

ICXI - POST newsbriefing

Vol 2 – Issue 9 February 2023

Introduction From The President

An announcement on the UK's BBC News stated that the UK's Energy Ombudsman received a total of 107,000 complaints from customers in 2022 and upheld 75% in favour of customers. The last published figures from the UK's Financial Services Ombudsman for 2020/21 showed over a quarter of a million complaints with over 40% being upheld in favour of customers with the half yearly trends for 2022 following a similar course. While this should be a worrying statistic when bearing in mind that complaints to an ombudsman are usually made as a last resort so the number of initial complaints and those that are abandoned is probably much higher. Such figures can be seen as being literally on an industrial scale and indicative of the fact that these two sectors of the economy are clearly not operating as customer centric organisations. A fact supported by the internationally poor service quality reputation of the energy and financial services sectors.

<https://www.fca.org.uk/publication/archive/fsa-review-of-complaint-handling-in-banking-groups.pdf>

What is of even greater concern is the very high percentage of ombudsman complaints that are up upheld. To be in the energy sector and see 75% of such complaints being upheld should be a fact that would be of huge concern to the leaders of such organisations, but their track record would appear to indicate a high level of indifference to the issue and begs the question about the value, importance and effectiveness of their service quality leadership as a central influencing and motivating force.

It is hard to believe that it is over 35 years ago that Jan Carlzon in his book Moments of Truth said *"If you are not serving the customer, your job is to be serving someone who is"*

A clear message to everyone in the whole organisation that providing the highest level customer experience is the responsibility of every member of staff.

The reason why such a responsibility is a business imperative was explained to me in the early 1950's by my Uncle Bert, an undertaker by trade whose mantra, *"The customer is always right"* led my enquiring mind to challenge how such a statement could be true, especially in his business.

His answer *"Because the customer has my salary in his wallet"*.

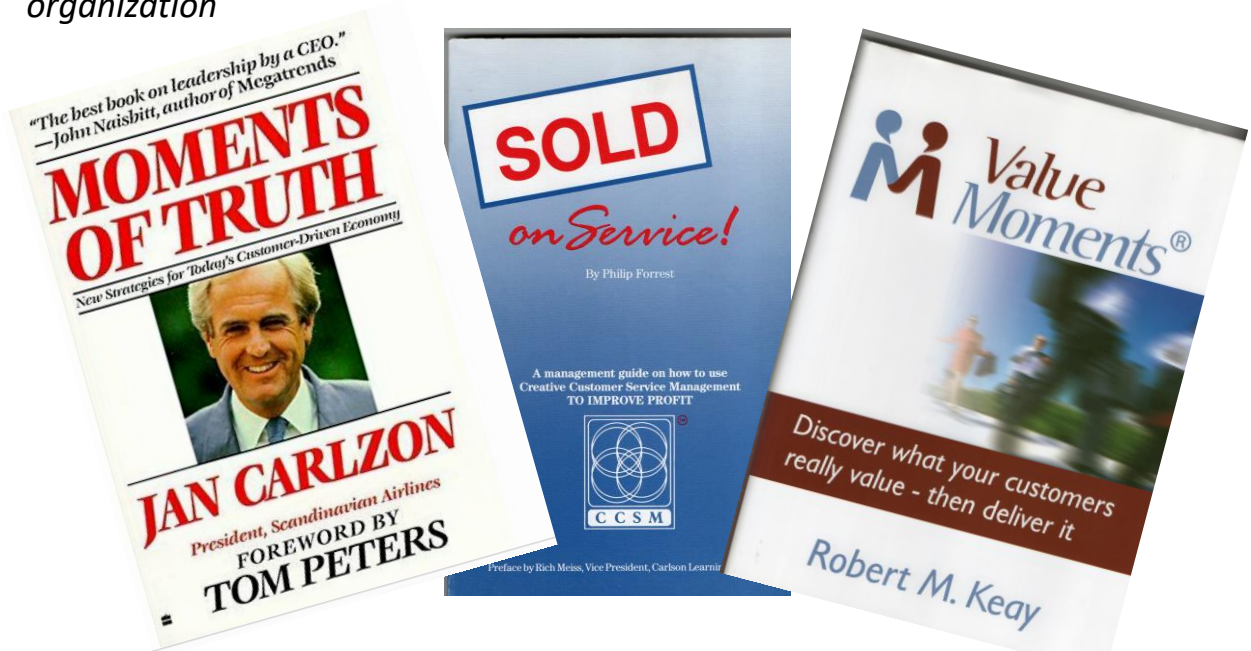
Jan Carlzon and Uncle Bert provide the two key foundation facts that every business leader needs to understand about creating a customer centric organisation.

The most notable feature of the Jan Carlzon book is that he is the leader of the business and it is his name that is promoting the necessity of customer care as a fundamental element to business success. He takes on the leadership responsibility. Sir Ranulph Fiennes the, perceived to be eccentric, British explorer and author of “Mad, Bad and Dangerous to Know” was once asked for his definition of leadership, given the fact that his decisions were often taken in situations where the lives of his team could be lost.

