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## What's the Story Behind Your Customer Experience?



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CEOs, CMOs and other business executives are quickly coming to the realization that every aspect of the organization must work together to achieve lasting customer experience success. Every aspect of the business that touches the customer ... matters. It's not just about successful lead generation. It's not just about great sales conversion rates. It's not just about better than average Net Promoter scores. Christine Crandell, a contributing editor with Forbes Magazine said it best, "Customer experience is not restricted just to the attract-engage-convert-close funnel. Rather it is about the lifetime experience the buyer expects to have with a vendor." What this means is, every phase of the customer experience matters. And only when all three phases of the customer experience are performing at a high-level can a company reach its full potential.

Phases of the customer experience that matter are: self-service, sales process and post-purchase. And there is one aspect of your business that connects and directly impacts every phase. That's your corporate story. More specifically, the messages prospects and customers consume throughout their journey with your company. From a prospects first encounter with your website to the conversations they have with your sales team, the connections they have with your customer support team and everywhere in between ... your story is omnipresent.

### **What is the story hidden within and how consistent is it?**

The question is, what is the story you are telling throughout all three phases of the customer experience and just how consistent is it? The honest truth is, the story most prospects and customers consume throughout their journey is fragmented and inconsistent. This negatively impacts business performance. How? An inconsistency story creates customer confusion, uncertainty, doubt and negatively impacts loyalty and trust. And we all know the foundation of any lasting, profitable customer relationship is ... trust.

There is a direct correlation between the consistency of your story and the degree of trust you earn throughout the customer

experience. Lack of consistency ... results in lower trust. Lack of trust results in ... lower customer acquisition, retention and advocacy rates. Metrics that directly impact financial performance of your business. So, trust is critically important. So important that we should look at the definition ...

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**Trust: a firm belief in the reliability, truth, ability, or strength of someone or something.**

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### **What is preventing you from telling a clear, consistent story?**

Think about it, consistently communicating who you are, what you do, the value you deliver and what you stand for is critical when it comes to establishing trust between your company and your customers. And yet, the corporate story most prospects and customers experience in their journey is far from consistent. Why is that? We have identified three primary barriers that prevent companies from delivering a clear, compelling and consistent story throughout the customer experience. Those barriers are:

- > Distributed ownership
- > Functional silos
- > Multi-channel integration

These barriers create a highly disjointed customer experience. They prevent organizations from delivering a clear, connected story. They negatively impact business results and customer satisfaction. That's why breaking down these three barriers should be a strategic priority for every CEO, CMO and customer experience professional. McKinsey and Company, recently published a report that said, "Improving customer satisfaction can be an engine of profitable growth, but it demands a common vision and new levels of coordination across historically strong organizational silos. Establishing cross-functional, multichannel customer experiences should be a CEO and board-level priority."

They key message from McKinsey is the critical importance of “establishing cross-functional, multichannel customer experiences.” The only way to make this happen is to eliminate these barriers and deliver a consistent story throughout all three phases of the customer experience:

- > Self-Service Phase
- > Sales Phase
- > Post-Purchase Phase

#### **Telling a consistent and connected story in a complex world.**

Today, customers have unprecedented access to your company. Their experience spans more people, processes and technologies than ever before. This means the number of ways customers interact with your business has literally exploded. The impact of this explosion has been felt in three key areas: the organizational structure, communication channels and partner ecosystem that play a role the customer experience.

**Organizational structure:** there are more individuals and teams that have customer-facing communication ownership and responsibility within the enterprise than ever before. Think about all the “customer-facing” areas of your business and the interactions they have directly or indirectly (via technology) with your customers. Every one of these interactions has an impact on the customer experience.

**Communication channels:** never before has there been more channels through which companies communicate with customers ... and customers communicate with companies. From websites, to social media, customer portals, online chat, email ... the list goes on and on. Each of these channels play different roles at different times in the customer experience.

**Partner ecosystem:** technology has had a dramatic impact on the number of sales and marketing partners' companies must manage. A few years ago, a single “ad agency” pretty much handled how, when and where the company story was told in the marketplace. Today, companies have dozens of partners developing and delivering messages at distinct points in the customer experience.

Changes in these areas become more challenging with when you layer on the barriers we mentioned earlier:

**Distributed ownership:** the number of individuals, teams, partners that are responsible for developing and/or delivering the corporate story throughout the customer experience has dramatically increased. Inside and outside of your organization.

**Functional silos:** the distinct functions/roles within departments, business units, divisions and partners that communicate with customers have grown significantly.

**Multi-channel integration:** the sheer number of channels and communication vehicles used to communicate and interact with customers has exploded.

#### **The first step is acknowledging the problem and uncovering the truth.**

It is a simple fact. Distributed ownership, functional silo and multi-channel integration barriers have been constructed within your organizational structure, across the communication channels you utilize and the partner-ecosystem you manage. These barriers are negatively impacting how you develop and deliver your story throughout all three phases of the customer experience.

No wonder most companies are unable to deliver a consistent message that fosters trust. It should be no surprise that organizations find it difficult to create clarity in the minds of their customers with respect to the company's purpose, vision, mission, value proposition and promise. And there should be no question as to why most companies can't seem to leverage their corporate story as a competitive advantage in the marketplace.

The good news is, CEOs and CMOs that acknowledge this reality and breakdown the barriers preventing the company from delivering a consistent story will win. They will win because they will tell a consistent story throughout the customer experience that establishes “a firm belief in the reliability, truth, ability, or strength” of their company in the mind of their customer (that's the definition of trust ... by the way).

Those who don't ... can make all the other operational, technology and process changes they think may improve the customer experience. But, in the end, their story will be disjointed and customers will still walk away from their experience with “a feeling of uncertainty or lack of conviction.” (that's the definition of doubt).

#### **More Information:**

To learn how you can deliver a clear, compelling and consistent story throughout the customer experience visit [www.itsonmessage.com/resource](http://www.itsonmessage.com/resource).