BUILDING A CUSTOMER CENTRIC BRAND BY TRANSFORMING THE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

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Putting the customer at the heart of an organization is no mean feat, and even with advances in technology and the digital user experience, the aspiration to become customer centric is alive but still elusive for most brands. Furthermore, consumer behavior is changing so brands need to respond to a rapidly evolving marketplace.

Consumer research from GfK and other sources suggests that customer experiences across many sectors in the UK have plateaued or are in decline, despite a move to build digital channels with growing investment in multichannel service delivery and a big push towards more personalized communications.

Voice of the Customer (VoC) programs require better customer analytics. Voice of the Customer information is the life-blood of customer centric organizations, however, there are signs that traditional research techniques need to be adapted to ensure that customer KPIs are more effective at tapping into consumer behavior and providing brands with the commercial insights necessary to respond proactively to short and medium term priorities.

Employees at all levels need visibility of customer feedback and customer strategy. The complexity of the multi-channel and digital interactions require that customer facing employees at all levels have a clear view of the critical experience points in the customer journey to become more agile in resolving problems and embedding innovative enhancements to the customer experience. They also need to understand what type of experience the brand is aiming for, so they can be in tune with the Brand Experience vision.

Trust and consumer engagement are earned by brands one interaction at a time. Customer feedback on transactional interactions is an operational and strategic priority, consumers expect convenient intuitive low effort interactions and these contribute to long term engagement and trust - great user experience, effective communication, excellent and consistent service delivery across all channels (owned, earned and bought) can build stronger consumer-brand relationships and customer life-time value.

Growing risks of commoditization in many sectors mean that customer experience management is becoming central to how brands find and retain competitive advantage. Customers crave simplicity, have rising expectations and turn to their favorite brands to help them manage growing complexity in consumer choices.

Highly fragmented experiences in many languages across an increasingly complex set of touchpoints in the customer journey are difficult for global brands to manage. Voice of the customer programs can help brands to recognise and address the growing complexity of the systems needed to manage the customer lifecycle effectively.

Multi-mode event driven structured and unstructured customer feedback, cloud based data collection and measurement technology, rapid closed-loop action management and smarter customer analytics can provide brands with the information management tools needed to improve decision making at all levels and become more responsive to customers.

Data-driven innovation of the customer experience can enable brands to become more agile and more successful with integration of digital service channels, boosting customer engagement and transformation of product and service delivery.
Customer centric brands build offerings around customers and thereby become a store of future value through delivering on a promise to empower their customers. A fair value exchange, clear communication, effective and consistent delivery leads to customer satisfaction, loyalty, advocacy and trust. However, despite the huge changes that the Internet, mobile connectivity and datafication have brought to brands in recent years, there is little evidence that brands are keeping up with the promises that they are making to customers, most mainstream brands in the UK are still far away from the 1-1 marketing vision that Don Peppers and Martha Rogers saw as the holy grail for consumer-brand relationships back in the ‘90s, when they revolutionized management thinking by demonstrating the value of customer centricity and Customer Relationship Management (CRM).

The current business environment is increasingly focused on quarterly results for growth and profitability, and there is tension between the long term objectives of making the enterprise more customer centric and adding value to customer experiences, and the pressure to deliver business performance at both a strategic and operational level. Cost management weighs heavily in the equation, and there is constant pressure to demonstrate returns on investments. Are brands willing to put the customer at the heart of decision making or are they short term risks and technical challenges perceived to be greater than the long term rewards? Some believe that delighting customers is a waste of resources and that the aim should be to keep customer effort low. Is this realistic in the rapid innovation cycle that the digital world offers both established and start-up brands? The uncertainty that the digital economy brings means that companies need to constantly feed available resources back into the business. The earnings plough-back ratio is important for growth because brands need to constantly invest in the experience in order to offer protection from the risks of the future.

The digital environment is transforming the way consumers relate to brands and in many sectors there is already a distinct shift in the balance of power from brands to consumers. Technology and choice are both expanding to endow consumers with greater control. In many sectors, existing business models are prone to threats of disruption. When barriers of entry disappear, customer data forms the core of the consumer-brand relationship, this is where the knowledge about customers resides that gives incumbent brands an edge over challengers.

Are brands really getting this right, as they try to change the way that they engage with consumers? What are the hallmarks of customer centric brands? Here are a few:

» Always accessible. Brands make it easy for customers to get in contact and communicate with them, increasingly this means making sure that customers can decide how and when they want to communicate and which service channels work for them on their own terms, not just for the organization.