His definition “*Leadership requires total subjugation of self to cause*”. Seen in the light of that statement Jan Carlzon provides an excellent example of how his “self” is deployed to demonstrate the imperative of the issue of customer service. If one searches the internet today for similar statements by the leaders in the energy and financial services sectors their presence is remarkable only by their scarcity. Sadly, what is less scarce is the presence of leaders who by their inertia exhibit a preference of “*Total subjugation of cause to self*”

Dr Michael O’Connor one of the USA’s leading organisational performance thought leaders has described this as

The "Disease Of Me." While some of these individuals may also be clueless or incapable, many of them simply are self serving only! Research by my colleague, Dr. Drea Zigarmi, has shown that such leaders, who are viewed by their direct reports and peers as self-serving, have not demonstrated responsibility toward the organization’s key stakeholder groups (employees, customers, investors, others). They have a dramatically negative impact on employee passion, engagement, and sustained commitment to their organization



This was some of the early, prevailing wisdom on customer experience management from the past 30 years but what is the talk and walk on the streets today. What are the key elements required to lead an organisation to developing and maintaining an upper quartile experience to its customers and enjoying its associated benefits?

Customer Experience Leadership Today

Firstly, it may be useful to look at the environment in which organisations will have to operate. According to Forrester's report by Rick Parrish VP Research Director, **Predictions 2023: CX Teams Thrive Or Wither Based On What They Do Now** the year ahead is going to be somewhat challenging.

The challenges of 2022 — when companies lost their customer focus amid rising customer expectations and a worsening economy — will create an inflection point for customer experience (CX) programs in 2023. CX programs that help their organizations achieve their brand aspirations — and have the data to prove it — will thrive despite corporate belt-tightening. Other programs will wither, since they'll no longer have a strong economy to buoy them. What does this mean for companies' CX improvement efforts, and the CX programs that lead them, in 2023? Here's a sneak peek at two of our top CX predictions for the coming year:

CX differentiation will erode in three-fourths of industries. *The range between the best and worst CX in these industries will narrow as 25% of below-average brands improve and 50% of above-average brands decline or stagnate. Differentiation has already narrowed in at least one industry in eight of the 11 countries for which we have year-over-year Customer Experience Index (CX Index™) data — including 10 of the 13 industries we study in the US and five of the nine industries in Canada. Why is differentiation narrowing? Lower-performing brands are solving basic CX problems, while top brands are struggling to embrace transformative CX improvements. To stand out from this tightening pack, companies must embrace customer obsession and pursue CX innovations that differentiate their brand, rather than relying on CX strategies that consumers perceive as similar.*

One in five CX programs will disappear — and one in 10 will be stronger than ever. *The estimated 80% of companies for which great CX is not part of their brand identity will finally demand proof that spending on CX improvement is necessary, and some of these companies will dissolve CX teams that can't show numbers. That's bad news for the 54% of CX pros who told us that their teams are unable to prove the ROI of their projects. Some of these teams will be split up and absorbed into other business functions, while other teams will see their influence dwindle. In contrast, the 20% of companies that embrace great CX as part of their brand identity will reward CX teams that can show positive ROI. The leaders of these teams will join the one-fourth of their CX leader peers who already sit in the C-suite. They'll also gain direct control of teams to which they previously had only dotted-line connections — such as customer success or the contact center — and earn larger budgets for personnel, technology, and project work.*

Forrester also predicts that 2023 will be a year when **Fortune Favours the Brave**

Customer Experience Leadership Importance

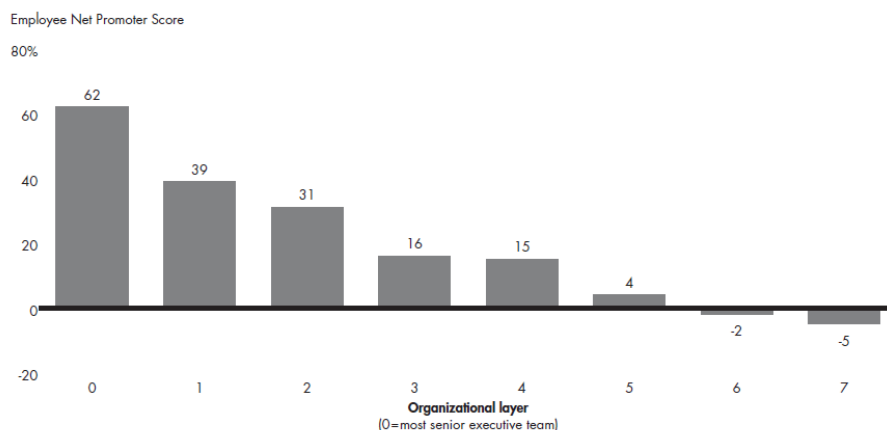
An interesting viewpoint from Europe is published by i-SCOOP in their article **Compelling reasons why customer experience excellence requires leadership** *Executive leadership and boardroom buy-in is essential for customer experience excellence. Do you have someone in your company who is responsible for the improvement of customer experience, customer service and a clear, strategic and overall customer-centric optimization focus? Someone who makes sure that customer experience excellence is achieved in an enterprise-wide way? The majority of organizations do not.* Given the key role of the customer in (today's) business and the really many evolutions which led to the need of an utter focus on the customer, that's more than a pity.

