

# ICXI -POST newsbriefing

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## Introduction From The President

A piece of recent research identified that in their *sample 97% of customers would rather clean a toilet than call customer support*. Another article in Customer Experience Magazine (CEM) Oct 2022, discussed how the *Silence of the Customer is Louder Than the Voice of The Customer*.

One of the old saws of the recent past suggested that “No news is good news”, the truth of the matter in the customer feedback world is that “*no news is no news and that can mean potentially bad news*”

If an organisation is not up to date with the voice of the customer on their opinion of the of their performance and that of their competitors, they are potentially manoeuvring themselves into a tricky position when it comes to both maintaining standards of high-quality day to day customer experience and for their future strategic planning. The assumption that customer silence equates to customer happiness is a dangerous one to make.

But back at the toilet cleaning report in which 42% of the 1000 people surveyed by Shep Hyken gave that as a preference to calling customer support can serve as an example of the degree to which, not only an organisation but a whole operational sector in an economy can lose touch with the reality of their customers’ perception of the quality of the experience they are delivering.



## Customer Support-The Elephant in The Room

Whether the global pandemic hastened the decline in performance in this area or whether it was already on a slippery slope of decline is a moot point, but it is observable that creating, as the only channel of customer contact, what amounts to a customer care call centre, employing semi skilled personnel supported by dubious AI and other technology and manning it an operational capacity that is far below the demand it generates has not been an unqualified success. It is difficult to speak to anyone who believes that calling a customer support centre is going to be an enjoyable and satisfactory experience.

So how might matters be improved?

Shep Hyken has ten “rules” which should improve matters

- 1. Be Friendly and Knowledgeable: When we asked what was most important to customers, the top two answers were dealing with people who were friendly and knowledgeable. Be nice and have the answers—or at least know where to get the answers.*
- 2. Be Consistent: Remind your people that consistency and predictability are the foundation of creating an amazing customer service experience. **Always** be friendly and knowledgeable. While employees don't have to have the same personalities, they all have to have the same relentless and reliable dedication to taking care of their customers.*
- 3. Be Better than Average: You don't have to go “over-the-top” to create an amazing experience. Just be a tiny bit better than average. That can come in the form of a positive attitude, a good sense of humor (when appropriate), using the customer's name, and other small moments or experiences that have a positive impact.*
- 4. Shorten the Hold Time: Customers don't like waiting on hold, no matter how good the “hold music” is. Putting customers on hold for an unreasonable amount of time sends a negative message that you don't value their time.*
- 5. First Call Resolution: The goal is for the customer to call only once. Customers become frustrated when they have to call back for the same problem. It could cause customers to question the capabilities of the people working for the company. That erodes confidence.*
- 6. Transfer Only Once: If you have to transfer, it should only be one time. It's okay to escalate a customer's issue to a higher level of support or to a supervisor, just make sure that this is the right person. Multiple transfers are just as bad as a customer having to call back for the same issue again and again.*

7. *Don't Make Customers Repeat Their Story: Just as you only want to transfer a customer once, you only want them to tell their story once, and that is to the first agent. That doesn't mean the customer can't share more details, but the new agent or supervisor should have some idea of the call so it doesn't start from the very beginning. At a minimum, there should be appropriate notes in the customer's record. Informing the next tier of support about the situation also helps to eliminate the need for the customer to start over.*

8. *Be Proactive: Consider ways to help the customer with something they had not thought of or asked about. Looking at their history and paying attention to their questions could give you clues about what you could suggest making their future experience with your product better. It could also result in them not having to call back for a question you know they might eventually have.*

9. *Always End Strong: Keep the door open. Even if the call isn't perfect, do your best to end strong. The customer needs to feel that you put forth your best effort and truly cared about their issue.*

10. *Show Appreciation: Don't forget to say thank you and make the customer feel appreciated. Even in a bad service interaction, the customer service agent almost always says, "Thank you," but the customer sometimes feels this is part of the script rather than a sincere gesture of appreciation.*

### **It's a Leadership Issue**

There is no doubt that a customer support centre that managed a high standard of performance in these areas would be in the upper quartile. The one point that is missing is a point of leadership rather than management and that is capacity. The root cause of customer frustration is waiting on hold. *One study shows that the average person spends an outrageous **43 days of their life** waiting on the phone to talk to a service agent.*

And what reasons do customers give for their displeasure?

