Union and the California Consumer Private Act (CCPA) in the U.S.

Ease-of-use: Test solution usability with employees and customers to ensure it delivers a positive experience and requires minimal training to encourage widespread use and keep costs down.

Simplify your journey with an expert technology partner

An expert technology partner with the right experience helps businesses choose, implement and support the technologies that best support their customer experience strategy.

Alcatel-Lucent Enterprise delivers all the services and technology solutions businesses need to deliver a stellar customer experience today and flexibly to adapt as the business evolves and grows. We provide:

- A complete suite of services to fully support each stage of the improvement journey, including consulting, customisation, implementation, optimisation, training and technical support services
- The secure and reliable technology foundation and applications needed to connect people, objects and applications with real-time communications. With our solutions, the right information gets to the right people, in the right way, at the right time to accelerate responsiveness and enable new levels of personalisation.
- APIs so businesses can interconnect our technology solutions and integrate real-time communications with other vendors' equipment and applications, and with CRM and business systems used to manage customer data

Rely on decades of experience to increase peace of mind

As a leader in the communications industry for more than 100 years, we've helped thousands of organisations make their customer experience stand out from the competition, including:

California State University in the U.S. The university is using our network solutions to deliver new services that encourage innovation and remove barriers to success to increase graduation rates and eliminate gaps in opportunity and achievement. Infrastructure efficiencies have helped the university save more than $100 million.

Fertilys Clinic in Canada. The reproductive healthcare specialists are using our communications solutions to seamlessly handle patient calls and provide responsive and consistent telephone assistance across sites.

China Eastern Airlines in China. The airline is using our communications and contact centre solutions to improve passenger satisfaction and loyalty and has cut its international communications costs by 50 percent.

Astra Hotel Vevey in Switzerland. The four-star, family-owned hotel is using our Wi-Fi solutions to provide secure and reliable high-speed wireless connectivity throughout the hotel so guests are never disappointed.

Hokkaido Municipality in Japan. The municipality is using our cloud-based communications solution to deliver a range of audio and video communications, notification and alert services to better serve residents across 11 towns and villages.

Transit Wireless in the U.S. The telecommunications company is using our autonomous network solutions to provide hundreds of thousands of New York subway passengers with free Wi-Fi connectivity across four city boroughs and 276 subway stations.

Banner Bank supports rapid growth while delivering stellar customer service.
Alcatel-Lucent Enterprise provides leading-edge and easy-to-use solutions. Callers to any branch can easily connect with a live agent, employees can manage and route calls based on specific needs, operations and maintenance costs are lower, and we can easily expand and upgrade the network to support daily operational changes.

—Jeff Reynolds, Assistant Vice-President Telecom Engineer IV, Banner Bank

Learn more

To learn how we can help your organisation deliver a stellar customer experience, visit our website or contact us today.

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