Ownership, responsibility and leadership in customer focus

Common sense says that anything that's crucial for (future) business success requires measurable and clear responsibility (which is not the same as ownership). Common sense also dictates that anything requiring cross-divisional and enterprise-wide focus, beyond silos, also requires – at the very least – responsibility. The reason we make a difference between responsibility and ownership is that ownership often leads to debates that don't really focus on the improvement of the focus or desired outcome. With responsibility comes accountability and attention for that desired outcome.

Another aspect is leadership. As change and collaboration across the organization is seldom spontaneous or natural, leadership makes sure those who are responsible work with the various stakeholders and are not stopped by internal challenges in several areas such as the human dimension, processes, organizational issues, etc. Let's also not forget the undeniable link between employee experience and engagement on one hand and customer experience on the other. It's clear that employee engagement is not something that just "happens". **Bain & company found that employee engagement drops with each organizational layer farther from the CEO.**

Figure 1: Employee engagement drops with each organizational layer farther from the CEO



With anything that relates to the customer (end-to-end customer experience, customer engagement, customer service, marketing, employee engagement, the processes driving customer experience in the back office etc.) being essential for the business, you need leadership and responsibility over it all.

The customer needs to enter the boardroom as do customer experience excellence and customer service optimization for that matter. Ownership then becomes ownership and responsibility over various pieces of the bigger puzzle to achieve the overarching goal of improving customer-facing functions and tying these improvements to better business results as defined in the bigger plan.

Is the Chief Customer Officer a Customer Experience Excellence Officer?

De facto we see that responsibility and leadership over the customer-centric equation has been on the rise. Think about the Chief Customer Officer, for instance, a role we've seen growing since several years now.

*The Chief Customer Officer, as Jeanne Bliss who recently published her latest book **Chief Customer Experience 2.0** puts it, needs **“to work with the leadership team in building the consistent behaviors, decision-making, and company engagement that will prove to the organization that leaders are united in their commitment to earn the right to customer-driven growth”**. And customer-driven growth is obviously achieved by customer experience excellence.*

However, despite the clear growth of the role of the Chief Customer Officer (CCO), Jeanne Bliss also reminds that “organizations still rely primarily on areas of expertise or silos to run the business”. And that has consequences. silos are deeply rooted in our organizations and customers feel it.

Uniting the leadership team on customer asset growth – source Jeanne Bliss

The question that arises is whether a CCO is enough to ‘honor and manage customers as assets’. Because that’s what they are: key assets that deserve at least as much attention as other company assets, especially as you don’t own them as you own other assets such as your office furniture or computers. Moreover, your customers are only one click away from your competitor and one bad experience from not being a customer anymore. They are highly autonomous and know what they want. They can leave at any time, even if you treat them well. That’s something office furniture won’t do.

Most important strategic performance measurement is the ‘Customer experience’

Customer experience levels have **dropped** for the **4th** consecutive year



Why customer experience needs to enter the boardroom

*The valuation of customer experience, customer service, customer engagement etc. by C-level executives, the CEO and even the board becomes more important than ever. In that sense it was rather saddening to see that, according to research by The Institute of Customer Service, “**only 51% of employees and LOB managers think their CEO and Board are interested in customer insight and that less than 50% believe senior executives understand customer needs**”.*

There are several strong cases to make customer experience a top priority in the executive suite and enter it into the boardroom.

Customer service excellence is gauged by customer experience excellence

Customer experience as key driver of retention and customer loyalty

When we identify the core drivers of customer retention and customer loyalty, two key priorities for business and the latter essential for acquisition, even if loyalty is on the decline, we again see customer experience popping up.

The ROI of customer experience excellence

Watermark Consulting found that customer experience leaders have:

- *Higher revenues due to, among others, better customer retention. Other reasons for these higher revenues (again, because of being customer experience leaders) include less price sensitivity, greater wallet share and positive word-of-mouth).*
- *Lower expenses due to, among others less intense service requirements of loyal customers. Other factors: less complaints and lower acquisition costs (we know the link between loyalty and acquisition but also of customer experience leadership on acquisition – make it frictionless).*

In all honesty, we don't really need surveys to understand the impact of customer experience on retention and loyalty. Customer emotions and the end-to-end customer experience (a highly emotional given as well) are known to impact both.

