

FROM THE CIMPHONI BLOG ON TECHNOLOGY TRENDS

10 Tips to Guide a Customer Experience Improvement Initiative

By Rick Davidson



CIOs are in a unique position to co-lead a customer experience (CX) improvement initiative. First, they generally have a good understanding of key business processes that engage and support customers across the entire CX lifecycle – from sales, to product and service provisioning to support. They also have a fairly good understanding of the business systems that are involved at critical customer touch points – including the strengths and weakness of these systems. Finally, they likely understand where the discontinuities exist in CX-related business processes as these frequently manifest themselves through gaps in process automation, lack of availability of critical customer information and poorly integrated business systems. CIOs should see this as their opportunity to co-lead a CX improvement initiative within their companies.

Once you have made the decision, as the senior IT leader in your company, to embark on a customer experience (CX) improvement initiative, here are 10 tips to ensure it's successful:

1. Ensure that your CEO sponsors the CX initiative

Get CEO approval to lead the effort, since technology underlies nearly every business function involved in delivering the customer experience. Nearly all business operations and support functions will be involved and should share similar goals and incentives. The CEO can ensure everyone is aligned toward the same destination.

2. Engage a business partner to co-lead the effort

Since Sales, Marketing and other functions may believe they are best qualified to lead an initiative targeted toward customers, it is likely that there will be a struggle for control of the initiative. We recommend that CIOs partner with the Customer Service function, for example, to explicitly make the point that the focus is on improving CX and not about implementing new technology.

3. Become a customer of your own organization

Getting first-hand experience with your company's product and service offerings from the outside in will give you both the insights and credibility to co-lead a CX initiative. It is also likely to uncover some gaps that may help you to decipher where to start on your improvement journey.

4. Assume that most customers want to do the right thing

Avoid developing business processes and rules that punish the 98 percent in order to prevent the two percent from fraudulently exploiting an opportunity. Be clever and innovative in dealing with the nefarious two percent.

5. Solicit the voice-of-the-customer (VOC)

It's important to understand which business processes and rules create roadblocks to a positive CX. Explicitly ask your customers – they will tell you what is broken. Research is likely to require formal surveys and focus groups, and you likely already have much of the data you need via your existing customer service channels, social media and other online commentary about your organization.

6. Create a list of offensive CX rules and broken processes, based on VOC feedback

Include every issue, no matter how trivial it may seem to be. Triage the list of rules and broken processes into three categories:

a. Candidates for elimination – rules that imply that your customers, left to their own devices, would take advantage of you; rules that coerce your customers into taking actions that seem irrational or not in their interests; rules that blame your customers for acts of omission (failing to do something) or commission (doing something incorrectly) which are really just shortcomings in your business processes or systems.

b. Candidates for simplification – mobile devices can serve as a useful benchmark for measuring product and service simplicity. Their form factor limits the level of effort required by customers in using your product or service to a few simple keystrokes. This is relevant for

companies whose products or service offerings are information-based. In general, products or services that require a call to a customer service center or a thorough reading of the user manual imply that they are too complex.

c. Candidates for automation – technology that can infer customer preferences after multiple interactions; technology that captures and shares information across multiple customer engagement channels; technology embedded in your products and processes that is intuitive and valued-adding to the customer experience.

7. Eliminate, simplify and automate complex processes

Streamline your processes and rules before any discussion of information technology that may help to enable those processes. Avoid using technology to automate an inherently inefficient business process. Simplify first and then automate with technology.

8. Address complex issues through collaboration

Bring in mid-level leaders with CX responsibilities to capture a diversity of ideas. Directors and Managers are the best positioned to identify and make CX changes. Additionally, cross-functional collaboration between business groups is an effective approach in identifying where processes can be improved.

9. Avoid codifying complexity into software

Keep it simple. It is difficult and costly to reverse course if overly complex processes are codified into business systems. Address complexity by empowering people with information and enabling them the latitude to address customer issues. Automation is great, but many times the human element is the most appropriate approach to delivering a great customer experience.

10. Weight the economic value of a rule versus the impact on CX

A simple formula – the benefit of complexity minus the cost of complexity equals CX value. This formula can help you prioritize which rules to eliminate. Many of the rules embedded in our systems today were the result of good intentions to fix a problem at the time. These good intentions, in hindsight, are now seen clearly for what they are – “speed bumps” on the road to delivering a great customer experience. Time to repave.

If you're looking for additional ideas on how to deliver a first-rate experience to your customers, help is just a click away!

About Cimphoni

Cimphoni is built on the premise that technology, when properly applied and led, can deliver innovative solutions that transform businesses, enrich the products we use daily and improve the quality of our lives. The Cimphoni team is comprised of technology and business leaders, physicians and medical researchers with a thirst for innovation and a passion for solving problems. Cimphoni Consulting is focused on business transformation using information technology to enable new product and service offerings and improve business performance.

Cimphoni Solutions develops Internet of Things strategy, devices and data analytics, as well as custom enterprise software. Cimphoni Life Sciences creates new medical devices and solutions that address acute and chronic illnesses and improve the health of individuals.

Founded in 2012, Cimphoni is headquartered in suburban Milwaukee and has an office in Phoenix to serve customers throughout the United States. More information can be found at www.cimphoni.com.

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