*Reason #1: Customers hate wasting time.*

*Reason #2: Customers feel unappreciated.*

*Reason #3: Hold times indicate lower quality service.*

*A study by Gladly found that 81% of customers believe customer service today isn't meeting their expectations.*

*On top of being a frustrating experience, those long hold times directly affect customer satisfaction and brand perception, ultimately impacting a business's bottom line.*

<https://getmindful.com/blog/customers-hate-waiting-on-hold/>

The performance of customer support centres is the elephant in the customer experience room.

## So if customers are silent- What to do?

Nav Thethi in an October 2022 article in Customer Experience magazine proposes the following approach



Warning – Not new but clearly not front of mind

*The silence of your customer is a deadly threat to your business's future stability. It is an early indicator of their dissatisfaction either with your product or service.*

*The quiet and disgruntled customer pays attention to the sales experience. They narrate their dissatisfaction to their friends and relatives. This customer purposely chose not to provide feedback and discontinue business with your brand. Unfortunately, they have the potential to disrupt your brand's image.*

*"For every 27 dissatisfactions experienced by American consumers, only 1 is voiced in the form of a complaint to the company. But the 26 silent customers don't stay that way for long—they each tell another 10 about their unhappiness"*

*Sam Deep and Lyle Sussman in 'Smart Moves for People in Charge'*

*Around 90% of mute consumers will shop around because of their unresolved dissatisfaction. Former CEO and President of Amazon, Jeff Bezos says "If you make customers unhappy in the physical world, they might each tell six friends. If you make customers unhappy on the Internet, they can each tell 6,000."*

*It is likely that most firms are mistaken when it comes to gauging their popularity with customers. This is due to the existence of muted consumers. Hence, the identification of this segment of buyers becomes all the more crucial.*

***Let's try to understand this with a simple 5 W approach:***

*WHO are your silent customers?*

*WHAT are the reasons behind their silence?*

*WHERE do these customers disappear?*

*WHY do they cease to do business with your brand?*

*WHEN does your company suspect customers turning silent?*

*This is critical to know what your customers are you telling you vs. what they're doing when they're interacting with your business touchpoints. Many times, companies go very tactical when it comes to understanding customer insights. They tend to miss the empathic and emotional aspect of customers.*

*This is critical to know what your customers are you telling you vs. what they're doing when they're interacting with your business touchpoints. Many times, companies go very tactic when it comes to understanding customer insights. They tend to miss the empathic and emotional aspect of customers.*

*While silent customers create a negative impact on your business, they can also be a viable resource. Once you dig deeper and understand their concerns, gather feedback, and communicate effectively with them, you feel less threatened and more empowered. Identifying silent customers involves taking a closer look at your data patterns through the touchpoints in the user journey maps. The safe way to have an overview of your customers' history within a company is to apply CRM software (customer relationship management). Contemporary CRM helps to track customer specific KPIs. This enables you to acquire a well-defined look at the customers' journey maps.*

*The important thing is to start early. Identify indicators and focus on the right set of metrics. Let's understand more about the earliest indicators:*

- 1. Decreasing customer engagement -This can be noticed easily when a customer decreases the time spent on your website; decreases the number of customer service tickets created; or simply downgrades the services. When a customer interacts less with the business, they are less likely to stick around.*
- 2. Product – price discontentment -It all boils down to product value. If your competitor provides better value at a lesser price- your customers are bound to renounce. Keeping an eye on your immediate market is often an effective way to reduce churn in a monopsony. If it takes longer for a customer to see the value in your product, then that's a warning signal. If a product is beyond their price point, they leave – often silently.*

### 3. *Analysing the drivers of churn*

*In a volatile market, churn is inevitable. When it starts to reflect on your graphs- it's time to step back. Analyse and relaunch with the "correction of error". Business leaders must engage in pattern recognition of the churned accounts and facilitate new processes. This should involve stakeholders across teams being streamlined to make an impact that could proactively prevent future churn.*

### **How to turn your silent customers into the most loyal**

*If a customer has conducted business with you, it is definite that they have something to say. All customers are willing to pass feedback if it is straightforward and less complex to do so. For example, creating customer engagement loops that make it easier for customers to relay concerns is an effective way to understand their emotions. With engagement loops, you're constantly encouraging all customers to be proactive. At the same time, you'll make them feel valued.*

