

The background of the entire page is a photograph of a crowd of people clapping their hands. The scene is backlit by a bright, warm light, likely from a stage or sunset, creating a strong lens flare and a golden glow. On the right side of the image, a portion of a red theater curtain with vertical pleats is visible. The overall mood is celebratory and energetic.

THE
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The Age of Customers

10 Key Trends for Customer Experience Professional in 2015

By Jerome Joseph, CSP

The Age of Customer

2015

2014 has proven to us all that the information era, with its social media and super connectedness is here to stay, thus paving the way for the age of the customer.

Forrester Research define this age as “business cycle in which the most successful enterprises will reinvent themselves to systematically understand and serve increasingly powerful customers” This age is well on its way with power in the hands of the customer. In this dynamic age, customers are better informed, and privy to more choices than ever before. Given the status of the empowered customer, how can a business differentiate themselves?

Consider leaders like Apple, Zappos and Amazon.com, who have transcended prices and features to create compelling and fulfilling customer experiences. These companies have rewritten the rules of customer relationships by leveraging every touch point and every interaction to create an experience. These brands have embraced the customer revolution and are raising customer expectations for every other business. But what has truly differentiated them has been the consistent yet unique emotive experience driven by the Brand across a seamless integration of touchpoints both online and offline.

The good news is that in 2015, you don’t have to be a multibillion-dollar company with global brand recognition to deliver a standout customer experience. In this paper, we outline key trends for 2015 that Customer Experience professionals need to know to impact their planning strategies.

Customer Experience is Critical

People choose brands that provides unique, meaningful interaction in a consistent way.



The Strategy to Build Branded Customer Experience



As you reflect on the trends in this paper it is clear that the world continues to experience a fundamental shift in the way customers engage with companies, products and services.

While 2015 will see a significant increase in more advance Customer Experience (CX) initiatives, the challenge is still to improve the overall CX to match global standards. Customers around the globe are no longer tethered to a traditional model of engagement—they are in pursuit of the whole experience, not just the end product or service.

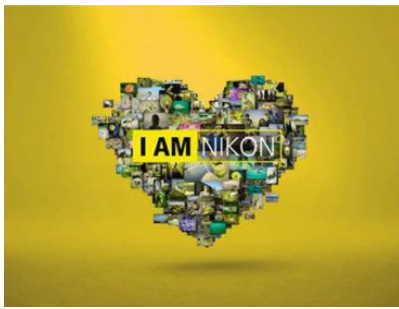
Despite changes in technology and the way we do business, customers are out there still buying and consuming, and they are willing to pay a premium when they feel confident that they will receive an amazing experience. Looking ahead to 2015, organisations will attempt to be more brand focused to differentiate in the marketplace at the same time revamping their CX processes to be more in line with today's demands. We share trends which organisations are embarking on to stay ahead of the curve. We noted that companies will be tracking and optimising existing customer journeys, creating new experiences and anticipating unrealised customer needs.

Organisations will become customer obsessed as technology disruption threatens to fundamentally change the way they manage the customer journey and key touchpoints. They realise that their brand will be a differentiator and that getting buy in from within will be crucial for long term customer experience management. 2015 is here, and the customer is more in control than ever. Are you ready?



Three Crucial CX Strategies

1. Building training program
2. Updating company core values
3. Implementing technology



#1 - Increasing Brand Impact on Customer Experience

Customers want to feel the brand and need to be the centre of the brand experience

Customers want to know, feel and experience the brand in unique and consistent way. However, with today cluttered marketplace and the collapse of distinction, many brands are lost in the crowd, providing no uniqueness and adding to customers' confusion.

This is exacerbated with the drastic rise of customer expectations in the last 5 years. Many brands are struggling to keep up with those expectations, thus creating a gap between the desired experience and the delivered performance, which coupled with the collapse of distinction render brands impotent.

In 2015, we will see companies trying to stand out by utilising the power of their brand, and design their CX in alignment with their brand strategy to create market differentiation. Brands will have a clear purpose which is coherent with the overall experience that exists in the minds of the customer.