Customer engagement: (inter)action driven by experience

The value of customer experience is higher when CEO leadership is involved

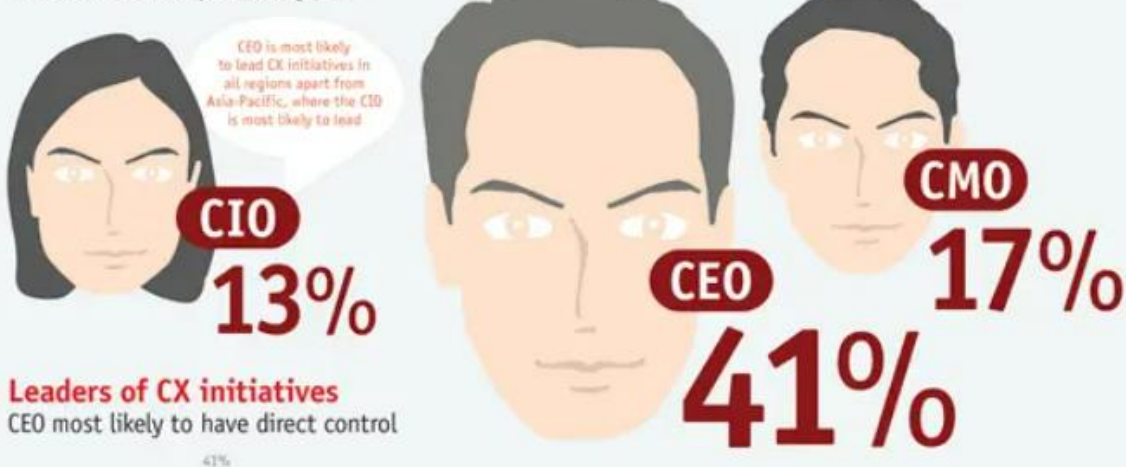
Not convinced yet? Here is another case to bring customer experience into the boardroom. Research, conducted by the Economist Intelligence Unit Research for customer experience and contact center solution provider Genesys has shown that CEO leadership of customer experience is linked to better business performance.

According to the research, “Value of Experience: How the C-suite values customer experience in the digital age”, companies – and thus C-level execs) that prioritize customer experience investment show higher revenue growth (59% versus 40%) and are more profitable (64% versus 47%!) than companies where this is not the case.

*Also that a growing number of C-suite execs will, or at least intend, to prioritize investment in customer experience over the next 3 years. **Focus and strategic alignment across the enterprise and its ecosystem with a clear choice, message and action plan do matter indeed.***

CEO leadership of customer experience linked to better business performance

Where does CX responsibility lie?



Wrapping up: leadership needs to care about customer experience now!

Looking at the rest of the research, everything we mentioned in this article and the many other pieces on declining customer loyalty, changing customer behavior, the expectations of today's customer, the competitive benefits of customer-focused organizations in a challenging global economy with ample challenges regarding costs, differentiation, process optimization and – shall we go on – it's probably safe to say that CEOs and C-suite executives need to act now.

Those who don't make sure that customer experience and all the other mentioned areas (customer service etc.) become strategic priorities with clear leadership and responsibilities will have another responsibility to bear. Explaining why they messed up by not creating trust, be more transparent to their customers and putting the customer and their perceptions and expectations first. In fact, as we write this, a few CEOs of large organizations are going through exactly that: facing responsibilities they rather wouldn't have to.

<https://www.i-scoop.eu/customer-experience/compelling-reasons-why-customer-experience-excellence-requires-leadership/>

The key underlying point from all of this is that customer experience management is unlikely to become a cultural priority and thereby a “natural” organisational behaviour unless the C-suite makes it a priority and leads the organisation in that direction. Given that the culture of any organisation can be described “the sum **and** priority of its values, whether formally expressed or not, as determined by those with the power to direct the organisation”. If customer experience management is either not in the values list or is low down as a priority then it will have little or no practical influence on the quality of service provision at the point where the customer interfaces with the organisation. 7

So What To Do

The internet gurus offer a wide range of advice ranging from an exhaustive twenty point menu of the traits of successful customer experience leaders to a more succinct five point guide. Blake Morgan from Forbes in her article

The Top 20 Traits Of Customer Experience Leaders proposes the following

Companies that have the strongest customer experiences often have the best leaders. Whether they are individual contributors, executives or customer-facing employees, they know what it takes to motivate and inspire others to create a positive experience. And it shows—customers can tell when an organization is focused on providing a great experience and that attitude is reflected in their people.

Here are the top 20 traits of customer experience leaders:

- 1. Communication.** *From emails to in-person conversations and written memos, leaders know how to communicate clearly and powerfully. They get their message across concisely and by using the right channel. Good leaders say what they mean and are as comfortable communicating with customers as they are with executives.*
- 2. Listening.** *Great leaders listen to people and welcome feedback. They apply what they hear, involve others, and consider what would be best for customers. These skills include listening to comments from both employees and customers to learn what the company can do to create a better experience.*
- 3. Empathy.** *Leaders have to connect with others. They must put themselves in the shoes of their customers and employees to understand how other people are feeling. It's about more than just the purchase or the service received—it's about the emotions that customers feel.*
- 4. Delegation.** *Customer experience leaders know they can't do it all on their own, and they share the workload with other people who are qualified to do the job. Great leaders know the skillsets of the people around them and assign tasks to the right people. Delegating involves knowing what needs to get done and providing enough details without micromanaging.*
- 5. Motivation.** *Great leaders know how to inspire greatness in others and use this to encourage their employees to do their best to serve customers. They encourage each employee in his or her career and help them develop professionally. In order to best motivate employees, a leader must truly know them and help them set and reach their goals.*
- 6. Trustworthy.** *Employees and customers won't listen to a leader or give their best effort if they don't think they can trust them. Leaders need to stand by their word and not get involved in office gossip or politics. Customers and employees should know that a leader won't back out of a promise or go back on something they said.*
- 7. Humility.** *Leaders are humble enough to realize that it isn't all about them. They are willing to sacrifice their time, energy, and resources to make sure other people succeed. Humility can also mean turning to people who are more experienced for a task and*

