

# NEXT-GEN CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

## HOW TO CREATE EXCEPTIONAL EXPERIENCES ACROSS ALL TOUCHPOINTS TO SET YOUR BRAND APART

### THE EVOLUTION OF THE MODERN B2B EXPERIENCE

#### Why CX makes a difference in B2B marketing ROI

In today's marketing world, it isn't just what you say—it's what you do. Simply put, customer experience matters.

No matter what vertical you play in, relevant customer experiences are key to being a business-to-business marketing leader. B2B is no longer the stuffy cousin of consumer marketing. Modern B2B buyers expect engaging CX from the companies they work with, and the brands that deliver are leading the way.

"It's strange that customer experience is suddenly on everybody's lips, because it is one of the most common sense principles of business," notes Chris Eifert, principal of TriComB2B.

"Thanks to the advent of easy-to-use consumer applications like Netflix and Uber, consumers have gotten accustomed to things being simple in their personal lives—and they crave that kind of interaction in their business dealings," says Robin Miller, vice president, client services of TriComB2B.

"There needs to be a shift to more things like mobile apps for maintenance, so it is easier for customers to talk to who they need to reach within an organization," she adds.

Sales—and retention rates—skyrocket when customer service is exemplary, says Eifert, and industry research proves that point. Studies

show time and time again that superior CX leads to superior revenue growth, and brands are paying attention.

According to Forrester's 2019 Customer Experience Index, 14 percent of the brands tracked showed a significantly increased CX score. Still, there is room for improvement: Across the 260 brands and 16 industries tracked in the research, conducted for the fifth year in a row, 81 percent of brand scores stagnated.

"Brands are on the right path but still have a long way to go," says Carrie Johnson, chief research officer at Forrester. "With customers in the driver's seat and heightened consumer interest in organizations' corporate values when making buying decisions, how experiences make customers feel has a bigger influence on their brand loyalty than any other factor."

Harvard Business Review looked at two companies, one transactional and one with a subscription-based revenue model. Experience data and spending over the subsequent year were evaluated, and the results added up: Customers who had the best past experiences spent 140 percent more compared to those who had the poorest.

"The best brands have always been great at this," says Eifert. "If someone has a great experience with you, they will be more likely to buy from you and be super loyal to your brand down the line."

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# MAKING IT HAPPEN

## The role of data in delivering outstanding customer experiences

For B2B enterprises both big and small, obtaining the resources to deliver stellar CX can be a pain point. There are numerous variables and touchpoints to consider, from pre-sale nurturing to the purchase process itself, and then delivery, documentation, after-market support, customer service and more.

Often, enterprises do a great job at being operationally focused and maximizing organization and cost structure, but in the race to be efficient they forget to allot necessary resources to customer-facing aspects of the business.

*“The concept of a digital footprint is important, and coming to that single point of truth across business units can be difficult.”*

*— Chris Eifert, TriComB2B*

“Whether we’re talking about marketing, sales or online support, it can be a big challenge,” says Eifert. “Businesses are waking up and putting more resources into it.”

Data plays an enormous role in CX, and harnessing its power can be a challenge if information is stored in disparate systems across the organization—and even the globe—such as multiple CRMs or ERPs.

Companies are making investments to improve their CX initiatives: 38 percent of respondents to Chief Marketer’s 2019 Martech Outlook Survey said they planned to implement customer experience software in the next 12 months.

For many enterprises, data issues can arise when acquisitions are made. Different internal processes and systems need to be integrated and that can hinder the streamlining of processes. Migrating to new CRM systems can also cause issues: While the new system might be more efficient, the information being entered from old spreadsheet systems might not always be squeaky clean.

Data cleanliness is a particular thorn in B2B, where companies often crawl through sales cycles spanning 12 to 18 or even 36 months. “And, if you can’t tie marketing activities or specific customer actions to the final sale, that’s a challenge too,” says Miller. “Everyone is hyper-focused on metrics, but [we need to realize] that there are a lot of manual processes that still go into tying everything back to sales—it isn’t as automated as people would hope.”

Once information is as clean as possible and accessible, creating profiles of your customer personas is crucial to discovering how they want to engage with you and what content will form their ideal brand experience.

“The concept of a digital footprint is important, and coming to that single point of truth and a holistic view of a customer across business units can be difficult,” said Eifert. “You need to know how they interact

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## How They Do It

### HOBART SERVICE COOKS UP PATH TO PURCHASE

Hobart Corp. is one of the country’s premier foodservice equipment manufacturers—it’s the home of numerous brands, including Traulsen and Kairak for refrigeration, Baxter, Vulcan and Wolf for baking and cooking, and Gaylord for kitchen ventilation. Hobart Service offers new equipment installation; service plans with certified technicians; and replacement parts.

The decision maker Hobart Service needs to connect with when marketing depends on the target company. At an independent restaurant, it might be the owner or operator, while at a national account, the procurement manager, facilities director and head of maintenance could be the right connection.

