



BUZZ!

What's Buzzing in CX World This Month?

There are many C-Suite Executives that "get" the imperative of CX performance to financial and reputational well being of their organisation. There are others who when reaching the C Suite appear to develop CSA –C-Suite Amnesia –regarding CX either through a perceived greater importance of their C-Suite role or even of their own perceived self importance. However, all is not lost, CSA is a curable affliction as CXM's Sandra Radlovacki explores some of the treatments in her article

"5 Unconventional Strategies CX Stars Used to Win Over the C-Suite

Getting a great CX idea approved is often harder than executing it. Budgets are tight, executives are sceptical, and "improving customer experience" rarely competes well against a cost-reduction target in a board meeting. The CXM Stars 2026 features several leaders who solved this problem with genuinely unconventional approaches to building executive buy-in.

1. Hire an Outsider to Challenge From Within

Most organisations protect the C-suite from uncomfortable truths about customer experience, but Ageas did the opposite. The CEO and Chief Customer Officer created a brand-new role — Customer Challenger — and deliberately hired Jackie Dyal with no insurance background, specifically so she could interrogate processes, challenge existing practices, and advocate for customers without the blind spots that come from being embedded in the industry.

Within nine months, the concept had earned board appetite for expansion, active executive demand for agenda items, and industry interest from competitors wanting to replicate it. Sometimes, the most powerful way to get leadership to act on CX is to create a role whose entire purpose is making them uncomfortable.

2. Take It to the Investors

Giulia Ajello, CCXP, Global CX Lead, Generali

Most CX leaders present to the executive team, while Giulia Ajello took Generali's CX strategy directly to financial investors. In 2025, she delivered a global CX programme across 30+ markets, secured multi-year funding and executive sponsorship, and co-sponsored the Group's new customer portal. However, the moment that shifted the conversation permanently was presenting the CX transformation to financial investors and demonstrating how customer-driven change translates to tangible business value with evidence linked to Generali's publicly announced RNPS targets.

When investors hear about CX, they tend to pay attention. So, when the board knows investors are watching CX metrics, budget approval for the next initiative becomes a different conversation.

Ajello also unified more than 35 fragmented VoC platforms into a single group-wide solution, giving leadership a coherent signal where they'd previously had noise. Coherent data, presented to the right audience at the right level of the organisation, is what turned CX from a programme into a strategic priority.

3. Build the System Before Asking for Permission

Jenn Stephens, Senior CX Leader, DocuSign built a working prototype, demonstrated its value, and then got approval from leadership to scale it. The system she re-architected in 2025 collects customer data daily, monitors 20 journey touchpoints, supports predictive modelling, and provides real-time "red alerts" that allow immediate outreach to at-risk customers.

One example shows how she made the business case concrete. The product team couldn't justify developing a missing feature without commercial evidence. Stephens added a single question to the system. Within a week, she had data showing customers were regularly leaving DocuSign's platform to access that feature on a competitor's site. The product team now had justification, and the feature got built. The system is currently described internally as "the gold standard," contributes to corporate-level OKRs, and directly shapes product and strategic planning. Her method is not to ask for buy-in to improve CX in the abstract, but to build something specific, show what it reveals, and let the business case make itself.

4. Defend the Budget in the Public Sector

Mwendwa Mworira, CX Lead, Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission, Kenya
If winning a budget in a corporate environment is hard, try doing it inside a government body. Mwendwa Mworira spent three years developing a vision for a national Customer Experience Centre within Kenya's electoral management body, a trust-sensitive organisation serving millions of citizens. In July 2025, the proposal was formally adopted, a cross-functional implementation committee was constituted, and the Centre was launched. The critical milestone was defending and securing a KES 25 million budget in front of senior management and the Board, a significant financial commitment in a public sector context where CX has historically been treated as administrative overhead rather than strategic infrastructure. Her argument was structural, that fragmented service delivery and siloed information were creating accessibility gaps that undermined institutional credibility. The CXC was an operational infrastructure. The Centre currently operates with five staff and is designed to scale to over 200 agents during a General Election. CX as infrastructure that flexes with national demand is what made the business case land.

5. Make the Data Work for the Room

Sam Phillips Lord, CX Leader, HSBC launched a new CX measurement framework across 15 markets at HSBC in 2025. The thing that changed executive behaviour was the way data reached them. Rather than distributing dashboards and waiting for leaders to draw conclusions, he simplified the outputs, sharpened the executive narrative, and created targeted insight packs designed to be pulled into decision-making rather than politely acknowledged.

"CX insight became something leaders actively pulled into decision-making, rather than something politely acknowledged at the end of a meeting," he said.