- 8. Positivity.** *It can be easy to get bogged down with negative customers and experiences, but leaders rise above it and share their positive attitude with others. When stressful situations arise, leaders set the tone of positivity and encouragement for everyone around them. They think about the good that can come from a situation instead of jumping to the worst conclusions.*
- 9. Creativity.** *Leaders think outside the box, especially when it comes to finding the best way to solve customer problems and create a great experience. They are willing to try new things and take risks that could potentially lead to great rewards. Creative leaders know the customers want something different that meets their needs, and they are willing to consider all options to find the right solution.*
- 10. Responsibility.** *Instead of blaming others when things go wrong or taking all the credit when things go right, leaders win and lose with their team. They take responsibility for failures and make plans of how to improve in the future. Instead of just being the figurehead in charge of a team, they are alongside the employees to get the work done and make sure it is done right.*
- 11. Commitment.** *Great leaders follow through on their promises to customers and employees and do what they say they will do. They are committed to the mission of the company and do what it takes to succeed. Even when times are difficult, they stand by their employees to ensure that customers are always satisfied.*
- 12. Flexibility.** *Plans change, and leaders need to be agile enough to make adjustments without being totally thrown off course. This also means understanding human issues and making flexible procedures to meet people's needs. The best leaders stick to their principles but also know that not everything is black and white and can make changes as needed.*
- 13. Honesty.** *Transparency is key for leadership. Great leaders don't keep things from employees and customers. They are honest and open about their actions, motivations, and the state of the company. If something goes wrong, a leader doesn't try to hide it or avoid talking about it—they are open and address every situation.*
- 14. Organization.** *When managing numerous employees and customers, the ability to stay organized is key. Leaders focused on customer experience create efficient processes to get the work done and solve customer issues as quickly as possible. Leaders teach their employees how to stay organized in their work so customers know they can depend on the company to get things done the right way.*
- 15. Strategy.** *Good leaders don't fly by the seat of their pants. They have a strategic vision and reason for their actions. They use customer experience to strategically help other areas of the company and know the importance customers play in the overall goals of the company.*
- 16. Approachable.** *Customers and employees know they can come to a leader with their concerns or questions and that they will be listened to and appreciated. A good leader doesn't just sit in their office and watch over their employees; they get their hands dirty and get involved with all areas of the work. No job is too small for a good leader, and customers and employees know they can come to them with anything*

17. Innovative. Customers and trends are always changing, and leaders find innovative and new solutions to meet their needs. They are willing to take risks that could pay off with a great customer experience and a competitive advantage. Leaders encourage using new ideas and technology and promote a culture where employees aren't afraid of failure because it leads to something better.

18. Forward-Thinking. Instead of only thinking of what is happening this month or year, leaders look to the future to prepare their organizations and employees for what is coming next. In customer experience, this means keeping up with trends and incorporating new technology. Leaders don't wait for customers to tell them what technology they are using. They stay on top of developments so their company can be a leader in a new space.

19. Caring. For customer experience leaders, it's about more than just the money—it's about caring for people and helping make their lives easier and better. Leaders know the importance of helping customers through difficult times and encourage their employees to go the extra mile to help customers. They are less concerned about sticking to the letter of the law and more concerned about solving customer needs.

20. Decision-Making. Nothing will happen without a smart leader who is willing to pull the trigger, make tough decisions, and get things done. Leaders are smart and decisive. They know that business moves fast and in order to keep up, they have to make quick decisions.



“What if, and I know this sounds kooky, we communicated with the employees.”

<https://www.shutterstock.com/image-illustration/what-know-this-sounds-kooky-we-125888744>

Another Viewpoint

Jeannie Walters from Experience Navigators includes the following in her shortlist of **What Makes a Successful Customer Experience Leader?**

I've been so fortunate to work with some really great people. Many of these were clients who were charged with leading customer experience change within large companies. There are so many challenges in these positions. In most cases, it's new philosophy, limited staff and authority, and typically a culture straining against the wave of change that is required with a successful customer experience strategy. It also takes a bunch of traits that are often not found in one person. But here I go anyway...my thoughts on the traits a great customer experience leader needs to be, well, great.

1. Flexibility

If CX were an Olympic sport, it would be gymnastics. You have to be ready to adapt, stretch and jump. Seriously, one day you're reviewing communications because the CEO realized they actually go to customers. The next you're discussing why there was a 20% drop in online conversions.

2. Business Acumen

If you don't know your P from your L, or how to get smart about measuring not just transactions but overall implications, then someone else better. Numbers matter in customer experience, but how to change them matters more. This takes hard core review, critical thinking and game-changing action.

3. Instinct

This one is a little more difficult to judge or even describe. Instinct is what serves the leader who makes a call BEFORE the metrics show there's a problem. Instinct helps you sniff out a problem to investigate.

4. Communication Prowess

Gathering the information is great, but it won't do any good if it just sits with the Customer Experience team. Whatever information you gather has to be communicated in ways to make change. Not easy, folks. This is where the rubber meets the road. (And, in my experience, where many CX leaders and teams fail.)

