



Enriching customer
experience through
journey mapping and
personalization



We all know that digital technologies have given customers unprecedented power to dictate terms of purchase – to the point that instant gratification has become the norm. In a world where customers have an app that meets all their needs in a snap, they expect the same kind of immediacy, personalization, and convenience in all their purchase related interactions. If not, they will not hesitate to switch between service providers. Where online reviews are driving purchase decisions, it becomes all the more critical that companies understand customer-behavior. Organizations need to be extremely responsive to cope with the volatility created by customers engaging via multiple channels and digital technologies. Failure to deliver personalized customer experience can lead to customer churn and even business demise. It is important to react in real time and make the customer feel individually valued. We are talking personalization in a multi-channel service environment.

Question is, how can personalized services be provided in a highly digital-driven world? How can one deliver a connected, consistent experience across all touchpoints to ensure seamless brand? More importantly, how can companies balance human and digital interactions to deliver enhanced user experience while strictly adhering to privacy regulations? The answers to these pertinent questions lie in identifying and transforming the Customer Journey Management process.

For customer journey mapping and personalization to succeed, the entire organization must be aligned to the its goals and objectives, ensuring that every customer's journey with the company is delightful and beneficial. It also involves improving disjointed processes, systems working in silos, and non-collaborative culture. To achieve this, it is also important for organizations to address broader issues like customer's demand for transparency, shorter consumer attention spans, ubiquitous connectivity and access, and traditional channel fatigue. On the other hand, the back-stage functions need to know where the technology and systems issues lie in order to understand where individual customers “get stuck or lost” and drop off the grid altogether.

Approach to customer journey mapping and personalization

Much of the work done by organizations on personalization has been ‘inside out’ – I call this

‘Renovation’. This typically involves deployment of web content based on explicit customer preferences, implicit behavior, or customer's previous purchase history. This tailoring and configuring of experiences allows targeting customers with the right offer at the right time, in the right place. These approaches are rational, tend to be systems-driven, and are about how the company sells more.

However, if we step into customers' shoes and take an ‘outside in’ approach, then personalization is realigned to focus more on how an organization responds to a range of emotional needs. I call this ‘Innovation’. Personalization, a crucial element to a customer experience strategy, at its best attends to the following basic psychological human drivers:

- The desire to bond and affiliate
- The desire to learn and grow – in experience terms this often relates to education and knowledge
- The desire to feel in control and be prepared for the unexpected

Customer journey and personalization management: the key to better customer engagement

1. Focus on end-to-end customer journeys

In our experience, an effective Customer Journey Management program helps eliminate any disruption in the customer purchase process and uncover the critical success factor. The Customer Journey Map puts the customer front and center of your organization's thinking, enabling your ability to hear and act upon the voice of your customers, employees, and business needs. This approach has helped us in supporting our clients in the process of shaping their customers' experiences (CX) at each stage of the buying cycle using the different channels. With a broader scope, it has helped influence their customers' perception of their brand. It demonstrates a new way of discovering customer behavior, thoughts, feelings, and preferences. To this end, we map the Customer Journey to identify gaps, disjointed or frustrating points in customers' experience with the brand. We often find that barriers to retention are gaps between the devices, channels, departments, and customer communication.

Any attempt at Customer Journey Mapping or Personalization must ensure that the contact center transformation solutions leverage journey mapping and Analytics-enabled Artificial Intelligence. This will help understand customer behavior and associated patterns to predict future needs and formulate a proactive, customized approach to achieve true customer delight and engagement. On similar lines, **we partnered with one of the largest European Telecom major to proactively drive and deliver early revenue realization of £30M high value orders by reducing the Cycle Time from 140 days to less than 90 days.** For another client, we used Gamification techniques to effectively train staff, and improve learning and development, which helped enhance user experience and boost agent productivity by 37%. It reduced time-to-market by 20%. **We delivered this for a global leader in the online transportation network that redefined disruptive innovation through its App-based Service.**

2. Standard vs personalized experiences

In our experience, amongst the key pillars of Customer Experience – which includes personalization, integrity, expectations, resolution, time & effort, and empathy – personalization has the most significant impact on advocacy and loyalty. While it is important to advance all the pillars to deliver an excellent experience, in a brand's customer experience strategy, the priority is always personalization. Personalization involves demonstrating that you understand the customer's specific needs, circumstances and will adapt the experience accordingly. Use of name, individualized attention, knowledge of preferences and past interactions all add up to an experience that feels personal. It makes the customer feel important and valued and begins to build an emotional connection. These feelings ensure reduced instances of strife or customer churn. Instead, customers feel proud to be associated with the brand and become brand advocates. We proactively delivered a Customer Analytics led Complaints Resolution solution for one of the largest UK Telecommunications company. **We delivered £18M in business value in a single year through personalization and driving proactive actions. This also reduced churn by 50%.**

Leading companies are using individualized attention to drive an emotional connection. Companies like Netflix, Amazon, Uber are investing in algorithm for recommending

personalized content. Artificial Intelligence led solutions improve Personalization using 'deep learning' – a method of organizing content to reflect how the brain works. The need to feel in control is a very powerful and motivational driver. Netflix, Amazon, and Uber Online solutions cleverly put customers in control in many ways. Giving customers the freedom of choice in itself is a key element of control!

3. Focus on domain and self service

As per industry trends, majority of customer interactions are likely to be managed with minimal human intervention in the next couple of years. A service partner with deep **domain and industry expertise** will help reimagine processes by keeping customer expectations at its center. Also, knowing domain and industry context will help the service partner advice the organization on digital tools and technologies as well as the strategy to realize greater value on investment. Besides technology, it is also important that the staff is trained on process capability, functional and technical aspects to cover end to end customer journey. This is integral to a customer experience strategy and ensures the right products and solutions are delivered. Responding to customers' emotional situations takes strong detection skills as well as highly-developed emotional intelligence. The right approach is to take the problem off customers' hands when they want reassurance, responding with urgency when something untoward has happened, and providing sympathy and understanding where needed.

While choosing a service partner, companies need to deploy newer customer engagement solutions such as digital CX, Natural Language Processing enabled intelligent Chatbot, Voice Biometric authentication, and cognitive capabilities. These tools help manage volumes better. With the help of an experienced service partner, organizations can deploy self-service content (including videos, FAQs, interactive manuals, etc.) and digital channels (like chatbots, voice bots, etc.) to further enhance personalization and win over customer loyalty. They can also consolidate and integrate digital channels with social media to offer better convenience and speed to the customers.

It is a very thin line that separates a good experience from a bad one. A single interaction – big or small – is all it takes to lose a potential loyal customer. Companies must ensure that

their service partner is invested in delivering delightful experience through consistent and connected customer experience, understanding customer needs across the journey, and personalizing what is delivered. The service partner needs to focus on establishing an unspoken bond between the company and

the customers – a bond that encompasses an understanding that the company would safeguard and utilize customer information provided, judiciously. In turn, customers are a discerning lot – when they perceive genuine efforts towards personalization in customer service, they are sure to reciprocate with loyalty.

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Deepak is an accomplished IT/ITeS professional, with over 20 years of international and diverse

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