**Personalise.** *People like experiences tailored to their preferences. Therefore, so must be the feedback process. For example, a customer dining at a restaurant is not impressed. When the waiter asks for feedback, he nods and walks away never to return. It was the easier option than having to explain what went wrong. But if the restaurant reaches out with a personalised message, notification, or calls enquiring for feedback, the customer might be more open and comfortable sharing their experience.*

**Predictive.** *To make earning back your customers more frictionless, companies have to be predictive in their approach. This should become easy once you know your customer personally. For instance, notify your customers that it's almost time for them to restock their favourite products. This process of anticipating your customer's needs will make them feel more connected, and make engagement effortless.*

**Proactive.** *Companies have to be proactive – especially when they want their silent customer to engage with them. This means offering something that makes them feel special. For example, incentivising an unpleasant experience with coupons or offering an additional discount. Perhaps adding a gift voucher or free subscription every time they provide feedback. These are some ways to make the experience better.*

**Pervasive.** *Your customer support should be streamlined in an omnichannel manner that allows the customer to be able to interact with you across channels. The user experience should remain for interface, personalisation, and quality of service. This requires an omnichannel approach to customer services across all devices and modes of interaction*

[https://cxm.co.uk/silence-of-the-customer-is-louder-than-voice-of-the-customer/?utm\\_source=CXM&utm\\_medium=Newsletter](https://cxm.co.uk/silence-of-the-customer-is-louder-than-voice-of-the-customer/?utm_source=CXM&utm_medium=Newsletter)

## CRM Next Provide some useful direction on some voice of customer research techniques



### *WHAT IS VOICE OF THE CUSTOMER (VOC)?*

*Voice of the Customer (Voc) is a research strategy that is used by brands and businesses to describe customers needs and expectations for their products or services. It helps you discover everything your customers think and are saying about your business.*

*Customers provide feedbacks through different channels like website, email, telephone, social media, etc. By gathering and understanding this feedback data companies are able to define and prioritize customer needs.*

### *VOC TECHNIQUES - HOW TO COLLECT VOC DATA*

#### **1. Customer Surveys**

*Customer surveys are among one of the most traditional, scalable and commonly used way to collect customer feedback. Surveys can be created for any stage in the buying cycle to gather relevant data. It's important to ask the right set of questions in the survey to understand the customer needs and resolve the issues they face with your products or service. customer surveys for voc*

*Surveys can be conducted both online and offline. With survey tools available online, one can easily create and automate different types of surveys in quick time.*

#### **2. Customer Interviews**

*Customer interviews are time consuming and costly technique to collect Voice of the Customer data. But are more personal which helps to build trust and strong customer relationship with the brand. It is usually conducted in-person, on the phone, or email. You can choose to interview one customer or a group of customers having some common attributes. Customer interviews help you get very specific answers to the <sup>7</sup> questions about customer experience and perception about your product and services.*