5. Empathy

Finally, it doesn't make sense to have a leader focused on customers who can't empathize with the center of that universe. Sometimes a leader has to listen carefully to what customers are trying to say – not what they're reporting in a survey. Empathy helps the leader decide what actions to take.

There you have it. My short list of what it takes to be a successful Customer Experience leader. What would you add?

<https://experienceinvestigators.com/customer-centric-culture/best-qualities-of-a-customer-experience-leader/>

Back to the Moments

The start of this newsletter included references to Jan Carlzon's *Moments of Truth* and Robert Keay's *Value Moments*. The current white paper from *Infinity.co*

Every Conversation is a Moment that Matters indicates that such moments are still important today

It's often said that time is money. But what if it wasn't the time you spend on phone calls that impacted your bottom-line, but the specific moments that make-or-break the customer experience? Poor customer experiences can be damaging for both your revenue and your reputation. And we've got the data to prove it.

We've surveyed 2,000 consumers across the UK to understand the impact of negative call experiences on consumer behaviour and what this means for brands. We've surveyed 2,000 consumers across the UK to understand the impact of negative call experiences on consumer behaviour and what this means for brands.

We wanted to understand what those make-or-break moments are for customers on calls. According to our survey, a whopping 84% of customers would be less likely to return to a brand after a poor customer call experience. And yet, almost half of the people we spoke to say that they've been on the receiving end of a poor call experience in the last 6 months.

"Simply not being helped quickly enough."

"Being put through to an automated voice."

"Being passed between too many call agents."

"Being put through chatbot and then put on hold."

The current economic crash has served as an earthquake-like awakening for CX - the oceans are receding from the shoreline and call centres should prepare for a tsunami of calls. Businesses now need to have a deep understanding of their consumers' needs and the right systems and tools in place to support them during times of uncertainty. As we look to 2023, businesses will need to adapt to consumer behaviours, preferences and expectations, and grow amid the changing landscape to meet the needs of the modern consumer. Once an organisation has this insight, it can use it to attract potential customers and nurture existing customers. The problem is—most businesses are out of touch with what their consumers expect from their CX calls and this is a serious issue for businesses; especially considering these problems arise from call centre basics, such as quickly answer a phone call. Infinity data found that nearly 76% of customers give up on brands and hang up within 15 minutes of waiting on the other end of the line. This is stunting overall business growth. Every minute is a moment wasted and every moment matters. As the dreaded "R" word, recession, continues to grow from a whisper to a rumble, companies will need to implement systems, software and solutions to keep up with the increase in CX calls from anxious customers, whilst also upholding the highest levels of care and service

“You haven’t met my expectations!”

46%

of consumers have been disappointed with calls to a brand over the last 6 months

Over

65%

of consumers say that a single positive call experience makes them more likely to buy from a brand in the future

Key Infinity statistics of customer call frustrations

Nearly

40%

of customers are having to wait in long call queues

Over

30%

of customers express frustration with having to speak to chatbots

30%

of customers listed being put on hold as a source of frustration

The power of customer experience on brand loyalty

Poor call centre experiences could cost businesses up to

84%

of returning customers

Businesses spend

£470bn

on improving CX every year ^[1]

IDC

86%

of consumers are willing to pay more for positive CX ^[2]

pwc

80%

of consumers believe that getting through to the right expert call agent boosts brand loyalty.

79%

of consumers believe feeling listened to on a call increases the likelihood of them purchasing from that brand.

83%

of consumers believe that having a positive customer service call increases loyalty to that brand.

The biggest offenders of poor customer service calls

Utility and Financial services branded as worst for CX calls by over half of customers!

We are in an economic crisis – the cost of living is only getting worse; mortgages are in crisis and energy bills are soaring. The average Brit is and will continue to struggle over the next 12 months as they scramble to pay bills and get by. During this time, they will need to heavily rely on customer calls with utility companies, banks and other financial services to settle their anxiety and help solve their issues.

82%

of consumers still want human interaction even as technology improves ^[5]

pwc

Utilities

40%

of UK consumers agree utility companies made them wait on hold longer than brands from any other sector.

38%

agree that utility companies are the least likely to resolve their issue on the phone.

60%

of consumers say they have been disappointed with the way their call was handled by utility companies during the last 6 months.

Nearly

40%

said that waiting in a long call queue has been their leading source of frustration.

Financial Services

45%

of consumers must wait over 15 minutes before getting through to their bank.

24%

of customers list speaking to automated voices as their leading source of frustration with Financial Services Institutions.

20%

of consumers say FSI brands passed them between the most call agents.

19%

of customers wait longer than 26 minutes before the call centre picks up, let alone getting their issue resolved.

The state of CX calls – it's in crisis!

Nearly

76%

of customers are giving up on brands and leaving these terrible customer calls within 15 minutes of waiting

Over

60%

of consumers would switch brands after on bad experience ^[6]

Forbes

The Customer Experience Leadership Challenges

The commercial climate for year ahead is likely to be influenced in multiple ways as economic and political forces combine to paint a picture of great uncertainty. In an entirely unrelated newsletter Johan Cronje CEO of Integro Learning South Africa looked at how teams could address the issue of “Loadshedding”. This is a factor that organisations need to address as a result of the national electricity supply being unable to meet the country’s load demand. In it he addresses the need for organisational leaders to take a new approach to what is a dynamic and unpredictable situation.