We will also see a more razor sharp focus on delivering the brand promise against the expectation of customers to create long term impact of brand to the CX. The professionals will embark on research to find out how to match brand against customer expectation and more importantly, deliver both performance and message that help unify and identify the experience that the customer will receive.



Simplification: create brand differentiator that aid customers in understanding the overall exp.

MCDONALDS BIG MAC

ADVERTISEMENTS
ACTUAL BIG MAC
- ROTATED TO MOST ATTRACTIVE ANGLE



Delivery: live the brand promise to match and exceed customer expectation



#2 – Inside Out Transformation

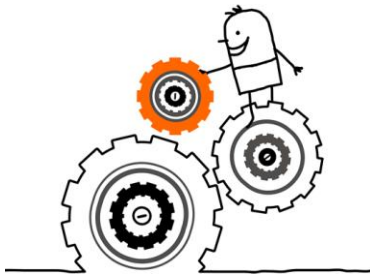
Delivering on-brand experiences require a shift of paradigm, from reactive to active approach, from externally to internally induced

Historically, there has been a disconnect in managing CX, with employee engagement and customer scores rarely managed together, even though the link between the two has been acknowledged.

2015 will see an increasing rise of the role of employee engagement as a factor that leads to improved customer experience and profitable organic growth. Companies will start to see that employee engagement is driven by a strong corporate culture that is in turned aligned with the brand promise of the organisation. Expect engagement of employees to be impacted very much by the voice of the customer and the brand.

As such, expect to see inside out transformations with the aim of improving service delivery, increasing employee commitment to the customer and creating a sense of purpose with the Customer as the number one priority. Organisations will make customer experience a core competency of the entire business and employees will be the key to delivery.





#3 – Moving to Customer Engagement Support System

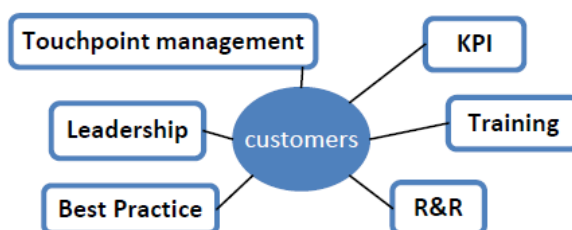
A systemic change is required within organisation, with customers' best interest in mind.

A survey by Oracle indicate that executives cite limitations from inflexible technology, siloed organisations and systems, as the biggest obstacles to delivering the best possible customer experience. This soon will change, we will see customer centric key performance indicators with integrated business processes, such as rewarding and recognising employees, increased specialised customer experience training, and customer leadership focus.

In many cases, a complete overhaul of the company's organisational structure and operating model is required to ensure a holistic corporate customer driven change. Expect training to focus on personalisation of the customer facing touchpoint and deeper engagement with customer through stronger understanding of behaviour, needs and wants of the customer.

Engaged organisations will also align all their goals with what that of their customer. They will assign high value knowledge and anticipation of customer's real needs and desires. Employees will also be exposed to increasing VOC data to help them engage and empathise with the customer better.

The future will see customer experience professionals use the voice of the employee for social collaboration on internal platforms such as internal intranets, best practice standards and internal communities, where employee feedback and engagement will provide a two way journey into deeper understanding of the customer and the employee.



System centered on CX:
KPI, training program,
organisational structure,
with customer best
interest in mind



#4 – Rise of Behavioural Research

Customer research need to evolve and become smarter with more holistic approach

Forester reports that 50% of companies inconsistently measure or fail to measure their customer's cross channel journey. In 2015 organisations will have to modify their research tools for more targeted feedback as they seek to understand their customer's journey in a deeper and more meaningful way. They'll rely less on multiple-choice surveys and more on topic-specific surveys and text analytics of unstructured content (like comments on surveys), calls into the contact centre, social media conversations, observational research and chat sessions with agents.

Feedback is on the journey of evolution. We will see this trend evolving with more companies blending together customer feedback data, CRM, and customer behaviour data. The blend will enable companies to accurately target experiences to reduce churn, improve key metrics and increase customer lifetime value. Organisations can obtain key insights by understanding what customers have done, what channels they have used and what products they have purchased and what service interactions they have had and they can do so through a variety of tools that have emerged in today's market. A recent trend for example is the video analytics where researchers, pour through user generated videos to glean behavioural insights.

