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How to build optimized customer journeys to drive profitable experiences

Rakesh Prasad 1 day ago



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Modern-day customers are being met with a wave of new digital products, market ecosystems, AI-powered gadgets and much more. Though organizations employ the best tools to facilitate interactions with customers, they need to develop a deeper sense of customers' needs and wants to deliver unforgettable experiences. A recent survey by PwC indicated that 82% of consumers are willing to share some type of personal data for a more personalized service. Therefore, it has become pertinent for organizations to invest in personalization efforts and deliver memorable experiences, leading to both long-term loyalty and sales. Organizations need to correctly capture, analyze and decipher customers' every step at every stage of the buying cycle and build tailored journeys, stretching across multiple channels, moments and touchpoints. According to a recent study, 52% of brands will be investing in enabling online customers to easily connect with the brand on their channel of choice (e.g., chat, social, text, video).

A customer journey map can help organizations visualize their customers' viewpoints from initial contact to final purchase and reveal the channels customers prefer to interact with. Strategic journey maps enable businesses to listen to customer cues and recognize the moments that shape the customer experiences while powering 1-to-1 relationships.

With best-of-breed customer journey mapping solutions, organizations can-

- Understand how well their brand, products, services and bundled offerings are being perceived by the customers
- What factors motivate or drive customers to frame their opinions, what helps to earn their loyalty and what upsets them
- Identify the parts of the journey that are creating friction and what can be done to deliver seamless experiences across specific touch-points
- Give marketing, sales and customer support teams a direction to eliminate negative experiences and delight customers with outstanding services

Below are some of the modern tools and techniques that empower organizations to build frictionless journeys and proactively act on customers' changing needs and wants-

Persona Development Tools and Templates

Templates

With the help of intuitive persona generators, organizations can create customizable buyer personas at the speed of light. These tools offer multi-view personas to help organizations compare customer profiles, spot the differences between their behavior, and gather valuable insights. Moreover, the personas empower organizations to collect a deeper sense of customers' likes, habits, preferred buying channels, pain points and much more.

A retail organization that serves a breadth of individuals via both online and offline channels will be interested in knowing the background of its potential buyers. Here, buyer personas can help them discover concrete findings such as which social media or interactive forums customers are most active on, what factors influence them to make a sane purchase decision, or which customers have the highest propensity to churn. Once the organization has identified what interests their customers, which content topics they like, and which shopping methods they prefer – they can build lead nurturing programs and define the scope of customers' journey across all stages – awareness, consideration, purchase, post-purchase and advocacy.

Journey Building and Visualization Applications

To accurately interpret customers' behavior, organizations must employ journey building apps powered by conversational analytics, sentiment analysis and visualization tools to capture 100% conversations and communications across all channels. Such apps enable organizations to collect deep audience insights and prepare stand-out customer journeys and impact maps in minutes. These apps provide organization charts, Venn diagrams, ready-to-use templates, and other useful graphics to frame journeys from scratch and visualize each step a customer takes to reach closer to their goal i.e., making an informed purchase. This empowers organizations to connect the dots between interactions, insights, and actions and deliver superior experiences with speed and precision.

Consider a non-profit organization seeking to expand its member and donor base. By envisioning their members' and donors' journeys, the organization can build an active, compelling community of supporters connected to a cause. From engaging with the right volunteers to retaining donors to inspiring non-members to commit to a charity event – mapping out step-by-step journeys can help the non-profit organization make note of success indicators and the areas they might fall short of. It is also critical to map out how members and donors are engaging with offerings and how the organization can improve outreach and retention strategies.

Voice of the Customers (VoC) Solutions

Voice of the Customers solutions let brands encapsulate, analyze and record customer interactions in real-time to gain a firsthand perspective on what the customer experience should be like. Upgraded features like pop-up surveys, dedicated feedback forms, on-site interviews, and custom emails help organizations get a sense of how the customers think and feel, and act on it. This enables organizations to collect unfiltered feedback across multiple touch-points such as mail, websites, live chats, and more and build new products and solutions centered around their customers.

A machine manufacturer who is dealing with high product recalls can take advantage of the VoC solutions and capture quality feedback, enabling the organization to hone its products into something that customers truly want. These solutions can help the manufacturer gain insights into the performance of their sales reps, gather a list of potential detractors, and proactively follow up with customers on open/ outstanding issues, enabling seamless service and elevating the satisfaction levels of the customers.

Conclusion

With both digital and offline channels, organizations need to highlight the best means to reach out to their targeted audience and truly fulfill customers' intent and expectations. Journey building and action tools can bring their vision to life by generating accurate and actionable maps that help in elevating customer experience across channels, devices and platforms. These holistic tools assist organizations in inspiring and incentivizing positive behaviors to drive greater business outcomes. Organizations can leverage these powerful tools, apps and software to ensure that extraordinary experiences are available at the most defining moments in customers' journey.



(The author is Mr. Rakesh Prasad, Senior Vice President – Digital Services, Innover, and the views expressed in this article are his own)

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