Leadership. *A paradigm shift and thoughtful leadership is required to successfully manage teams as a complex adaptive system. Interdependencies and feedback loops are hallmarks of complex systems. That means that part A has an impact on part B, which may then affect part C, which feeds back in turn to have an impact on part A.*

Consequently it requires appropriate leadership to set up conducive working conditions for self-organisation-self-management and embrace the creation of adaptive capabilities in a team as a fundamental organisational competence. The current situation has forced companies & teams to find new adaptive ways of shedding the workload, a blessing in disguise. Consequently the concept of teaming has emerged which is in essence the creation of small adaptive teams, sub-units, within the larger team to shed the load of work and tasks they are accountable for. It enables reciprocal interdependence, where back-and-forth communication and coordination are essential to get the work done. They are directly linked to the deliverables of the larger team to generate new ideas, find answers for improvement, and solve problems. Adaptability is in fact the name of the game. It enables the team access to its own intelligence for self-organisation and self-management. Integro Learning SA introduced a unique team management operating software system that incorporates AI called ‘TeamingExcel’® that facilitates the teaming process with ease and great success.

Three Strategies:

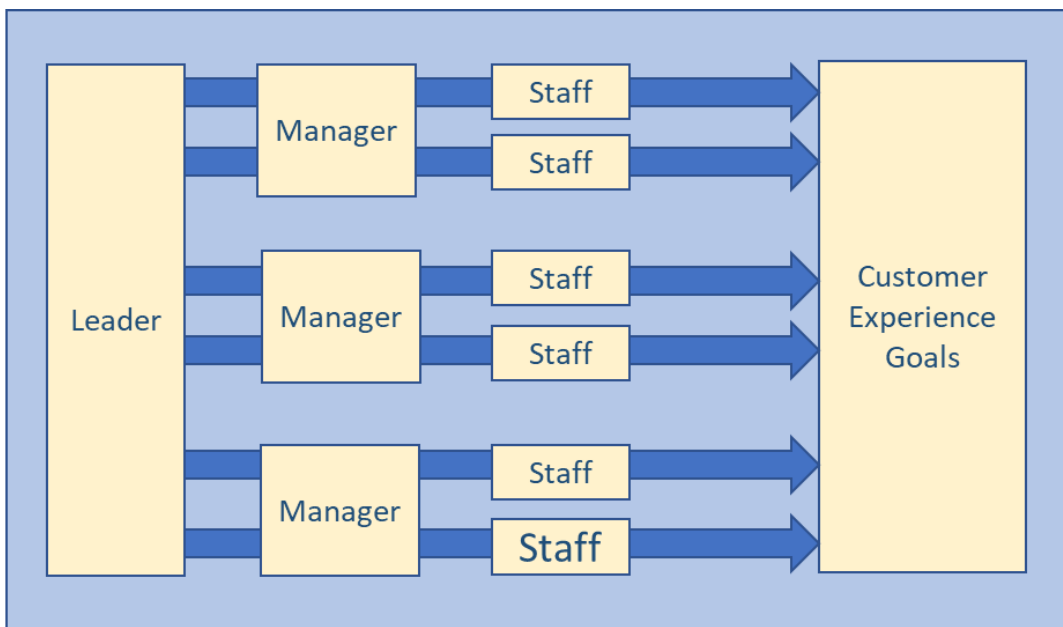
1. Cultivate Ownership – Team members must be grouped into operating sub-units to distribute ownership for their part of the team deliverables. This breeds mutual accountability between members. It implements task management by agreement that stimulates participation with responsibility.

2. Opposing Forces at Work – Understand & manage them. Every situation always has two forces at work; the driver, energiser forces and the barrier, restraining forces that keep the status quo in place. Changing and managing the forces to move toward the desired state of performance highlights the barriers to engagement.

