

# CX Rises in Business Importance, SAP Sapphire Now Speakers Urge

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Customer experience (CX) today needs to be the backbone of any business, Geert Leeman, global chief operating officer for CX at SAP, told attendees today at the CX track of SAP's Sapphire Now online conference.

"CX is about connecting the dots and breaking down the silos," Leeman said during the day's opening keynote. "It brings all the pieces together."

CX, Leeman added, "goes hand in hand with every business process."

And at the heart of CX is data and artificial intelligence, which Leeman called "imperative in this new business environment."

That's why companies today are "starting to mine data more in a CX context," allowing them to be more personalized and relevant to customers, he said.

Denise Lee Yohn, author and brand leadership expert, agreed. Personalization, she said, is one of the key trends in CX that is allowing companies to be more convenient and relevant to customers. But, it requires data and AI, she said.

CX technology today must be predictive, according to Yohn. "Companies don't just need to respond to what customers want or need, they need to predict it ahead of time," she said. "And it's not just for product recommendations but also for turning around potential problems."

Companies also need to reach customers on a personal and emotional level, she added, but that requires them to build trust around a responsible use of customer data.

"Customers are willing to give up some of their personal information if they feel that they are getting something of value in exchange," Yohn said.

Customer loyalty and trust also comes when companies reach out to them "on their own terms," she added.

And while the customer should be at the heart of everything companies do today, they can't forget about the employee experience, Yohn argued.

"Employee experience is critical," she said. "But companies need to align the employee experience with the customer experience."

But even then, great customer experiences require "getting everyone on the same page" Yohn said.

This makes SAP Upscale Commerce, a direct-to-consumer engagement platform that SAP introduced during Sapphire Now, that much more important.

SAP Upscale Commerce includes built-in AI that helps retailers provide personalized offerings based on a 360-degree view of customers from social sentiment and purchase data. SAP Upscale Commerce is integrated with SAP S/4HANA to help ensure customer-facing experiences work with back-end finance, logistics, and fulfillment systems as well.

SAP Upscale Commerce delivers mobile-first, cross-channel, and in-store experience for shoppers. It also integrates into social media platforms, enabling organizations to connect their online stores to their social accounts and create social stores that drive new sales opportunities to consumers.

Because, in the end, "the customer has to be at the heart of the intelligent enterprise," Yohn said.

