

DESIGNING AN END-TO-END CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

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How can a company distinguish itself and its products with today's savvy, informed buyers? Many marketing experts believe differentiation lies in designing a memorable customer experience. A recent study found 75% of companies cite improving the customer experience as their top objective.¹

Every touchpoint a customer has with a company's products or services should deliver experiences that delight, create positive memories, and are consistent with the company's brand. But to get there, you first need to develop a strategy.

START WITH A PLAN

A customer experience strategy defines the actionable steps necessary to deliver a positive, meaningful experience for customers across all interactions.² This requires understanding and empathy with customers and the application of technology to make all interactions positive. The range of customer interactions, whether by phone, online, or in-person at a retail outlet, should combine to create an overall positive experience.

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Market-leading companies look holistically at the customer experience. In applying a design approach, they begin by analyzing the customer experience from inception and then applying a variety of tools and media to create positive interactions.

Consultants recommend using the following principles to design a customer experience strategy:³

- Gain an in-depth understanding of customers' needs, aspirations and behaviors from their perspective.
- Look beyond industry boundaries for better approaches to customer experiences.
- Consider future trends in technology and societal shifts in behavior, demographics and social norms.
- Comprise teams across several disciplines for diverse thinking to create a multilayered experience.
- Use prototypes to quickly test approaches and business models.

Strategic plans often require changes in how organizations use technology and direct the activities of their customer service and sales staff. Tactics are designed to improve customer convenience, enhance personalization, streamline access, and ease the purchase process.⁴

The goal of these efforts is to create "sticky" experiences for customers that are exceptional, increase brand loyalty, and improve sales. Although these efforts take time, they can create positive experiences that are memorable and often are shared by customers among friends and on social media.



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Technology enhances the customer experience

Companies are using technology to imbue the customer experience with several benefits. Some of the technology tools include:

- The customer experience cloud merges data derived from customer service, marketing and sales. It brings together customer data and their digital experiences to personalize interactions in optimal ways.⁵
- Big data analytics offers a single consolidated view of a customer's overall experience derived from a wide range of sources across all channels, such as actual buying history, customer conversations, online advertising response, search engine history and demographics.⁶

- Microdata can be derived from big data to analyze consumer buying patterns and trends. It can be used to target advertising and special offers at precisely the right place and time.
- Machine learning enables higher levels of personalization in the customer experience. By selecting "likes" on a playlist or shopping website, customer preferences are tracked and product offerings can be refined to personal tastes.
- Augmented reality (AR) apps used on smartphones or tablets can help customers visualize products in their homes or virtually try on products.⁷

By using technology effectively, companies are creating highly personalized experiences that delight their customers and build brand loyalty.

To discuss these topics in more detail, please contact your PNC Relationship Manager.

1 "Five Trends Shaping the Future of Customer Experience in 2018," by Blake Morgan, Forbes blog, Dec. 5, 2017.

Available at: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/blakemorgan/2017/12/05/five-trends-shaping-the-future-of-customer-experience-in-2018/#2245c4d12d9c>

2 "How to Design a Customer Experience Strategy," by Carly Stec, HubSpot blog, Aug. 31, 2017. Available at: <https://blog.hubspot.com/service/customer-experience-strategy>

3 "The expanding role of design in creating an end-to-end customer experience," by Raffaele Breschi, Tjark Freundt, Malin Orebäck and Kai Vollhardt, McKinsey & Company, June 2017.

Available at: <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/operations/our-insights/the-expanding-role-of-design-in-creating-an-end-to-end-customer-experience>

4 "How to Design a Customer Experience Strategy," by Carly Stec, HubSpot blog, Aug. 31, 2017. Available at: <https://blog.hubspot.com/service/customer-experience-strategy>

5 "Five Trends Shaping the Future of Customer Experience in 2018," by Blake Morgan, Forbes blog, Dec. 5, 2017.

Available at: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/blakemorgan/2017/12/05/five-trends-shaping-the-future-of-customer-experience-in-2018/#2245c4d12d9c>

6 "Five Trends Shaping the Future of Customer Experience in 2018," by Blake Morgan, Forbes blog, Dec. 5, 2017.

Available at: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/blakemorgan/2017/12/05/five-trends-shaping-the-future-of-customer-experience-in-2018/#2245c4d12d9c>

7 "Five Trends Shaping the Future of Customer Experience in 2018," by Blake Morgan, Forbes blog, Dec. 5, 2017.

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