Qualitative Observation will be king

- Topic specific survey
- Text analytic
- Soc-Med conversation
- Observational research
- Chat Session
- CRM Data





#5 – Emotion Drive Loyalty

People are more willing to spend more on brand if they feel a personal connection with the brand.

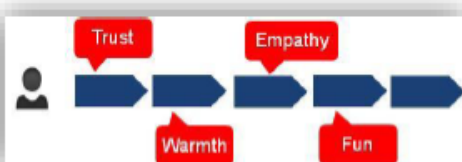
Building an emotional connection with a company can lead to greater loyalty and revenue. One recent study reported that 83 percent of consumers are willing to spend more on a product or service if they feel a personal connection to the company — and one fifth said they would pay 50 percent more if they felt the company put the customer first. Research by Beyond Philosophy indicated that emotions are a key driver to customer experiences. Forrester indicated that companies have been exploring the connection between enjoyment and metrics like satisfaction and Net Promoter Score (NPS).

Empathy will be a buzz word for 2015 as companies seek not just understand but to also emotionally connect by putting themselves in the shoes of the customer. Brand will be working hard to create a believable persona that connect with customer at emotional level by employing Customer Journey Map that is driven by emotions as differentiation factor.

Expect customer experience professionals to look ways to map planned positive emotions across channels that will trigger a response or a positive reaction from the customer. Trigger points will be key for customer experience professionals and they use it to position moments of delight unique to the brand of the organisation.



Brand needs to develop **emotional linkage** to its customers through **persona, values & delivery**



Customer Journey will be designed based on the **emotional values** and measured by **emotion metrics**



#6 – Cross Channel integration

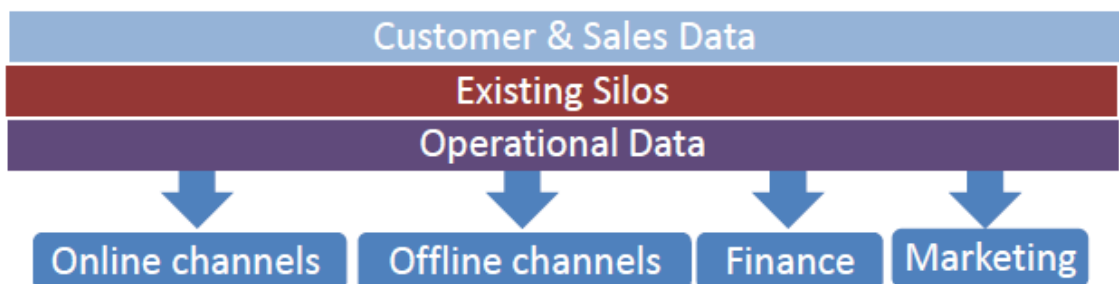
Managing multiple channel to provide the same CX consistently, without fail.

In today omnichannel world, companies put the customer in the foreground and allow them to conduct all interactions as a coordinated, branded experience spanning touchpoints such as retail outlets, websites, mobile and social media. In a recent Forrester survey 74% said that improving cross-channel experiences was their top objective and this trend will continue to intensify for 2015.

With this trend staying, brand will strive to ensure that there is no disconnect between one channel with the others. Consistency in brand delivery and brand communication become increasingly crucial to ensure that the customers consume seamless, enjoyable, end-to-end experience with the brand.

This can be achieved by creating a brand nerve centre, where all information is integrated and shared across functions and touchpoints to provide consistent and customised experience that enhance customers' satisfaction. Powerful integration model would equate with more efficient marketing effort, more productive physical outlet, improve customer retention, increase sales and reduce the cost of doing business.

Brands will need to work hard to create integrated CX cross channels, consistently, without fail





#7 – Personalisation & Predictive Intel

Brand will get even closer to consumers, and create intimacy like never before.

Great brand will try to get closer to its customer by gaining deeper understanding of customers and tailor the customer experience with smart interaction that is unique and intimate. Expect companies to take a stronger proactive approach in intelligence gathering to discover how to connect effectively with their customers.

One of the key aspects of personalisation will be the use of predictive intelligence to provide the optimal solution based on customer data and behavioural attributes. 2015 will see the need to create customised solutions based on the type of customer persona to create opportunity for moments of delight.