» Proactively responsive. Digital channels like email, texting and social media mean that customers expect quick responses, they expect issues to be picked up and taken care of. Closed-loop communications should happen quickly and special care to make sure that resolution happens first time with no need for customers to follow-up.

» Well organized, integrated and consistent. Interactions across the enterprise have to be cohesive and well-orchestrated to avoid disconnects across different parts of the organization that lead to disjointed and unreliable service experiences across different parts of the customer journey.

» Show real empathy. Concern for customers requires demonstration that they are being listened to, their issues are well understood, and they are being cared for. Authenticity is key, customers can usually tell if they are being told the truth, and don’t appreciate being patronized.

» Agile, collaborative and adaptive. Brands that are able to listen to customers, learn from them or co-create solutions, and then quickly incorporate their perspective in changes and improvements, will earn the respect of customers. Agile brands watch the market closely, and adapt effectively to the changing needs of their customers.

» Putting the customer’s best interests first. In some cases customer centricity is less about delighting customers or exceeding pre-existing expectations, and more about communication, education and choice. It is sometimes appropriate to challenge the customer perspective, particularly in a B2B environment, when the brand can show customers that it is in their best interests to change their ways or think differently. By offering a better solution to a problem, recommending the best tariff or demonstrating the benefits of eco-friendly behavior, brands can demonstrate how more informed choices and even increased effort from customers can create mutually beneficial outcomes.
While some brands may be able to break the mould, the overall customer experience across a number of sectors shows that at best, brands are keeping pace with customer expectations, at worst, they are losing ground. A plateau has been reached in several sectors despite heavy investment in both retail and online customer experiences.

The below table shows GfK research sources that reflect sector average customer satisfaction for banking, motor insurance and energy providers in the UK.

Looking at the overall performance of brands within these sectors, customer perceptions of how brands are performing appear to be flat-lining or declining, customer experience measures are showing little tangible improvement over the last two years.

Within these mainstream sectors that affect most UK households there is a general trend of a narrowing gap in customer scores between the highest and lowest performing major brands, a sign of growing commoditization. With the advent of price comparison technology, consumers are increasingly sensitive to price promotions in sectors like insurance and telecoms, brands are struggling to restore the price inelasticity gained through loyal relationships, where customers will value more in the relationship than just price. Furthermore, GfK research shows that in some sectors where UK customers show relatively low switching intent, such as retail banking and energy, quite often this happens because consumers don’t see the point in making the effort to switch, they believe that nothing will change with a different provider. Lengthy customer tenure may indicate inertia, dormancy and low customer value rather than engagement, loyalty, trust and high value.

Performance on customer service has been

**DATA-DRIVEN CUSTOMER CENTRIC BRANDS**

In the face of great change, brands that place the customer at the heart of their business are most likely to weather the storms ahead. The good news is that data is making customer centrity more attainable; attitudinal and behavioral customer data enables brands to gain commercial insight on performance from the customer perspective. According to research by McKinsey and MIT, companies which are more data-driven are 5% more productive and 6% more profitable. Leading brands on a strong growth path such as Amazon, American Express, First Direct, Hyundai, Kia and Samsung are known as firms that embrace customer centrity through heavy use of data and performance measurement. As the adage goes, if you don’t measure it, you can’t manage it.

Newer digital brands like AirBnB, eBay, PayPal, WhatsApp, WeChat and Uber are based almost purely on data in the online world and use this to have an unwavering focus on the customer. These brands all display a hunger for rapid learning and improvement based on internal and external data, fueling a move from traditional business process management techniques like Six Sigma and Lean to the latest approaches borrowed from software and social media business process, such as Agile and Growth Hacking.

When we look at performance levels across sectors in the UK, it is clear that while customer centrity may be an aspiration, and many brands declare that they want to be No.1 in customer satisfaction, there is often still work to be done on building brands that are really true to this. In many cases, fundamental changes are required in how customer data is used in business decision making, from the leadership team to the front-line employees.

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particularly lack-lustre. According to the leading international benchmarking study for contact centres by Dimension Data\(^1\), there is an erosion in satisfaction with contact centres from 2011–2013, falling 4.5% in two years from 82.1% in 2011 to 77.6% in 2013. Resolution of queries and problems is sub-par and flat over the last two years, suggesting that even if there are improvements being made, service delivery is not keeping up to effectively resolve more challenging queries that arise as offerings become more technologically advanced. In addition, customers have typically worked their way through other self-serve channels without success before resorting to making a call, so they are understandably frustrated.

