Become the Master of the B2B Customer Experience

Executive Summary

How to think about customer experience management.

At CMG Partners, we've outlined the following process for exploring and optimizing the customer experience within B2B enterprises.

1. Understand the customer journey.

- Review the existing customer experience including transition points.
- Analyze Net Promoter Score and other customer analytics.
- Assess the current experience as it relates to the brand's aspirations.

2. Identify and validate *Moments of Truth*.

- Survey customers to understand their priorities and perspectives.
- Identify critical customer journey touchpoints—*Moments of Truth*.
- Leverage *Moments of Truth* through process and technology tools.

3. Perform gap analysis.

- Benchmark model companies within (and without) our own industry.
- Map existing customer experience against ideal state.
- Identify gaps between existing and ideal state.

4. Prioritize initiatives.

- Prioritize initiatives for both short- and long-term impact.
- Focus first on transition points from one lifecycle stage to the next.
- Marry systems and processes to new customer-centric philosophy.

5. Establish a *Voice of the Customer* measurement program.

- Build *Voice of the Customer* feedback loop and measurement program.
- Tie employee incentives to Net Promoter Score outcomes.
- Commit to ongoing listening, measurement, and optimization.

No one owns the customer experience like Disney's army of "cast members" who roam parks delivering on the brand promise of making dreams come true. A couple of years ago, I was fortunate to peak behind the curtain as a college student participating in Disney's Magic Kingdom College Program.

I saw a cast member deliver a free t-shirt to a dad whose baby had thrown up on his. I saw more ice cream cones dropped and replaced than I can recall. And, of course, I saw countless smiles and memories created by cast members dressed as Mickey Mouse or Snow White.

At Disney, nothing stands in the way of the customer experience.

In the B2B arena, proactive customer experience management is just as critical – perhaps more so. As our relationship with our customers becomes more and more sophisticated, companies that focus on the optimization of the customer experience outperform those that don't.

In fact, in a 2014 study of 400 executives, the *Harvard Business Review* found that customer experience leaders vastly outperform customer experience laggards across the following metrics:

- Profitability. 60% of leaders and 35% of laggards were high performers.
- Customer quality. 66% of leaders and 27% of laggards were high performers.
- Revenue. 60% of leaders and 28% of laggards were high performers.
- Market Share. 54% of leaders and 29% of laggards were high performers.
- Customer satisfaction. 54% of leaders and 20% of laggards were high performers.

The implication is clear. It's time for marketing leaders to think of customer experience management as an investment rather than as a cost.

So what exactly is customer experience management?

Today's marketing leaders must manage customer touchpoints across multiple channels, lifecycle stages and product lines. And they must do so while meeting increasing customer demands for real-time, customized communication.

Customer experience management is the enablement and optimization of the people, processes, and technologies used to manage those touchpoints. It involves analyzing customer behavior in order to build brand loyalty and drive revenue. It places the customer at the core of the business and pushes marketing leaders to develop experiences based on the customers' goals and motivations rather than their own.

Implemented properly, enabling a positive customer experience has never been more important – or more expansive across the organization. Because of this, it's increasingly important that marketing leaders generate customer insights – and act on those insights – to improve every step of the relationship between customer and brand. That's customer experience management.

How to think about customer experience management.

Taking command of the customer experience is not something to leave to chance. It's a strategic endeavor requiring marketing leaders to audit, assess, and optimize the customer journey.
At CMG Partners, we've outlined the following process for customer experience management. This outline is based on our work with enterprise clients in the telecommunications, technology, and wireless space, but the process and the examples below can be easily applied to all B2B organizations and most B2C companies.

Because the concept of customer experience management covers a lot of ground, no two implementations are the same. Therefore, this is just a 30,000-foot view of how you might consider an approach for customer experience management.

1. Map the current state of the customer journey.

First, we seek to understand the current state of the customer experience by mapping the customer journey to key lifecycle stages. This requires interviews with internal stakeholders and analysis of customer metrics like Net Promoter Score in addition to the customer's perspective offered via social media.

Those key lifecycle stages leveraged to understand the customer's journey are referenced as follows: Awareness, Knowledge, Consideration, Selection, Purchase, Satisfaction, Retention, and Advocacy. Watch out for transitions from one lifecycle stage to another. That's when customers are most likely to experience hiccups in their journey. Seamless transition points from one stage to the next are key. Frankly, you may learn of this less-than-successful transition from one lifecycle stage to another via social media first as immediate feedback.