### 3. Focus Groups

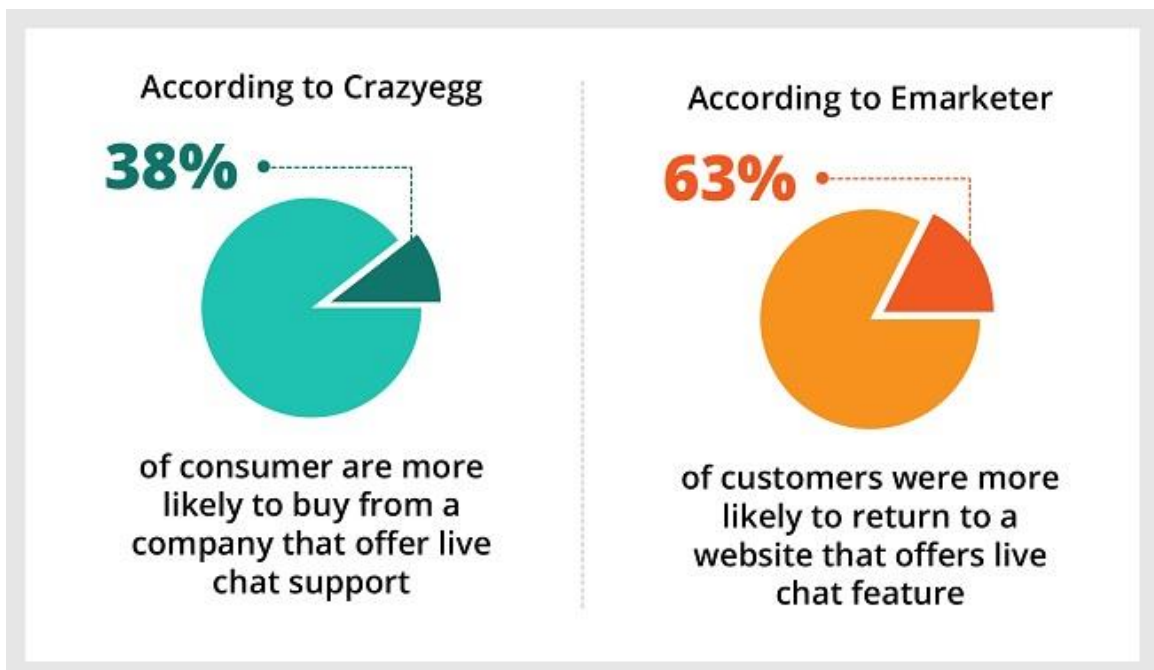
*Focus groups is a market research method where a group of 6-12 customers meet in a room to provide feedback and share their perception about a product, service or brand. Focus group participants are free to talk to one another. They typically don't know each other and are selected carefully based on their purchase history, demographics, behavior, or some other common attributes.*

### 4. Social Media

*Social media provides businesses with real-time feedback and valuable customer insights. Social media is a great tool to collect Voc data. It allows you to communicate directly with customers talking about your products or services on these social platforms. On popular social media platforms like Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter, you can connect with your customers by participating into conversations and also offer solutions to their complaints and queries. By active social listening, you can analyze current trends, gather feedback and have direct conversations with customers.*

### 5. Live Chat

*Live chat feature on a website is not only a great tool to resolve customer queries but also to collect valuable customer feedback data. Customers are more likely to buy and come back to websites that offer live chat. The following statistics shows the importance of implementing a live chat feature –*



*Live chat is a useful tool to gather VoC data. You can contact the customers who communicated through live chat and setup a short follow-up survey through email or over the phone.*



## 6. Online Customer Reviews

Apart from social media platforms, customers also talk and post reviews about companies on e-commerce websites, forums, product review websites, etc. Reviews help you understand what customers are expecting and are you able to deliver on those expectations. It's important to ensure you monitor both positive and negative reviews about your business as they impact your business reputation and image.

## 7. Net Promoter Score (NPS)

Net Promoter Score is a metric used to measure the loyalty of customers to a company. NPS is one of the most important customer experience metric used by companies to track how they are perceived by their customers.

NPS score is calculated by asking just one question in a simple survey –

“On a scale of 0 to 10, how likely are you to recommend our company/brand/ product to a friend/colleague/relative?”

Customers are then segmented as Promoters, Passives, or Detractors based on the response of the customer. NPS focuses on the entire experience of the customer with your business and their overall perception.

## 8. Email

Email is often used by companies as a marketing tool to promote their products and services. But it can also act as an effective tool to gather feedback and VoC data. You can personalize it for a particular segment of customers or design it to be sent to your entire customer base. It can be formal or informal.

## 9. Feedback Forms

Often customers will be willing to share their feedback with you – be it good or bad. Having a feedback form on your website makes it easier for them to express their thoughts and experience.

<https://www.crmnext.com/resource/learning-center/voice-of-the-customer>

## The Key Skill

The key skill for getting values from the voice of the customer research is to ensure that those responsible for leading change understand the difference between Hearing and Listening