“At the end of the day, they want to make better decisions about purchasing and installing equipment,” says Ani Jayanth, director, part sales and marketing, Hobart Service. “The challenge is to come up with compelling content they see at the right time to generate awareness and consideration, and ultimately, a decision to purchase.”

A crucial element of the customer experience process is mapping the customer journey. For Hobart, a big part of that is getting a clear picture of how people are behaving when they visit the company’s websites. “We need to see what people are doing on our sites and figure out where traffic needs to go—we’re at the cusp of doing that, with a giant leap forward toward more digital assets,” he notes.

Once you have that journey, it is crucial to determine an analytics baseline of exactly what you need to measure in CX, including the ultimate call to action you want your prospects and customers to respond to in each channel.

“It’s like saying you want to buy a new car to get more miles per gallon, but not knowing your current mileage,” says Jayanth. “If you don’t know that, how do you know your mileage is bad? You need to know what you want to improve. Know what you want to compare against and improve. Then, you can hone in on the efficiency of your plan, and pair the right content with the right tactics, to the right personas in the right channels.”



The foodservice decision makers Hobart needs to reach vary depending on the size of the target customer.

with you [not only] online, but if they attended an event, interacted with customer service or received a shipment of a product. If you can record all of this and have a centralized view of the customer profile, imagine the actions you can take. Instead of communicating generically, you can say, "Well, if they did X, Y and Z, then ABC would be relevant to them."

When you're able to create that centralized view of the customer and deliver relevant, consistent messaging across all touchpoints, another challenge is gauging whether those communications really moved the needle.

What are the most meaningful metrics for CX? Forrester's Customer Experience Index, for example, uses six factors to measure CX—effectiveness, ease of use, emotion, retention, enrichment and advocacy. How each B2B brand evaluates the data surrounding CX depends on what the brand ultimately wants to achieve, says Eifert.

"Data is extremely helpful in defining the relationship," says Mike Bell, vice president and chief creative officer of TriComB2B. "There are a lot of factors that come into play when someone is making a purchase decision, particularly when the decision takes a year or more. We need to know what is influencing their decision and what is in their path."

"But," cautions Bell, "don't get analysis paralysis. Some people get into an analysis spiral where they are continuously gathering and looking at data. At some point, you have to make a decision based on the information you have in hand and respond accordingly as things happen."

"If you try to make something super safe and risk free by having all of the data, you run the risk of killing the creative," he notes. "David Ogilvy said there's a tendency to use data as a drunk would use a lamppost, for support but not illumination. That really sums it up—data is helpful for insight, but don't let it completely define the campaign."

## How They Do It

# FLOWSERVE MOVES WITH A CHANGING CUSTOMER BASE

Flowserve is one of the world's leading providers of fluid motion and control services and products, such as pumps, seals and valves. It has more than 50 brands, which are sold in 56 countries. Customers operate in several sectors, such as oil, gas, chemicals, water and general industry, which includes pulp/paper, mining, steel and food/beverage.

The target decision maker Flowserve typically needs to reach is a facilities or engineering manager. A variety of channels and tactics are used, including email, mobile, retargeting, content marketing and paid search.

Making that initial connection can sometimes be challenging, because competition is strong in the field. "I put myself in our customers' shoes, and think about how we can make our products stand out in a crowded space so customers can learn more," says Deepak Sivanandan, director, global marketing, Flowserve Corp.

Making a customer's experience on your website as simple as possible is crucial. "It's all about moving them through their journey and getting them the information they need," Sivanandan notes. "No one person in our audience is the sole decision maker [for their company], so we need to communicate our value proposition and make it easy for customers to share that information with others in their organization."

One challenge for Flowserve is changing customer profiles. Those who have been in the industry for a long time—and have a high degree of familiarity with the brand—are edging toward retirement age. New customers don't know the products as well, and need more education. Unlike their older peers, this younger generation relies heavily on online research and word of mouth to inform their decision making.

To reach this audience, Flowserve created a content hub offering up case histories, video and other content designed to educate consumers. Social and search help drive traffic, and length of time spent in the hub—and what content is consumed—is closely monitored via marketing



Flowserve offers a variety of products, such as this VCT vertical pump that could fill an Olympic-size swimming pool in less than three minutes.

automation, to gauge what is engaging visitors and help qualify their propensity to buy.

"We nurture them, and make sure sales is taking the right actions," Sivanandan notes. "Turning data into insight can be a challenge, but data plays a huge role [in determining] the channels we need to target."

# TOP 10 CX TIPS

## 10 ways you can engage customers across all touchpoints

In today's environment, customer experience can be a significant differentiating factor. Here's 10 tips to impress your customers and prospects, and create engaging multichannel experiences at scale.

### 1. REMEMBER, IT'S NOT ABOUT YOU.

A good customer experience isn't about your brand—it's about the customer. Good digital customer experience doesn't serve to merely promote your product or service, it helps to solve your customers' pain points. Make your digital experience consultative, and illustrate to customers that you understand their challenges. "Show how you can help them and what your company is really all about," says Miller.