Some of the reasons for this are as follows:

- **Trust and consumer engagement are low.** Exploding consumer choice means that customer experiences are highly fragmented and lacking cohesion, while consumers want to engage brands on their own terms. Brands that take advantage of customers, over personalize offerings or abuse access to them may risk losing the respect and trust of customers. These brands may not receive particularly low satisfaction ratings but customers are showing a tendency to disengage and show indifference to brands they don’t trust or care for.

- **Expectations are being transferred across sectors and are rising faster than delivery.** According to Forrester Research, two thirds of customers carry over expectations from one service provider to another in a different sector. This means that best-in-class experiences in one sector can set the standard expected across many other sectors. For instance, next day delivery by Amazon can cause frustration with turnaround times in other sectors like banking or utilities. The digital environment is accelerating the diffusion effect, putting pressure on brands that are slow to respond to the demands of digital.

- **Pricing increases outstripping inflation.** Price rises that affect standards of living begin to erode consumer sense of fairness. When price rises are not transparent and don’t demonstrate benefits, customers believe that brands are taking advantage of them.

There appear to be two major challenges currently facing most organizations that plan business transformation of the customer experience:

- **Creation of exceptional and unique branded experiences that address rising customer disengagement.**

- **Successful integration of the customer journey across multiple-channels in an omni-channel service environment that is increasingly digital, personalized and device agnostic.**

The challenges are faced against a backdrop of declining trust and general apathy towards mainstream brands, particularly from digital natives, and the tech-savvy, price sensitive millennial generation who already make up the growing segment of the addressable market in most parts of the world.

\(^1\) 2013/4 Dimension Data Call Centre Benchmarking Summary Report

PRINCIPLES FOR RECONNECTING WITH CUSTOMERS AND RESTORING TRUST

The relationship economy is seen to be the latest evolution in the modern economy, as value in the eyes of consumers is being driven less by increasingly commoditized products, services and experiences and more by finding meaningful consumer-brand relationships based on reputation and trust. As brands seek to rebuild trust with consumers, there is a need to realize that, like personal relationships, winning attention and engagement requires ongoing efforts to impress your partner. With an acceptable value exchange on offer, correctly toned communication, consistent service delivery and authentic efforts to empathise with customers, brands can slowly restore confidence and earn the right to more intimate dialogue. Consumers will no longer suffer brands that are not deferent to their needs, and that includes how customer data and privacy are respected.

Persistent and consistent delivery of branded experiences with peak-end effects
When thinking about how to create customer experiences that will impress, the peak-end rule is a psychological heuristic that provides some guidance on what consumers remember when they interact with brands. Customer experiences that have a strong positive peak, a positive surprise that has a wow-factor, however short, and a strong finish to the end of the experience, will leave a positive memorable impression. The design of every interaction with customers should take this into account as part of developing a long term relationship based on trust. Each moment of truth helps to form the overall experience of the brand.

Effort reduction for more intuitive experiences, link emotional benefits to rational considerations
In addition, applied psychology and behavioral economics show that consumer thinking tends to rely on intuition (known as System 1 thinking) and existing neural pathways rather than rational cognitive processing (known as System 2 thinking) to use logic in decision making, which takes much more effort. Easy and intuitive choices are preferred over rational choices, and cognitive biases creep into these decisions, creating a gap between perception and reality. Emotional considerations also hold sway over rational criteria when consumers make choices, the largest aspirational purchases consumers make such as buying a car or a house are heavily driven by emotional choices over rational considerations. Consumers will choose and reward brands that make them feel good and help them to make the right decisions with low cognitive overhead.

Raise the bar by elevating the ceiling, not by lifting the floor
If efforts are focused on minimizing unpleasant experiences rather than developing impactful ones that impress or delight, the message being sent to customers is that the brand doesn’t really care, and it’s clearly not customer centric. If they can’t be bothered to constantly make things better, why should customers continue to pay a premium for services? If efforts are purely focused on reducing effort in transactions or on just minimizing complaints rather than delighting customers that are usually indifferent, this is helpful but potentially short-sighted, it assumes that the relationship is purely intuitive and transactional and no effort is made to build further engagement that justifies emotional attachment to the brand and the associated premium that customers are willing to pay. Happy customers will return and spend more, indifferent customers are likely to become passive, inert and price sensitive.

