

CX Spotlight: In conversation with Nate Brown

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***CX Spotlight** is a weekly series where we meet with Customer Experience (CX) professionals and practitioners to find out about their CX ideologies, their journey so far, their inspirations, and more.*

Today, we've got [Nate Brown](#) with us. Nate is the Chief Experience Officer at Officium Labs Inc. – an organization that helps leverage CX to drive customer loyalty, engagement and revenue. Nate is also the co-founder of CX accelerator – a virtual community that connects like-minded CX professionals and helps them learn, share knowledge, and grow together in their CX careers.

Having started off his career as a customer support specialist at an e-learning company, Nate went on to manage a technical support team there, before moving further up the ranks to become the Head of Customer Experience.

Recognized as a top CX thought leader by the renowned [International Customer Management Institute](#) (ICMI), Nate's passion for CX has no bounds (in his own words, he loves all things customer). His expertise lies in helping employees understand and optimize

the customer journey, improving survey collection processes, and maximizing ROI from Voice of Customer programs.

We caught up with him to find out more about his one true passion (Customer Experience), how he built a career in this niche field, and the fundamentals of providing great experiences, amongst other things.

1. What made you passionate about Customer Experience?

My path to Customer Experience has had several interesting side quests. Straight out of college, I found myself in Jacksonville, Florida, selling these funny little postage machines. It was quite literally cold-calling around various strip malls under the burning sun and constantly getting kicked out of offices.

I was too naive to realize how bad the job was. One thing I did discover, however, is that I loved interacting with our existing customers and making them as happy as possible. That's where my love for customer service was unexpectedly born!

My next role was that of a support agent for an e-learning company where I eventually went onto manage a service department with multiple products and teams. The leap from there to Customer Experience was a short one — prompted by a strong desire to morph our view of service from a reactive fire-fighting mentality to a strategic and proactive model.

What I love the most about Customer Experience is how it helps people to live a better and easier life. It's our job to take the unnecessary friction out of everyday interactions!

2. What do you think is the most important soft skill in CX?

I made [a pledge to Leslie O'Flahavan](#) to never use the term soft skills, so I will say “human skills” for the purpose of this question. 😊

CX professionals are required to wear a variety of hats if they are going to be successful. But if I've got to pick one human skill, I will say **influence**. A CX professional must have the ability to inspire change in his or her peers. It's not enough for CX leaders to try and carry the mantle of experience management alone. Until they influence enough people to join them in the journey, there will be little to no real progress.

3. How important is organization-wide buy-in to deliver great CX?

THIS is the most important question we can be asking. The simple answer? There is nothing more essential than earning company-wide involvement. A CX program that does not unify the organization and encourage cross-functional participation is a CX program that will likely not be around for very long.

The way to go forward is what I'd call a strong 'CX Change Coalition'. This involves bringing together champion stakeholders from across the organization, who can then take the vision of CX back into their teams, and customize the strategy for each function. CX cannot be its own team, on the outskirts of the company hierarchy. It cannot be a re-branded version of the customer service center. In order to be successful, CX must have meaningful authority and representation inside of every major department.

4. AI Customer Support vs Human Customer Support. And why?

As Hollywood has proven in 1,000 different ways, an "us versus them" mentality between humans and AI never works out well. A hybrid approach to the service workforce is always best. How can we mix VIP-level support, potential outsourcing, excellent automation, and integrated self-service to provide outstanding support at every level? This is the question every customer service leader should be asking.

The immortal words of The Effortless Experience still ring true. Guide customers to the BEST resolution path based on the issue they are experiencing. In many cases, this will be an AI-driven path while in other cases, we need to remove the barriers to human support.

5. One book you'd recommend everyone to read.

The standout book for me in the past two years has been Fusion: How Integrating Brand and Culture Powers the World's Great Companies by brand leadership expert, Denise Lee Yohn. She brings the essential elements of culture, employee experience, customer experience, and marketing together in a way that no one else can. Absolutely brilliant work.

6. What's your go-to productivity hack?

If I start to get tunnel vision or lose focus, I have a disc golf basket set up in my backyard. I go out there, huck a few shots, and feel so much better in about 5 minutes.

7. 3 brands that come to your mind when you think great CX

REI – A company that is incredibly authentic in who they are and "walks the walk" in all areas.

B&H Photography – Takes the digital experience very seriously, and responds extremely well to customer feedback.

Amazon – Not a unique answer, but they are just phenomenal when it comes to effort reduction and ensuring a seamless experience.

8. Who has been the biggest inspiration in your professional life?

I'd say customer service expert and speaker – [Jeff Toister](#). From the first time I met him, I knew Jeff was someone I wanted to be like. He is so wise and personable. He cares more about truly helping the people he serves, versus putting himself up on a pedestal. He sets the bar for the term “thought leader” in the CS/CX space.

What can we usually find you doing on a weekend?

I can truly say that Customer Experience is a hobby of mine, as reflected by my CX Accelerator initiative. I also play racquet sports – tennis, badminton, and more recently, pickleball. The Smoky Mountains are fairly close by, and we love going out there for backpacking, disc golf, mountain biking and more, whenever we get the chance.

What advice would you give someone who is starting their career in CX?

First off, I authored “[The CX Primer](#)” just for you! I hope you find this immensely helpful as it covers all the fundamentals of getting started with Customer Experience Management. Additionally, surround yourself with positive thought leaders who will help you and challenge you along the way. CX can be lonely work if you don't reach beyond the walls of your own company. Which is why I'd highly insist on connecting and networking with like-minded CX professionals to grow your career. These connections that you make will forever be useful in your career!