



To react to disruption rapidly, build a foundation of customer-centric experience design

How Premier set up a unique digital customer experience that came to the rescue in a crisis

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If there's one thing we can all agree on in 2021, it's the goal of beating this global pandemic and moving *faster* to do so. In a recent webinar titled "[Building a digital business at speed to beat this pandemic.](#)" we were joined by special guests Andy Brailo, Chief Customer Officer at Premier Inc., and Mohd Haque, SVP and Head of Healthcare and Medical Devices, Wipro. As the customer evangelist for a healthcare improvement company and Group Purchasing Organization (GPO), which helps source essential products and services to the healthcare ecosystem, Andy is an advocate for his customers, referred to as "members."

These members are the hospitals and other healthcare facilities on the front lines of the pandemic. We heard first-hand about the digital acceleration Premier put in place, aiding thousands of acute and non-acute care facilities in getting the vital PPE (personal protective equipment) and other critical supplies they need to fight COVID-19. But Premier's digital transformation story started long before COVID-19 hit, demonstrating that its foundation of well-designed, customer-centric solutions already in place prepared the organization for massive disruption; business leaders from all industries can benefit from this approach.

A customer-first mindset created the first burning platform for change

Premier's journey has seen a decades-long focus and innovation in its ultimate mission to "improve members' outcomes while also safely reducing cost." Premier unites an alliance of 4,100+ acute entities (hospitals) and 200,000 non-acute

organizations, such as long-term care and skilled nursing facilities. While business was strong and the model robust, there were market dynamics at play— including startups, online natives, price wars, changing buyer expectations—had Premier rethinking its approach to member experience.

For its members in the non-acute space, Premier wanted to better understand their supply chain challenges and pain points. They found these members to be slowed down by multi-step processes, facing a lack of transparent pricing and toggling multiple platforms to buy products when what they really desired was a one-stop-shop tailored to their needs.

And so the e-Commerce platform Premier now calls [stockd](#)[®] was conceptualized. The idea was to design a platform that enabled the convenience of online purchasing and helped members understand the best products for them at a fair price, and to effortlessly connect these members with suppliers who provide reliably sourced products. While consumer-like behavior such as seamless online ordering is the standard, healthcare organizations cannot accept the risk of getting a lower quality product—and so, Premier sought to ensure ease and quality.

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Our aspirational goal is to be seen as an extension of our member's organization.

**— Andy Brailo,
Chief Customer Officer, Premier**

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Intelligent design is the foundation of seamless experiences

In developing stockd, Premier brought in Wipro as a partner, which worked as an extension of the Premier team. A big part of Wipro's role included experience design, bringing in research, experience, and brand designers who worked together to identify the buyer personas across physicians, clinician managers, purchasing agents, and more. The synthesis of the insight on how buyers want to consume informed the design of the Stockd platform. As such, Stockd became a very personalized experience for non-acute members, allowing for healthcare-specific attributes such as tax exemption statuses and bulk buying.

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Design for what matters to people and business. Design digital solutions that are easy use, easy to access, reliable and secure.

– Mohd Haque, SVP and Head of Healthcare and Medical Devices, Wipro

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Pivoting to meet acute demand amid pandemic disruption

Fast forward to early 2020, and the COVID-19 pandemic were felt throughout Premier's supplier ecosystem; tracking down products, dealing with shipments delays, speaking to caregivers concerned about having enough masks and gowns consumed the business. Rising COVID-19

cases caused demand for PPE to spike between 300 and 1,700 percent, with many Premier's members saying they only had a couple of days of inventory left.

While stockd was designed to meet the specific needs of non-acute members, Premier opened up this digital platform to the acute market, helping to meet demand and rapidly adding new products to the platform. Given the circumstances, hospitals were open to forgoing their usual preferred products, knowing that the stockd platform provided an alternative and verifiable high-quality product. This enabled hospitals, health systems and other providers to procure much-needed PPE and other supplies in a time of grave necessity.

Agility is the name of the game for customer centricity and battling disruption

The pandemic may have been the biggest disruption of our lifetime, but it won't be the last. Customer expectations will continue to change, disruptors will enter the market, and unforeseen events will occur. Mohd Haque of Wipro notes that delivery models must shift to become extremely agile to co-create solutions with clients and design experiences focused on the user and customer. Healthcare clients like Premier are relying on Wipro to cut down cycle time while reducing costs. This kind of transformation requires rapid design changes, often on a weekly and monthly basis. The ability to shift and pivot quickly has never been so important.

— The Bottom Line: A foundation of customer-centric design enables speed in times of crisis.

Every business needs to become much more digitally savvy to deliver competitive products and services critical to customers. Now is the time to tightly align your business with customer expectations and design your processes, supply chains, and experiences for agility. The stockd

platform is a shining example of a catalyst for digital acceleration, as an online marketplace that not only improves outcomes for members and their patients, but also rose to the occasion in a crisis to aid in saving lives.

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Melissa O'Brien leads HFS' customer experience and front office services research, with a specialization in retail and travel and hospitality strategies. Her key focus areas are on customer engagement operations, CX design, digital marketing, and digital associates, focusing on the trends that are driving customer experience across the enterprise.



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