Brand with forward thinking vision will strive to improve key touchpoints and performance to respond in manner best suited for their customers, thus making the customer journey more effective for the customer as well as creating best practices based on the right interaction at the right time. Customer experience professionals will be tasked with providing effective personalised content and driving powerful engagements through these multi paths, using the right platforms and in the right way, that will potentially create stronger emotional engagement, key moments of delight – and profitability.

Building powerful engagement and personalised content through multi path and platform will become big priority for brand to create an intimacy with its customers.





#8 – Mobility is here to stay

“People born in the last 5 years might never have physical wallet – the phone will become their wallet”

John Partridge – 2012 Mobile Congress

The new generations of consumer are super-connected, with their life revolve on their phone (not so) tiny screen. Mobile apps and messaging has overtook voice chat by storm and web browsing portion has become larger and larger annually.

Prepared brand will expect that escalation of the trend at even greater speed in 2015. mobility will continue to impact brand as customer will demand more and more convenience at the swipe of their fingers. They will want convenience with instant gratification. Brand will have to be innovative and creative in utilising various features from biometric to voice recognition to engage customers.

Professionals will review mobility in all seriousness, and integrate it into brand communication strategy. For some businesses, it might be sensible to tailor the whole experience with mobility as the centre of their brand experience. Brand will have to satiate the “Now and Here” mentality by offering real-time products, services and experiences.

Consider various features of mobility, such as:

- Cloud service
- Location based service
- Near field communication
- Social media

To develop mobile CX that is optimal for customers



Ordering

Paying

Locating Store

Promotion

Tracking



#9 – Transparency Tyranny

Customer are increasingly curious about what brands know, and whether they can be trusted

According to a survey by Accenture, 87 percent of customers believe adequate safeguards are not in place to protect their personal information. Sixty-four percent are concerned about websites tracking their buying behaviour, and many others concerned about transparency (or the lack thereof) shown by brands.

Expect things to change in 2015, with new regulation and media attention, brand will be upheld to higher standard of practice in term of transparency. Customer themselves will be more informed than ever before, and able to scrutinise your brand carefully

Rather than to see this as a threat, Brands need to treat this as an opportunity to build connection to customers. Transparency could be a new brand differentiation and incredible credibility builder. Furthermore this is also an opportunity to embrace the customers and create a collaboration that benefits both party.



Brand need to be transparent, not only to avoid regulation mishap, but more importantly, to create trust between the brand and its customers.

Smart brand will use this opportunity to collaborate with their customers, creating meaningful feedback loop.

ONE

#10 – To Be One

The ultimate key in 2015 – one brand message, delivered in one seamless process

The trends are important tools and opportunities that you can utilise to effectively improve your brand in 2015, but more than just following the trend, there is an underlying spirit to tackle 2015, to be ONE.

Being one means that you have a coherence on your brand, understand what it means, the promises it made to your customers, and the consistency to deliver it all the time, without fail. Being one means that your team has the capability, personality, spirit and passion to deliver exactly that singular focus of your brand, day in and day out.

With such focus, you can utilise all these trends to greater heights, integrate them in a planned, designed way so they amplified each other, creating synergy that make your brand experience irresistible.

This is the summary for 2015

One powerful brand message

Integrated seamless process

Future CX is personal, reflect the behaviour patterns of customers

Customers want to be seen as individual personas with needs and wants

Proactive processes to anticipate customers

Managing data privacy

Building trust in transparency

Are you ready to create ONE singular focus of your brand in 2015?



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Jerome Joseph is the author of “Turn Me On: Building your Personal Brand” and the CEO of Global Brand Academy.

He is a brand strategist & global speaker who has over 22 years of experience, in 33 countries and working with over 1000 organisations.

He is also the bestselling author of 7 books on Brand. He consults and speaks on Brand Strategy, Personal Branding, Internal Branding and Brand Marketing.

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The Brand Theatre Worldwide group is branding, customer experience and internal branding consultancy group. We believe that brand success stories is crafted, designed, and planned carefully. If you are aiming to bring your brand to the next level in 2015, contact us.

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