Build Your Brand with a Cohesive Customer Experience | The Social Customer

Between developments in social commerce, mobile apps that facilitate shopping on the go, and increases in multi-channel purchasing, retailers are faced with a multitude of possibilities for engaging customers. They need to create a **cohesive brand experience across all touchpoints**.

A [Customer Experience Architecture](#) is a tool that retailers can use to **optimize**, **prioritize**, and **unify** all of their customer experiences. It's a framework for describing and delivering the optimal experiences to different customer segments in different channels.
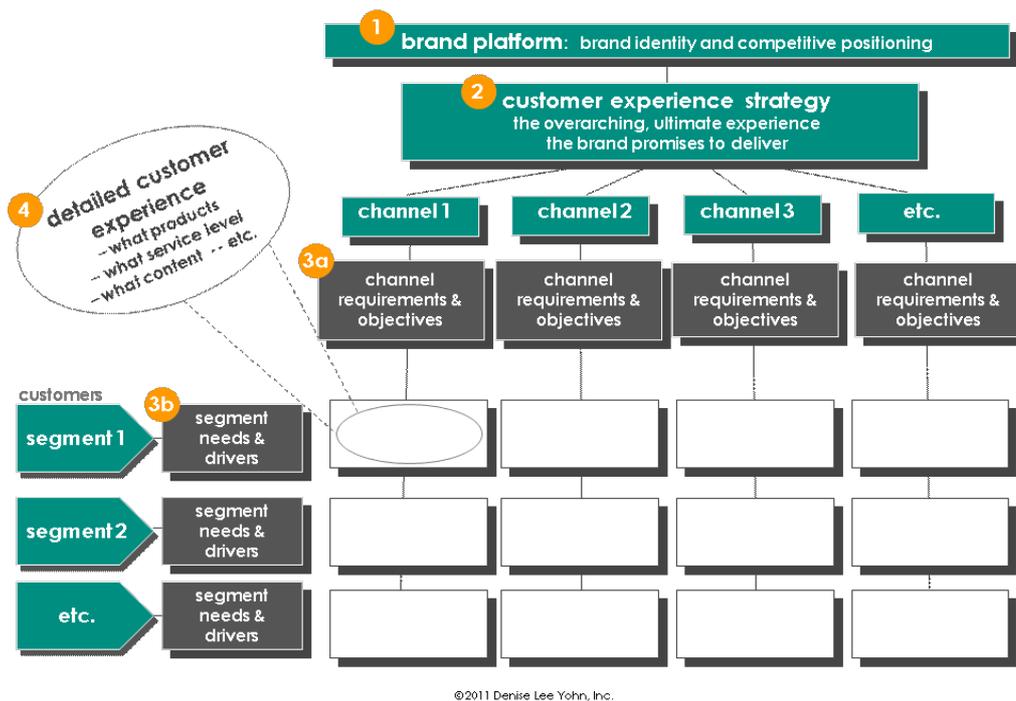
It's an "architecture" similar to other strategic architectures like a brand architecture or an information architecture that are used as planning tools. Plus, assembling a Customer Experience Architecture is like building a house.

A few years ago my husband and I got the crazy idea that we would build a house. That delusion didn't last long, but we learned a lot about the process of designing a house — and I learned a lot about the process of designing customer experiences. After all, a house is more than the materials to make it – we were really building our desired *home experience*.

So here are the steps for building a Customer Experience Architecture:

1. Brand platform — Our first step was to hire an architect and the first thing he worked with us on was our vision for the house – did we want a mission style? Modern? Spanish? etc. That vision is equivalent to your brand platform, the first step in developing a Customer Experience Architecture. You start by defining **what you want your brand to stand for**, the overarching idea that represents you.

2. Customer experience strategy — We then worked on translating that vision into the overall feeling of the house we desired – e.g., did we want a cocoon to rest in or a clubhouse for our family to gather in or an entertainment hub for our friends and neighbors? That's the second step – articulating your customer experience strategy, **the overall experience you want to deliver across all channels.** Perhaps you want to create a "place" to discover and try; or perhaps you want to deliver legendary service.

3a. Channel requirements and objectives — Next we broke our plan down into the specific

considerations and priorities for each room – e.g., a wide-open kitchen; a walk-in closet in the bedroom, etc. We had to factor in the limitations of the property we had purchased and the budget we wanted to stick to. In the same way, in a Customer Experience Architecture, you break down your plan by channel. Outline the **business requirements and objectives** of each and factor in your **operational capabilities and assets**.

Your website may use sophisticated filtering technology, for example, that makes it easy for the customer to find whatever they're looking for, so you may specify that channel for carrying a very broad assortment. Or, the location and layouts of your brick-and-mortar stores may be perfect for grab-and-go purchases, so that channel may be all about speed of service.

3b. Segment needs and drivers — At the same time in our home-building process, my husband and I defined our different needs so the architect could tailor his designs to address those differences – e.g., in the living area my husband "needed" a large area for watching TV on a big screen while I needed a sightline to the kitchen.

Similarly, your target segments have different needs in general and in different channels. Some may value convenience over price; others may be looking for an entertaining experience. Whatever they may be, outline those **different needs and drivers of their purchase decisions and brand perceptions**.

4. Customer experience — Then like our architect, outline the ways you are going to meet those segment-specific needs in each channel. Use **all the levers of customer experience** – product, service, content, community, value, facilities, etc. What product categories will you feature? Will you do sampling and demonstrations? What added value services will you offer? What information is provided and how?

5. Assessment and integration — Once your Customer Experience Architecture is assembled, **assess it as a whole "house"** – is the brand strategy delivered throughout? Do the discrete experiences ladder up to the overall customer experience strategy? Do the experiences complement and enhance each other, or do they conflict or detract from each other? You may need to go back to the drawing board a few times.

You also need to show how you will **integrate** the experiences. A map that shows how different experiences feed into and from each other will ensure customers get a seamless shopping experience.

6. Prioritization — The next step is to **value** the different segment/channel intersections and **prioritize** them. Use criteria like profit potential, fit with your long-term strategy, differentiation, and value to the customer to determine which experiences are the most important. You should also look for **synergies** between the intersections, meaning if you focus on one, you might also be improving another.

7. Description – Finally once you've set your priorities, use narratives, images, idea boards, videos, etc. to **convey your vision** for each priority experience and the **granular details** that comprise them.

Creating a Customer Experience Architecture isn't rocket science. And believe me, it's a lot less painful than trying to build a house. It simply requires discipline and a deliberate process. **Great customer experiences don't just happen.**

But the return on your investment is significant. One retailer used a Customer Experience Architecture to get all of its employees, executives, and vendors on the same page about how it would increase its competitive advantage. It showed how the company was going to get more business out of their existing channels and how to appeal to growing segments. The framework increased marketing efficiency by helping the company target the right people in the right way. And it improved customer satisfaction.

As the number of brand touchpoints grows in today's retail environment, retailers need to focus and unify their customer experiences. **A Customer Experience Architecture enables you to deliver a cohesive experience that builds your brand and your business.**

(To learn how to use a [Customer Experience Architecture](#) for your business, to request a custom proposal, or to book a workshop, contact me at mail *AT* deniseleeyohn *DOT* com.)