2. Survey customers to identify critical *Moments of Truth*.

As you'll recall, customer centric marketing requires us to places the customer at the core of the business by developing the experience around the [customer's goals and motivations](). You can't achieve that without talking to customers.

Therefore, our next step is to survey customers. We want to understand their perception of the company, products or solutions and to identify the most critical touchpoints in their journey. We call these touchpoints our *Moments of Truth*. Common examples include:

A) An organized website that allows prospects to find what they need when they need it.
Web content is especially important in the Awareness and Knowledge stages.
In 2011, Google and Shopper Sciences Agency found that potential buyers consulted 10.4 content sources before engaging – a 200% year-over-year increase. Just imagine what it will be in 2018.

B) Proactive and personalized communication during a trouble resolution process.
Communication is key during trouble resolution. You have to say *something* – even if the communication is simply "I don't have an update yet, but we're working on a solution."
Of course, that communication will increasingly happen through webchat or through social media or online resources – communication that you may or may not directly control. According to Forrester Research, 80% of people search for an answer online *first* when confronting a problem.

C) Hassle-free loyalty programs that identify and reward your most valuable customers.
What does a loyalty program look like in B2B? While you can't offer a punch card for a free beverage, free stuff never hurts as long as it's allowed within your customer's gifting policy. Neither does a simple hand-written thank you note or an analyzed report or access to exclusive research.
Once identified, *Moments of Truth* can be further leveraged with proper application of process and technology tools.

3. Perform gap analysis based on customer insights and best practices.

Customer insights around *Moments of Truth* are critical. Of course, we also need to look at customer experience management best practices established by companies of similar size in our industry as well as companies with similar customer profiles.

However, don't overlook companies outside of your industry who've demonstrated consistent leadership in customer experience. Although you may not believe you can learn from Disney's magic, it may provide an opportunity to think outside the box.

From customer insights and best practices, we establish our ideal state. And, as we map our own company's customer journey against the ideal state, gaps are inevitably exposed.

What kind of gaps might we find? Well, it depends. The customer journey can be so unique and differentiated from one company to the next. A few common gaps include:

- Impersonal or inconsistent online experiences due to poor integration between CRM and other digital platforms.
- Irrelevant one-to-one or overly-broad one-to-many messages due to sloppy or nonexistent persona development.
- The wrong information (or too little of the right information) at critical points of transition from one lifecycle stage to the next.

With gaps established, it's time to start bridging.

4. Prioritize initiatives to close the gap between current and optimized state.

Finally, we outline and prioritize projects the client could implement to align the organization around a customer-centric culture. We want to leverage *Moments of Truth* with process and technology tools and iron out any wrinkles in our transition points from one lifecycle stage to the next.

The marrying of systems and processes ensure that an optimal customer experience isn't a one-time thing but a daily commitment to the customer. However, it's worth noting that the development of process and system alignment requires time and investment and should be viewed as a longer-term commitment that can prove as a true differentiator.

5. And, last but not least, establish a Voice of the *Customer* measurement program.

A critical initiative in nearly every implementation is buildout of a customer feedback loop and measurement program. We refer to this as *Voice of the Customer*.
This will undoubtedly include a Net Promoter Score (NPS) program. In fact, some companies reward employees based on NPS to align their day-to-day actions with the overall customer experience optimization strategy.

Customer needs – and the technology and tactics we use to address them – are in a constant state of flux. Implementing a one-time customer experience management project is akin to applying a bandage. A long-term commitment to listening and measuring the *Voice of the Customer* will ensure that you never rest on your laurels.

So, what other customer experience management initiatives might we recommend? Keep reading to find out.

Customer experience management and the modern CMO.

The role of the CMO continues to evolve as marketing leaders are increasingly pushed beyond traditional marketing roles.

Because we're now expected to both build the brand while generating revenue and because of the emergence of increasingly powerful marketing technologies, today's marketing leaders are responsible for more customer touchpoints across more channels with more complex sales funnels than ever before.

Therefore, CMOs must be more than marketers. We must be strategists, technologists, quantitative specialists, and internal champions of the customer. We must be masters of the customer experience.

CMG Potential Realized.

About CMG Partners

CMG enables complex organizations to realize their market potential, becoming more agile and more focused on growth. We're strategists and practitioners in equal measure, backing up our thinking with a sharp understanding of execution. Clients from Fortune 500 powerhouses to growth-oriented companies trust CMG to lead category-changing marketing strategies to success. We deliver strategy, go-to-market, agile and analytical programs with speed and dexterity.

For more information, visit www.cmgpartners.com.

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