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# Customer Experience Success Relies On More Than Marketing

In the fight to win the customer experience battlefield, most organizations put their marketing departments in charge. But it takes much more than marketing expertise and impact to succeed in customer experience. Operations, human resources, and finance must also take responsibility and undergo fundamental transformations.



(Photo by Andrew Redington/Getty Images)

It's understandable to think that marketing should drive customer experience. Marketers usually know the customer best and they also usually have the best handle on how developments in technology and other trends impact customers. So, marketing is well-positioned to set the customer experience vision and lead the thinking about customer experience design.

But since most marketing departments' responsibilities are focused on advertising, promotions, and other elements in the last mile of customer engagement, they only have limited involvement in and influence on the more

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upstream, organization-wide, and fundamental changes that customer experience delivery requires. Customer experience success relies on operations, human resources, and finance as much as it does on marketing.

### **Operations: Breakdown Silos**

Operations must breakdown the silos between departments and integrate their functions. Take retailers, for example. Most retail organizations are set up by function — merchandising, buying, supply chain, store operations, marketing, etc. These departments used to work with each other in a sequential semi-annual or quarterly process, handing off the product to the next function when their responsibilities were complete.

But today's retail environment requires a more agile, flexible, and integrated approach. To execute the tailored local assortments, fast (or at least faster) fashion, new and varied store formats, and careful inventory management that distinguish the leading customer experiences, different departments must share data, develop new processes, and collaborate on product design and delivery.

Moreover, retailers can no longer operate with their channels separate from their product and digital channels cannot be divorced from physical operations. Customers expect the same product, pricing, promotions, and availability across a company, so operations must establish the structure and processes to deliver on this expectation.

### **Human Resources: Cultivate Culture and New Mindsets & Skill Sets**

Human resources must take responsibility for shaping the culture and developing the mindsets and skill sets that customer experience excellence requires. In order for employees to understand and embrace an organization's desired customer experience, the employee experience should be designed with the same values. For example, if a company wants to distinguish its customer experience with automation and speed, then the employees' workplace environment, benefits, performance reviews, etc. should be technology-enabled and fast. If personalization and personal care is what's important in the customer experience, then the employee experience should deliver on those values.



Recruiting, training, and development must produce employees who have different skills and new ways of thinking. Customer experience design and management requires all people in an organization to be focused on the customer. Customer intimacy cannot be only a marketing skill. Likewise, companies are more likely to successfully implement the technology solutions necessary to excel in customer experience if everyone in the organization has some level of technology proficiency. Human resources must take the lead in preparing the workforce with customer experience competencies.

### **Finance: Use New Customer Metrics**

Finance can make or break customer experience through the measurements and accounting it chooses to apply. Different metrics and ways of attributing results are needed in order for customer experience to be valued by organizations and their investors. Most balance sheets are organized like operations, by function or by business unit. This involves tracking and reporting discrete inputs and usually leads to misattribution.

Customer experience, on the other hand, is best measured by customer outcomes, which are usually shared by several groups within the organization. And customers themselves can be considered assets and liabilities. Finance must innovate new methods like algorithmic models to parse out the complexity of customer experience results and to focus the organization on customer, not operating, results. Specifically for retailers, when customer experience becomes the product, finance managers must re-classify metrics like sales per square foot, labor costs, product margins, and shipping costs.

If the rest of an organization is waiting for marketing to deliver customer experience success, it will likely fail. Only when the core functions of a company spearhead necessary changes in their areas will it be ready to fight and win.

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