Monitoring transactional interactions for operational control
While customer centrity is a long term strategic consideration, and rational and emotion considerations go into building loyalty with customers, monitoring the transactional interactions that mainly happen on an intuitive level is critical in order to ensure that brands deliver products, services, experiences and relationships as promised, since trust is gained through proven efforts to deliver to customers on a daily basis.

This means that customer experience management efforts need to be focused on transactional and operational considerations as well as the more strategic considerations of the overall customer-brand relationship. By concentrating on near real-time feedback from customers, brands can make strong short-term gains that contribute towards the long term rewards of customer attention, engagement, loyalty, advocacy and trust.

Human-centred approach to service quality
Service quality usually has a human element, even if it is automated self-service, that respects customer’s time, accommodates unique requirements with a personalized brand signature or entertains with a hint of humour in interactions. This means that every employee plays a role in daily efforts to proactively build meaningful relationships with customers. This does not only imply doing what is right for customers according to a rule book, it means that every employee has to apply practical wisdom and figure out what is right for each customer interaction in the context of their own role in creating an exceptional, meaningful and positively memorable customer experience.

Brands have to appreciate that customer perceptions of what is important may differ from their own perspective, making customer feedback critical to stay in tune with market sentiment.


Continuous measurement. Given the emphasis on easy intuitive decisions in the customer journey, the operational basics have to be continuously fine-tuned to avoid problems or delays and maximize positive impact, therefore continuous measurement of customer interactions at each touchpoint or experience point is key to identifying pain points, checking for engagement and ensuring successful delivery of exceptional interactions.

Customer KPI targets for front line staff. From the on-boarding process to every visit to the website or call with customer service, the feedback from customers enables a clear and regular read on whether performance standards are being met consistently and whether they are leaving the impressions desired. Customer KPIs and line-of-sight targets against these KPIs are used to manage and reward front line staff. High frequency event driven feedback from customers provides employees at all levels with prompt indications of how they are performing, and ideally, what must change to excel.

Customer communication not research. Short surveys that focus on timely and relevant communication with customers can be helpful to build engagement and trust if well executed. Customers do not want to be bombarded with surveys but will appreciate feedback mechanisms that match their own information sharing needs, particularly if customers feel cared for as part of the process.

Customer analytics. With the rise of digital activity across the customer journey, data analytics are becoming increasingly important to make sense of the deluge of customer data that is being encountered. Voice of the customer KPIs can be linked directly to internal business processes by leveraging transactional data effectively, analytics can automatically flag issues and speed up reaction times, empowering employees to become more proactive in addressing customer requirements.

MEASURING SUCCESS – EFFECTIVE NAVIGATION WHILE ACCELERATING CHANGE

Transforming the customer experience requires a strategic roadmap which lays out the initiatives to deliver the changes required. Performance measurement tools and customer metrics, quite often key performance indicators (KPIs) provide the evidence that these initiatives are making a difference to customers both on a transactional level and as part of a long term relationship.

Most brands currently use brand health trackers and voice of the customer programs to incorporate customer feedback into decision making, so what needs to be done differently in order to see commercial insights driving disruptive change that will actually improve customer satisfaction? It is helpful to reflect on how measurement of customer interactions is evolving:

UX. User experience feedback is now recognized as increasingly important to design effective experiences in the digital domain, not only for retail outlets, websites and social media but also for the customer journey across devices, even workstations for agents in contact centres serving customers. UX expertise brings ergonomics, product and service design into focus to ensure that experiences are intuitive, responsive and appealing. UX can elegantly orchestrate all the complexity across touch points into engaging experiences that are compelling to customers.

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So how can decision makers use these tools in new ways and think differently about driving improvement if we are not seeing tangible gains from current efforts? How can voice of the customer programs serve performance management objectives, particularly when rapid innovation and a cultural shift is needed to create positive disruptive changes to business-as-usual activities?

The management processes behind decision making and implementation of improvements are changing to become more dynamic. Leading brands show a shift in thinking from a focus on incremental performance improvement towards more flexible and dynamic approaches that emphasize speed, innovation and experimental design. Customer data enables brands to get back to basics and quickly create a much better integrated omni-channel customer journey that is better tailored to customer needs.
Business process management (BPM) requires timely information about quality and performance to inform decision making. This is the fundamental premise of Six Sigma and Lean, the most widely used management disciplines responsible for using data to drive performance improvement.