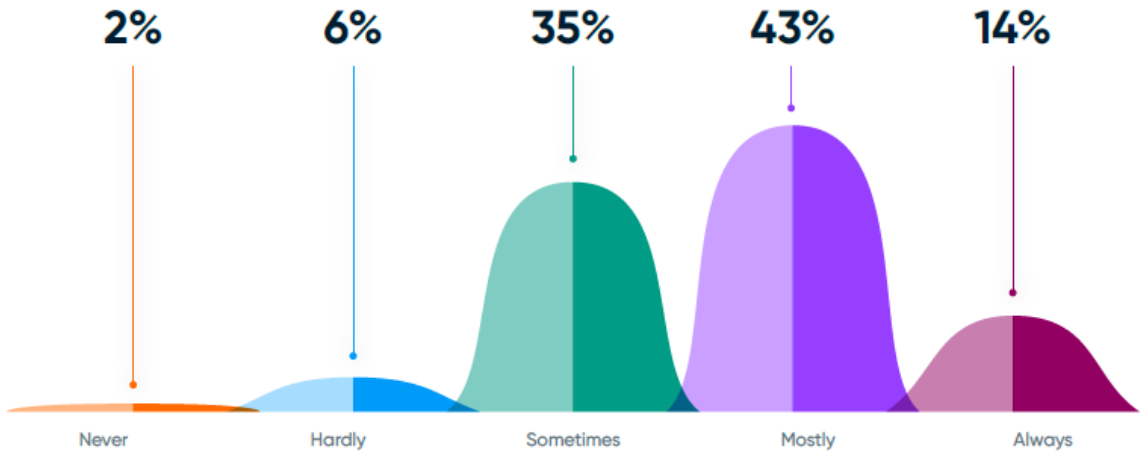


# The Global State of Customer Experience Report 2022 from CX Network

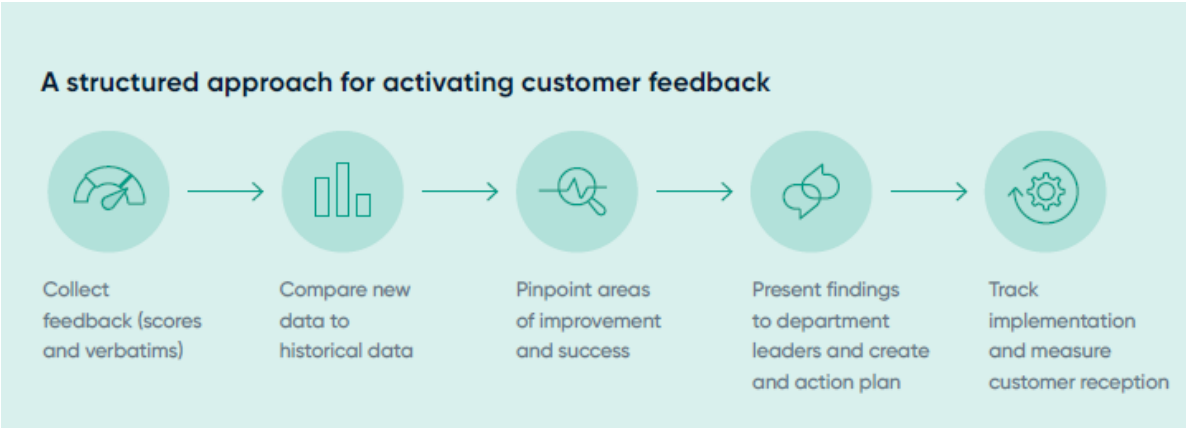
## Customer Feedback

This newly issued report goes beyond the narrow world of customer support centres and looks at the key trends emerging in customer experience management. One of the more encouraging trends to emerge is another increase in voice of customer research results getting to the right departments.

How often do customer behavior and feedback insights reach the relevant business units?



*The momentum spotted in last year’s report around VoC maturity shows no signs of slowing. A significant drop was seen in respondents admitting customer feedback insights ‘hardly’ or ‘never’ reached the right departments. This year, 57 percent of respondents ensure these insights reach relevant business units, which is a six percent rise on last year. Listening to customer feedback is only one step in the journey. To create meaningful changes, brands must feed customer insights into development cycles and employee training.*



## **Sustainability and convenience**

*The last 12 months have seen progression in customers desiring more sustainability and convenience. In 2021, 80 percent of CX practitioners noticed rising sustainability awareness from customers. This year just over 80 percent say this awareness is now influencing customer buying decisions.*

*“Sustainability is no longer just nice to have, but definitely a need to have,” says Michael Stausholm, the mind behind the world’s first plantable pencil. “Consumers want to purchase products from companies that make a difference.”*

*Similarly, there has been an increase (25 percent) in CX practitioners confirming customers are happy to invest in convenience. “In 2022 customers are willing to pay for says Chris Douglas, director of member services at hospitality group Accor Plus.*