### 2. DON'T MAKE THINGS DIFFICULT.

In days gone by, people were content to surf the web until they found the information they needed. Today, with all the information and options accessible online, people expect to find what they need, both in search and on your site quickly and easily. "With Google, you now jump right to the answer to your question, rather than navigate around. This is making people create experiences that are more guided and helpful," says Bell.

### 3. KNOW WHAT YOU WANT TO MEASURE.

Don't embark on a new campaign without a strategy in place. Understand your goals and list what you want to accomplish. Do you want to create awareness? Engagement? Are you looking for a specific response to a call to action? "Often, things move fast because of demands from higher-ups," notes Miller. "In your planning and initial steps, ask what can—and should be—measured, and know your goals, so you don't miss big opportunities to maximize conversion."

### 4. BREAK IT DOWN.

Of course, measurement isn't always an easy process. Today's B2B customer journey takes place across numerous touchpoints and channels, and measuring all the parts of the customer experience can be challenging. Break it down into small chunks, and look at the low-hanging fruit. Instead of trying to do everything at once, focus on the crucial parts of the sales journey you want to optimize, and look at how you are nurturing customers and prospects along the way. "There are so many different attributes in the sales goal that are incredibly difficult to measure," says Bell. "Something like awareness is nebulous. [Instead], measure the results of the actions you are trying to get them to take."

### 5. GET EVERYONE IN THE LOOP.

Marketing is the backbone of creating great content and campaigns. But your organization needs to understand the message to create a cohesive and engaging customer experience. Bell notes one company he worked with spent a lot of money to create a campaign that would be featured on a popular HGTV program. But, no one on the sales team or at the retail level was informed of the initiative. "Consumers watched the show, went to the store—and salespeople didn't know what they were talking about. That's lost momentum and a massive missed opportunity."

### 6. BE CONSISTENT.

Make sure that all your customer experiences serve a consistent brand purpose, and that your calls to action are crystal clear. No matter what the channel or format, customers should understand what you want them to do. "All campaigns should drive an action," says Bell. "Don't expect people to figure things out—no one has time for that. [Messaging] should be consistent and drive people to something specific. If it doesn't, you'll lose people fast."

### 7. CX IS MORE THAN MARKETING.

Look at the full scope of customer experience. Websites, email copy and social media posts are important, but remember that

CX encompasses everything that touches the consumer, from phone calls to the way packages look when they arrive to product documentation and beyond. "Don't narrow your field of vision to just marketing and communications," says Eifert. "It might be blasphemous for someone in a marketing agency to say this, but marketing is probably not the most impactful area in the relationship. There is so much more."

### 8. MAKE SURE YOU HAVE A COHESIVE CUSTOMER VIEW.

Many enterprises struggle with disparate systems housing customer information, such as multiple CRMs or ERPs across a global organization. It can be a tangled web, but putting in the work to understand what your customer's experience and journey look like will pay off. "It can be hard to figure out what someone's experience looks like, especially in a large organization, but it can lead to a more intimate experience," says Eifert. "Pull the information together and see where customers' personas and goals fit into the business."



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## 9. MAKE THE RIGHT CONNECTIONS POSSIBLE.

Communication is a huge part of CX. When your customers need to reach you, can they easily find the contact they need quickly? Make sure that you have rules and processes in place for every channel—phone, email, social, etc.—so no matter where they are in their journey, they can connect with the right person and come away satisfied. “Don’t delay delivering great [customer service] by making it part of a bigger CRM initiative,” says Eifert. “Make resources easy to find. Carve out that piece and make sure people can reach who they need to talk to and solve their problem.”

## 10. CX DOESN'T STOP WITH THE SALE.

Many companies have a laser focus on nurturing specific audiences to make the sale. Great content and experiences are created—and then forgotten when that prospect is in the fold. “Remember, those great materials you generated for acquisition can be used to build a retention campaign, so they fully understand your messaging,” notes Bell. “Then, people will have a consistent experience when they have contact with someone in your organization. This will broaden the experience.”

### ABOUT **CHIEF/ MARKETER**

Global online content portal Chief Marketer arms aspiring CMOs with the tools, insights, data and training they need to master the “next frontier of marketing”—an age of marketing much less dependent on advertising and much more focused on the rest of the branding toolkit. From digital, direct and content marketing, to social, experiential, promotion and more, our weekly newsletters and daily website content cover it all. Through annual initiatives like the Chief Marketer 200 (the only comprehensive list of the top non-advertising agencies), the PRO Awards, and recognition programs including Masters of Martech and Future CMOs, Chief Marketer helps marketers build stronger, smarter brand marketing strategies.

### ABOUT **TRICOMB2B**

No matter how technical, there’s a story to tell and customers to listen. TriComB2B is a business-to-business marketing agency focused on technical, industrial and considered purchase companies just like you. We’re passionate about diving into even the most technical projects with a unique enthusiasm. We make the complex simple, so your audience knows exactly what you do and why it matters. Tell that story in the right media and it’s good for your business.