

# Digital Customer Experience - The sum of insight and action

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If no action is taken, capturing online customer feedback is just a vanity tool. Equally, if customer feedback is simply stored in a system and nobody looks into it, the organisation is deprived of valuable customer insight. Its common sense to see that action taken on insights almost always leads to a positive outcome when it comes to the customer experience.

There are four phases companies go through in order to reach a mature stage of digital customer experience management. In phase 1 the focus is primarily on web statistics and numbers, phase 2 has a focus on periodic quantitative and qualitative research and phase 3, which is the point that continuous feedback is collected in real-time via onsite feedback forms. Phase 4 is all about turning insight into action to reach a mature stage of digital customer experience management.

Often when companies decide to look at their online customer experience they will start by collecting customer feedback and that is often the ideal place to start. However, it's important to realise this is a big undertaking and involves a lot of work if it is to yield meaningful results. When you only collect feedback but do not act on it, you are just collecting data. There are no insights and there is no action, so it is impossible to optimise the customer experience. For a strategic, mature focus on customer experience, it is necessary to actually create understanding after collecting feedback and then take action. But how do you set up such a process and reach a mature level of digital customer experience management?

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To manage the digital customer experience and turn insight into action an organisation firstly needs to look inward. Different departments need to be involved and feel involved, if the organisation wants to take the perceptions and expectations of the customer seriously. It's not a matter of just setting up some fancy feedback tools for a particular department. Customer experience touches many facets of the organisation, such as service, product development and IT management – as should the digital experience, as it is part of wider customer experience strategy.

All process owners in the company need to be involved in such a way that it is actually possible to take action on customer feedback, such as the product changes, the delivery and technical website adjustments - just to name a few. All processes that could contain obstacles that customers encounter on the way to achieving their goals should be included. Therefore, it may help to map the online journeys of a customer (like buying a product, editing a my-account, using self-service tools) and see where the main bottlenecks could occur. By using the right feedback questions, where they are most relevant in the journey, you are able to capture insights that are related to what customers are actually doing at that time to achieve their online goals.

Take the example of a local bakery, it always has direct contact with the customer and knows what is going on among his customers. But for people who work behind a desk in the online field, it may actually be new to really listen to the customer. A website or any other digital channel can massive and create distance between employees and the customer. Sometimes the customer can almost be out of sight! Therefore a cultural change within the organisation is needed for a customer experience strategy to succeed.

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After taking action based on feedback, a company must close the loop to the customer. The customer has given you the opportunity to improve a certain aspect of your business. Then if an adjustment is made, i.e. a technical problem with online ordering is solved; you need to let the customer know that action has been taken with the feedback and that you have solved the problem. That is a matter of courtesy, you may say, but it's more than just that. The knife cuts both ways. In the short term this can mean higher conversion and lower costs for more expensive channels like telephones (a customer that cannot solve his/her problem online will either turn to a competitor or grab the telephone to speak to somebody within the organisation). In the long term, this type of engagement with the customer, and successfully exceeding their expectations, means a more loyal customer base.

Closing the loop can be a heavy workload for the internal organisation, so a solution is to partially automate the feedback loop to the customer by topic, if you are dealing with high volumes of feedback. For example, where appropriate, you can use software to classify certain issues using text mining solutions. Based on the issue categories, customers can be emailed or updates can be posted on blog, newsletters or certain parts of your website. Naturally the best relationship is built on a personal level, but some business margins are too low and volumes are too high to get things of the ground. Either way, it allows an organisation to show what is done with the customer feedback and that the problem is solved. It could be an issue that the company had not even identified without the help of the customer.

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Like solving a technical problem on the website, customer engagement does not end with taking a single action. You can't just leave your customers in limbo. Customer experience is about resolution and engagement. The end goal is to

improve loyalty among customers and create value.

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Working around the voice of the customer ensures that your organisation is reminded of its role and what you are doing it for: the customer. It keeps employees involved in the product being delivered. It's certainly not just about negative feedback either; there are also positive messages or whole fresh ideas to be gained. Often there is a whole story behind the feedback that needs to be examined and understood. Direct input from customers about products and services can be some of the most valuable information to your business.