*For brands to capitalize on this, Douglas recommends examining the effort levels required of customers in interactions and minimizing friction points.*

*Flexibility and 24/7 access make self-service channels a convenient avenue for many. To ensure these channels remove frustration, David Blakers, managing director of APAC at In Moment warns that cost-cutting should not dictate journey design. “The need to reduce cost-to-serve through increased use of self-serve is a commercial reality for many, but this should be done in a way that improves the customer experience.”*

*Thorough customer journey maps should reveal where automated self-serve options align with customer goals. Blakers adds: “Where there is significant customer appetite for human interaction, provide an option [to access human agents] as customers get frustrated when brands offer too little choice and bury phone numbers.”*

## CX trends

### The top CX trends for 2022

#### CX practitioners



#### CX solution providers



Source: Global State of Customer Experience

*This year's CX solution providers and CX practitioners are better aligned on the industry trends that matter most. With both groups placing the same trends in the top three, in comparison to only two last year. This growth in alignment will be a good foundation for 2022's CX partnerships as they collaborate to craft loyalty-winning customer experiences.*

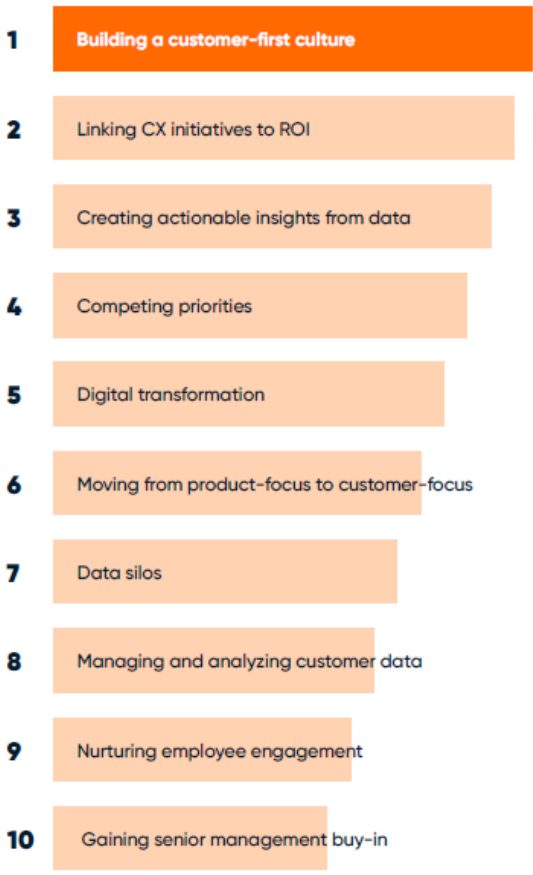
#### *Data and analytics*

*The application of data and analytics, this year's top trend, is essential for effective CX optimization. Brands that apply data can achieve a deeper understanding of customer behavior to provide targeted, meaningful experiences. The sheer processing power of artificial intelligence (AI) systems are allowing companies to utilize the masses of data available. AI, which appears as a top CX investment priority later in this report, generates hyper personalized experiences to customer bases while reducing issue resolution times and cost-to-serve rates. Telecom brand Huawei's global accounting and reporting senior director, David Wray, notes that AI powered analytics can drive data-led product and experience improvements. He explains that as projects progress through development cycles, predictive*

# Challenges

## The top CX challenges

### CX practitioners



### CX solution providers



Source: Global State of Customer Experience

*This year we are witnessing closer alignment between the two groups on challenges, with the only slight difference being around data.*

### Data

*For CX practitioners, data silos appear to have decreased in intensity, signalling progress in data-source integration. One particular survey respondent, a CX manager for a utilities brand in North America, is undertaking a project to improve data taxonomy and categorization. The initiative is breaking down silos at the utility brand and removing the need for specialized skillsets to interpret data. These data-centric hygiene projects, such as centralizing repositories, mining data lakes and driving data integrity, are intensive but crucial foundational tasks for locating and actioning insights that can improve customer experiences.*