By connecting customer feedback with operational, behavioural, and commercial data, and then presenting only the analysis that answered questions leaders were already asking, he turned CX measurement from a reporting function into a decision-support tool. As a result, leaders started rethinking investment priorities based on CX insight, and markets focused their efforts where it genuinely mattered to customers.

The unconventional part is the discipline of translating CX data into the language of whoever needs to act on it, rather than the language of whoever collected it.

[5 Unconventional Strategies CX Stars Used to Win Over the C-Suite - Customer Experience Magazine](#)

The C Suite that often attracts a negative customer response is the public sector, not only at national government level but perhaps even more so at local level where services that directly affect the customer's day to day life are delivered.

Taking a look at some inspirational thinking at what is sometimes seen as a parochial level David Dungay talks to the former Deputy Mayor of Medway, a local UK council, Douglas Hamandishe about the importance of introducing AI for the right purposes.

Digital transformation in public services is often sold as a productivity problem — reduce costs, increase throughput, automate the rest but that framing misses the point entirely. The real challenge facing councils isn't efficiency. It's trust. Hamandishe did something deceptively simple: making sure residents knew where they stood. Every email that came in, every request for help, was an opportunity either to acknowledge a person or to lose them. "We recognise that when people take the time out to format an email requesting assistance," he explains, "they want to know what happens next." That awareness — that behind every query is a human being who has invested time and hope — shaped how the office operated. One of the sharpest insights Hamandishe offers is the paradox between efficiency and feeling heard. Speed of service and quality of engagement aren't the same thing, and conflating them is where many councils go wrong. His analogy is a GP appointment. You might be seen in five minutes, but if the doctor seems distracted, doesn't acknowledge your concerns, or rushes you out the door, you leave feeling worse than when you arrived. "People forget how fast the service is," he says. "People remember the quality of engagement." The same logic applies to councils.

The scenario that best captures the trust problem is the pothole report. A resident spots a pothole on their way to the school run. It's raining. They pull over, note the road name, estimate the size of the crater, try to navigate a council website that asks questions they can't answer while standing in the cold — and then, if they manage to submit anything at all, they hear nothing back. No acknowledgement. No update. No indication that anyone received the message, let alone that anything will be done.

Hamandishe calls this the "administrative black hole — where all emails go to die." What goes in doesn't come out. The opacity becomes so complete that the resident is left with nothing: no information to share, no confidence that they've been heard, and one more reason not to bother next time.

The frustrating part, he notes, is that this isn't a resource problem anymore. "Technology has never been cheaper to deploy," he says bluntly. The barrier isn't infrastructure — it's ambition, and the willingness to put residents first rather than process metrics.

What AI Can Actually Do

Hamandishe is not opposed to technology. He has written extensively on AI adoption and sees genuine potential in it. But he is clear-eyed about where councils tend to go wrong. Too often, AI is deployed as a cost-cutting measure rather than a service improvement. A chatbot that leads to a dead end, or an automated system that can only handle one issue at a time, doesn't reduce resident frustration — it deepens it.

His counterargument is that, when used well, AI should do the opposite. It should remove friction, handle the repetitive and administrative work that doesn't require human judgment, pre-qualify requests so residents aren't passed back and forth between departments, and give people visibility into where their query actually sits in the process. The flight tracker analogy is instructive here: as a passenger, you can't make the plane go faster, but knowing your arrival time and making your journey comfortable change the entire experience. **Councils could offer something similar — and largely don't.**

Trust Is Built Slowly — and Broken Quickly

Perhaps the most sobering part of this conversation is Hamandishe's assessment of what happens once trust is lost. It spreads fast — bad experiences shared between neighbours, families, colleagues. And rebuilding it is slow, difficult work that requires honesty, transparency, and a willingness to admit that previous approaches fell short.

Some councils, he observes, respond by rebranding departments, shifting responsibilities, or changing the name of a service as though residents won't notice. They do notice. The memory of a failed chatbot, an unanswered email, or a complaint that disappeared into a system with no response doesn't fade quickly — especially when council tax is still being paid.

His advice is to do the hard work upfront. Test rigorously and for long enough, with real people in real scenarios rather than clean test environments. Bring residents into the design process — through pop-up consultations on the high street if necessary. Choose the long road that leads somewhere rather than the short road that leads to re-engineering, lost trust, and the same problems resurfacing. What this conversation ultimately points to is a question of institutional identity. Councils are not simply service delivery machines — they are the closest point of contact between the state and the individual. The experience a resident has reporting a pothole or chasing a missed bin collection shapes how they feel about the institutions that govern their daily life. That experience is political in the most direct sense.

Hamandishe's closing challenge is simple: AI doesn't have to be cold. Used with care and genuine intent, it can reassure, inform, and give residents back something they rarely feel public services offer — their time, and the sense that someone is actually paying attention.

Are the C-Suites of international corporations and local councils everywhere listening?

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