Six Sigma and Lean Business Process Management
Voice of the customer programs are becoming data intensive management tools, with a strong emphasis on Six Sigma and Lean principles to drive problems down to zero as part of continuous improvement. At its core Six Sigma business process management incorporates DMAIC steps as an iterative process cycle - Define problems, Measure, Analyze, Improve and Control. Black belts and green belts develop internal business cases to demonstrate the ROI on re-engineering internal processes to drive down defects and inconsistencies to improve quality. Lean places an emphasis on reducing wastage, cost management and streamlined processes in pursuit of efficiency.

Commercial insights based on customer feedback are a critical input into these activities, so transactional and relationship level KPIs allow brands to manage and control the short term and long term trajectory towards customer satisfaction, customer life time value, growth and profitability. In the digital age this path has to be navigated faster than ever before, and due to high flux, rapid flexible solutions are becoming more important than slower execution with perfect delivery. This means that traditional BPM and process improvement techniques are no longer enough to keep pace and address the high proportion of last minute changes and adjustments needed to respond to an increasingly fickle environment.

Agile meets Growth hacking
Agile techniques have been adopted from rapid prototyping in software development to provide business process management teams with a measurement framework for iterative approaches to innovation, product and service design and development. In a nutshell, Agile techniques accelerate development and transformation efforts by organizing activities in two week sprints by the team to reach a common goal, in a way that accommodates constantly changing requirements. Scrum is an iterative and incremental development framework at the heart of Agile, it is flexible but provides semi-structured process for Agile activities to realize the objectives. Scrum meetings enable the team to meet regularly to ensure that inputs, including customer feedback are used to ensure that the final outcomes are successfully launched as a product, service or digital offering. This approach is key for brands to adapt swiftly as they transform customer experiences in a way that anticipate rapidly evolving customer needs and expectations.

Agile thinking enables employees to proactively respond to customer feedback and learn from each interaction about how to make experiences better next time. Growth hacking builds on this - digital brands like PayPal, eBay and WhatsApp have used growth hacking techniques to rapidly build market share by tapping into the power of intuitive design and social media networks to test and optimize offerings for virality – developed with tested data models for maximum impact on accelerating AAARRR - Awareness, Acquisition, Activation, Retention, Referal and Revenue.

Growth hacking also refers to throwing out traditional techniques and exploiting innovations in whatever way possible before they are copied and tapped into by others in the digital domain. In order to transform customer experiences, business leaders need to adopt agile thinking and growth hacking techniques and rely on a myriad of data sources to adapt, innovate and compete for customers in a domain that is increasingly digital. There is a major risk that disruptive innovation will challenge core business models across sectors and enable start-ups to eat the lunch of complacent established brands, the old barriers of entry don’t apply anymore.
Touchpoints can help to measure the core activities that underpin each experience in the customer journey. By including both direct experience points that the brands have control over, such as the contract centre and website, as well as more indirect ones, like social media and marketing communications, brands can monitor the pulse of customers in near real time, which is critical for measuring consistency of delivery as well as the impact of innovation activity in areas that require an overhaul.

When deciding what to measure, the core customer metrics needed will vary depending on the unique customer journey of each brand and its performance improvement objectives. By including both direct experience points that the brands have control over, such as the contract centre and website, as well as more indirect ones, like social media and marketing communications, brands can monitor the pulse of customers in near real time, which is critical for measuring consistency of delivery as well as the impact of innovation activity in areas that require an overhaul.

Customer metrics for moments of truth:

- **Transactional Net Promoter Score (tNPS)**: Often used as a top level measure of customer experience across all transaction touchpoints. This measures the degree to which an interaction in the customer journey can lead to recommendation of the brand. Transactional NPS (tNPS) complements relational NPS (rNPS), a top level consumer-brand relationship metric, which measures the likelihood of the overall experience leading to recommendation of the brand.

- **Customer Effort Score (CES)**: Used to focus on understanding points of friction and usability issues, which are pertinent for customer service and low involvement interactions that require intuitive design. This works well as a touchpoint metric that may predict pain points that cause switching behavior but has limitations as a customer metric to cover the overall consumer-brand relationship.

- **Customer Satisfaction (CSAT)**: Measures customers’ feelings and attitudes towards their experience, and the service quality provided. Key driver analysis can show which elements or service attributes have the most impact on overall customer satisfaction.

- **Experience Point (XP) Score**: GfK has created a new way to evaluate experience points, both direct and indirect, more holistically. The Experience Point Score captures both the impression of each experience (whether positive or negative) and, at the same time, the memorability of the experience (whether it is strong or vivid or weak). This method can be used at the overall brand experience level and for ‘moments of truth’ or stages in the customer journey.