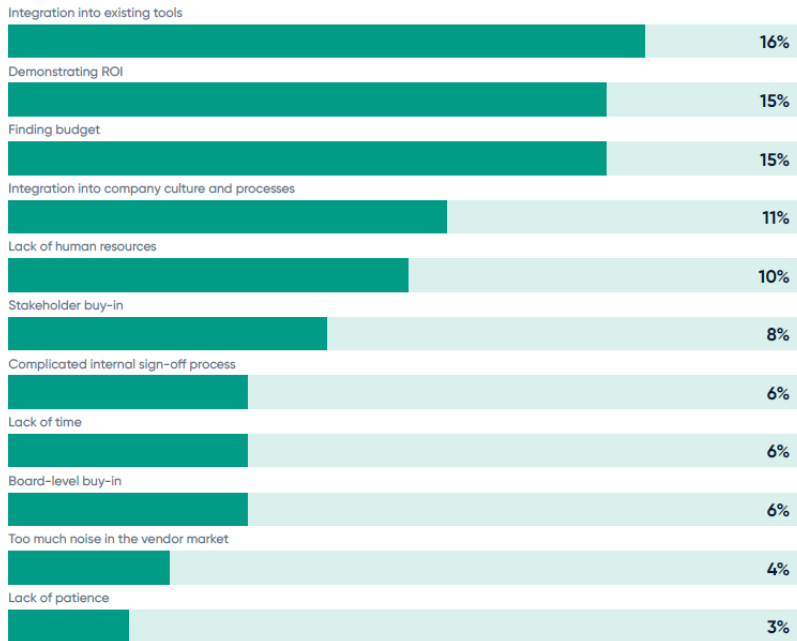
### Building a customer-first culture

*Building a customer-first culture continues to be the toughest challenge, troubling CX practitioners for six years running in the Global State of CX research series. The task of being customer-centric can lose precedence in business when company leaders are distracted by other corporate priorities, be it cost reductions or product development.*<sup>13</sup>

<https://www.cxnetwork.com/cx-experience/reports/the-global-state-of-customer-experience-2022>

## >> Spend priorities and ROI

### Top obstacles complicating CX investments



Source: Global State of Customer Experience

### How CX challenges are being tackled



**Digital transformation:** Focus more on the customer's perspective. Hosting calls and think-tank meetings with our customers.



**Actionable data:** Improving data definitions so it is easier to correlate, integrate and analyze. Replacing stubborn legacy tech with new applications.



**ROI in CX:** Creating calculations to quantify qualitative CX successes.



**Customer-first culture:** Business impact modelling, removing obsession with CX scores to be more holistic and improve processes.

## Integration

*This year integration beat the usual top investment challenge of demonstrating ROI. This indicates growing confidence in calculating the business benefits of CX initiatives, continuing the trend seen with gaining buy-in for CX gradually dropping in difficulty year-on-year.*

*To minimize the fragmentation felt in customer journeys, many organizations are improving their data unification and system integration. When breaking down silos, McDonald's head of customer experience, Luka Popovac, recommends avoiding CX solution providers that impose significant contingencies on integration with other tech vendors.*

*Mario Cacciottolo, head of PR and branding for betting website SBO, agrees that methodical strategies are needed when incorporating new CX tech into legacy infrastructure. "When time or budgets are tight, it's tempting to rush integration projects. But this can result in ineffective systems that don't last long term and cost more in the long run."*

*Another common mistake is for CX technology integration to be dictated by parameters set by IT teams. Muss Haq, strategic insights manager at UK bank TSB, notes: "Any new integration and process design should firstly come from the needs of the customer and how the employees will be able to use the technology to deliver that service."*

## Spend priorities and ROI

*"Use data to demonstrate ROI and improvements to the bottom line. Highlight any revenue increases that come as a direct result of a CX-driven project."*

*Chris Douglas*

*Director of member services, Accor Plus*

## **Will the Global Economic Situation Impact CEX Spending?**

A Gartner poll has suggested that only 7% of CFO's plan to decrease spending on customer service in the 12 months ahead.