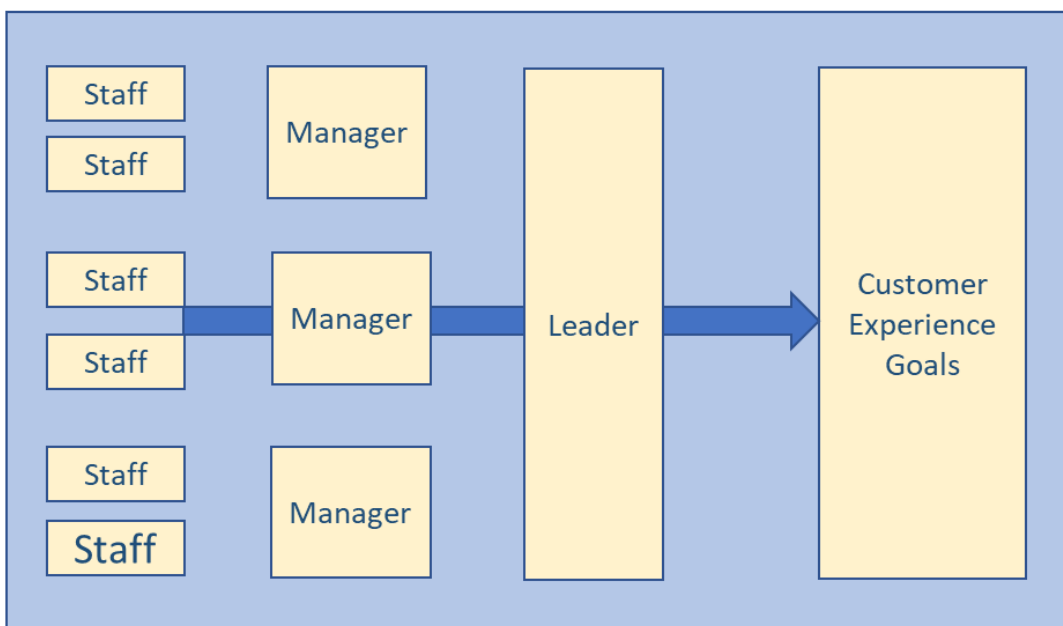
3. Personal Autonomy – The focus of attention of team leadership must be enabling people to have a sense of self-determination, of being able to make choices regarding the direction of their actions, including the freedom to pursue those choices adaptively to direct actions toward the achievement of the team goals

A Leadership Model

The approach of Integro to the situation in South Africa could equally be applied to the customer experience situation where every part of the organisation faces a slightly different challenge. Leadership can be approached from any number of viewpoints, from the very personal attribution of Sir Ranulph Fiennes to those that explore a wide range of traits and behaviours. Whatever approach is used one conceptual model appears to have some value in comparing the potential effectiveness of the leader on one hand attempting to drag the whole organisation towards its customers expectation management objectives and on the other hand empowering all parts of the organisation to pursue their relevant objectives themselves



People Pull – Enabling and Harnessing People Power



Leader Pull - Dragging People Limiting Leadership Power

The Last Word

Clear leadership is important at all times, in the uncertain climate of 2023 it is a role that takes on even greater significance. Political, economic, generational, labour and social factors present an unsettled and unsettling climate.

However, research continues to reinforce the fact that managing the experience of customers continues to be of growing importance to successful organisational development. As stated earlier there may be some sectors who believe that because they cannot identify a proven ROI on their CXM investment then it is not important to their sustained success of their brand. Apart from those organisations that enjoy a monopoly position it is difficult to identify may that would fall into such a category. Leadership from the front is a vital factor in promoting any value in an organisation. One of the oldest truths is that *“What the boss thinks is important, is important”* and the bosses influence for good or bad carries great weight.

Stew Leonard a supermarket chain proprietor in the USA and service quality pioneer said that

“If you really want to know what your customers think go and stand by the till”

It would be interesting to know how many CEOs in the world have ever done that?

So, if the boss believes the organisation’s customers should receive an upper quartile experience, then it is their responsibility to make it happen. This is especially true considering that Bain’s research identifies that employee engagement in an issue becomes lower the further, organisationally, the employee is from the leader. Given the fact that in most major organisations the person interacting directly with the customer is as far from the leaders as it is possible to be. No wonder then that a weak signal from the top regarding the imperative of customer service is either not received or lost in the traffic of “more important” management issues. As an orphan issue with no champion, it will not survive adolescence. The fact is that if the leader really wants to be serious about customer experience, **then they, or someone very senior has to front up and say so!**

Given that clairvoyance is one of the least well-developed human skills then Forrest’s first law of communication applies-*“If there is something you wish others to know, understand or enact then you have to tell them.”*

Recommended Reading

<https://www.fca.org.uk/publication/archive/fsa-review-of-complaint-handling-in-banking-groups.pdf>

<https://www.forrester.com/blogs/predictions-2023-customer-experience-cx/>

<https://www.forrester.com/resources/customer-experiencemeasurement/predictions-2023-customer-experience/>

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/blakemorgan/2018/03/30/the-top-20-traits-of-customer-experience-leaders/?sh=7825913a6fb4>

<https://www.gartner.com/en/marketing/role/customer-experience-leaders>

<https://experienceinvestigators.com/customer-centric-culture/best-qualities-of-a-customer-experience-leader/>

<https://www.i-scoop.eu/customer-experience/compelling-reasons-why-customer-experience-excellence-requires-leadership/>

[Customer experience \(CX\): the guide to customer success \(i-scoop.eu\)](https://www.i-scoop.eu/customer-experience/compelling-reasons-why-customer-experience-excellence-requires-leadership/)

<https://www.engati.com/blog/customer-experience-leaders>

https://ownightstudy.com/wpcontent/uploads/woocommerce_uploads/2022/02/THE-TRUTH-ABOUT-CUSTOMER-EXPERIENCE-xorjp8.pdf

[https://www.bain.com/insights/Who's responsible for employee engagement? - Bain Brief | Bain & Company](https://www.bain.com/insights/Who's_responsible_for_employee_engagement_-_Bain_Brief_|_Bain_&_Company)

[Understanding the Moments That M](#)
[Top Challenges and Opportunities fo](#)



[omers \(infinity.co\)](https://www.infinity.com)
[nswire.com\)](https://www.nswire.com)