- **Diagnostic indicators**: Customer data captured about a touchpoint interaction provides granular detail for...
measuring and controlling the quality of operational processes. Each touchpoint has at least one critical performance measure that determines the quality of outcomes, for example, reason for interaction, first contact resolution, duration of experience can provide visibility of actual behavior during the interaction. Much of this information can be captured as part of the interaction rather than using customer surveys to obtain the data.

» CRM. Customer Relationship Management technology solutions are making customer data a vital asset for managing the customer base and gaining a single customer view across all interactions customers have with brands. Cloud technologies enable better linkages of disparate information about customers to be pulled into one account profile, including customer feedback from surveys. By linking CRM data to other data sources, brands can personalize the experience more effectively, create segmentation profiles and predictive models to understand how to manage acquisition, retention and churn more effectively. Events in the customer journey can trigger real-time responses to profiles, ensuring that customers feel valued through a personal touch to service.

» Text and speech analytics. While structured surveys are the primary method to capture customer feedback in a way that can be quantified, the top of mind views of customers are best captured in what they say and write in unstructured text. Customer comments and conversations are becoming more useful as text analytics and speech recognition technology improves to create meaning out of responses. By using advanced quantitative and qualitative analysis techniques to mine large volumes of verbatim comments, recorded conversations, emails and social media interactions, brands can learn a great deal about how what is salient to customers.

» Closed-loop action management. Responding quickly to issues raised by customers is an increasingly important part of eliciting customer feedback. If customers complain or raise an issue that needs attention, these interactions are moments of truth that overshadow all other considerations from that customer’s perspective. Tools that flag issues in real time, delegate and monitor resolution can enable management teams to stay in control when perceived failures have a negative impact on customers. Granular information about how issues are resolved enable teams to establish critical success factors for how the address every challenge that customers bring to them.

» UX. A UX score can provide a top level KPI but user experience incorporates both quantitative and qualitative assessment techniques to ensure a human centred design that is stylized to incorporate brand signatures. It is not only important to understand usability of the website or mobile experience, the seamless management of the user experience across devices is increasingly important as a customer will often start an interaction on a mobile or tablet and then complete it by interacting with the website or other online channels. User experience also needs to work effectively across both the retail and digital experiences as the real and virtual worlds become blurred.

» Social media. As an indirect channel, social media is increasingly useful to tap into overall sentiment about the brand in real time, it also offers a view of how the brand is positioned relative to current trends and the zeitgeist of the moment.

When measuring performance, there is no single metric that will provide the answers for creating breakthrough changes, a constellation of different KPIs offers a rich and granular view of how customers are engaging and responding. When this information is understood and used to empower employees, learning accelerates because employees understand and adapt better to situational factors, leading to a more responsive enterprise.
journey. Decisions about priorities and the level of investment need for making rapid and dramatic enhancement to the customer experience, are the prerogative of the C-Suite executives. Without commitment from the top, decisions based on customer KPIs cannot drive significant breakthrough innovation.

When customers know that a brand is able to anticipate their needs because the employees behind it really care about doing everything possible to address their best interests, this creates a unique customer experience that holds more value than an undifferentiated approach that follows other brands in the same sector. Customers are willing to pay more for choosing their favorite brands, so brands have to look very closely at what they offer that would provide compelling reasons for them to become a favorite. In today’s complex digital environment, transforming the customer experience mixes effective management process with an insatiable curiosity about how and why customers find meaning and purpose in the brands that they choose.

In many cases, pressures to drive down cost and manage short term profitability outweigh the long term considerations to invest in the brand experience. As we see current growth in building digital capabilities, this can mean that resources are diverted away from continuous improvement in other experience points, like Customer Service and Retail. Line-of-sight objectives continue to vary across different parts of the organization, and even when digital capabilities are in place, they are not always well joined up to other parts of the organization. The complexity of large organizations means that there is often siloed thinking which needs to be challenged with shared objectives, metrics and targets.

Leadership and the ability to galvanise effort in the organization is often much more important than how metrics are applied and reported across the entire customer journey. Decisions about priorities and the level of investment need for making rapid and dramatic enhancement to the customer experience, are the prerogative of the C-Suite executives. Without commitment from the top, decisions based on customer KPIs cannot drive significant breakthrough innovation.

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While many of these tools are not new, and are currently applied by leading brands, strategic and operational customer metrics are not enough to build effective decision making systems for an agile and connected enterprise.

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