*Only 7% of CFOs plan to decrease customer service spending over the next 12 months, according to a July 2022 poll of 234 finance leaders by Gartner, Inc. Twenty-one percent plan to increase customer spending and 72% to maintain spending, despite economic pressures. "In response to inflation, supply chain disruptions, and a tight labor market, CFOs will make trade-offs in spending that affect customer service and support (CSS) leaders," said Sarah Dibble, Director in the Gartner Customer Service & Support practice. "The bright spot for CSS organizations is that their function is not a top priority for cost cutting compared to real estate/facilities management and finance, which are the most likely to face budgets cuts in the next year."*

*Nearly all CFOs prioritize, and will continue to prioritize, digital investments over categories such as sales or research and development, focusing particularly on technologies that enhance current revenue streams or new digital products and services. CSS leaders should therefore prioritize the technologies that meet these criteria to make the strongest case for investment to their CFO.*

*CSS leaders must also make a strong case for digital investments that reduce costs. For example, digital self-service channels offer a tremendous cost savings opportunity for service organizations, costing \$0.09 per contact compared to \$14 per contact in assisted service, according to Gartner research. Another area that will not only reduce costs but also better help serve customers is conversational AI, which is expected to reduce contact center agent labor costs by \$80 billion by 2026.*

*CFOs will also look to ramp up investments in hiring and compensation, but increase scrutiny on consultants, contractors, and facilities. "Service leaders with large budget allocations in the latter of these categories should be prepared for increased scrutiny, as well as have contingency plans in place," said Dibble. "For instance, there may come a time when a contact center in an expensive geography needs to be closed down, transitioned to remote work, or the frontline is unable to handle contact volume without contractors."*

*Overall, CSS leaders should look to demonstrate ways that their function helps the company achieve its financial objectives by increasing customer loyalty, especially as CSS organizations are faced with frustrated customers who are dealing with their own financial stresses.*

*Other actions for CSS leaders to mitigate the effects of the economic downturn include:*

*Influencing the C-suite on cost reduction and avoidance*

*Migrating volume to digital and self-service*

*Improving, automating, or eliminating inefficient processes*

*Assessing outsourcing options and partnerships*

*Contributing to the top-line by developing value enhancement strategies*

## The Final Word

The state of the global economic situation has caused all organisations to examine the costs of every part of their operations. While the Gartner study indicates that customer service is not in the frontline for budget costs in most organisations, the situation emphasises the needs of all customer experience management operation to both invest and spend in ways which improve their effectiveness. The key word here is effectiveness as applied, not solely to include the cost efficiency of the organisation but also the efficacy of the customers' experience.

As the drive towards technological innovation and customer self service continues the standard of service generally provided by customer call centres fallen well short of what can be described even as satisfactory. Organisations are set up to provide one key function that is to provide goods and/or services to their customers. Not to become amazing technology emporia or to be badly run, under resourced excuses for the poor provision of the customer experience.

Customers, particularly the coming generations, are already indicating their unwillingness to play *customer-service-hide-and-seek* with organisations. Self service is generally acceptable to them but that acceptance is conditional upon the fact that the self service works.

Where the customer interfaces with the organisation is to quote the famous old saying "*Where the rubber hits the road*", and if that interface does not meet the customers' expectations, then their loyalty to the brand has a high propensity to slide into the ditch.

*David Blakers, managing director of APAC at In Moment warns that cost-cutting should not dictate journey design. The need to reduce cost-to serve through increased use of self-serve is a commercial reality for many, but this should be done in a way that improves the customer experience. Thorough customer journey maps should reveal where automated self-serve options align with customer goals. Where there is significant customer appetite for human interaction, provide an option to access human agents as customers get frustrated when brands offer too little choice and bury phone numbers."*





## Highly Recommended Reading

<https://getmindful.com/blog/customers-hate-waiting-on-hold/>

## Recommended Reading

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/shephyken/2022/05/08/forty-two-percent-would-rather-clean-a-toilet-than-call-customer-support/?sh=5cb98ad72db2>

<https://www.crmnext.com/resource/learning-center/voice-of-the-customer>

[https://cxm.co.uk/silence-of-the-customer-is-louder-than-voice-of-the-customer/?utm\\_source=CXM&utm\\_medium=Newsletter](https://cxm.co.uk/silence-of-the-customer-is-louder-than-voice-of-the-customer/?utm_source=CXM&utm_medium=Newsletter)

<https://www.cxnetwork.com/cx-experience/reports/the-global-state-of-customer-experience-2022>

<https://www.gartner.com/en/newsroom/press-releases/2022-09-28-gartner-poll-finds-less-than-10-percent-of-cfos-plan-to-decrease-customer-service-spending-within-the-next-year>