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Energize Your Customer Experience Strategy

by Lynn Hunsaker

For holistic customer experience management, the challenge is horizontal alignment to deliver intentional customer experiences. And to design intentional customer experiences, the company has to decide that experiences are a differentiating factor competitively. In my interview with Desirree Madison-Biggs, Director of Customer Insight and Measurement at Symantec, we discussed the keys to horizontal alignment, and what it takes to energize your customer experience strategy as a long-term journey enterprise-wide. She emphasized the importance of:

- Executive sponsorship from the CEO, defining customer experience management as a way of life rather than “the initiative du jour”.
- Championing listening to customers and driving action for customer experience improvement through engagement across all functions.
- Systematic prioritization for fixing broken pieces of the customer experience.
- Consistent data, with focus on a key metric, communicated throughout the organization.
- Change management, including recognition, rewards, and ties to compensation.
- Champions within each business group to drive communication and actions.
- Keeping it fun through novel communication methods.

Communicating is Central to Relationships

“Communication is at the heart of any relationship. What we are doing is building relationships with customers. And as a central organization, my team has to have a message and a means to reach every employee in the company. One of the things that we did initially was make sure that customer data was coming in in a consistent and reliable manner. What we realized was ‘holy cow, we have this pot of gold in terms of customer voice, and so much could be done with it — how do we do it?’ So I would counsel getting this setup first. We have lots of different levels of communications, and we have different strategies and tactics within those levels to reach the employees that need to have the information.”

Setting a Manageable Pace

“One of the things we’ve had to keep our arms around is: how many things you can do at one time. We have really ‘ridden the wind with this’ because customers had a lot to say. We’ve had to orchestrate our priorities in order to deliver what they needed. And there are always many things to fix. We look at the broken pieces of the experience, and how all the pieces fit together. The second thing we did after making sure we had really good data was to have a metric that we could rally around, and that’s the Net Promoter Score as a measure of brand and quality of relationship. It allows us to understand, relative to that metric, all the different experiences that we are delivering. That’s how we prioritize: driving customer loyalty.”

Closing the Loop Internally & Externally

“We send a customized survey to a broad cross-section of contacts within an enterprise account. That information is aggregated and delivered back to the appropriate sales person. During the three weeks of surveying, there are triggers that are sent to various places in the company to address specific concerns. For instance, if someone in that account says they have an outstanding issue that hasn’t been resolved in terms of their purchase experience or support, then the right organization gets that trigger for resolution, and the sales person has visibility to that. At the end of data collection, the sales person gets a report with all the comments and ratings from that report, and then they can go back into that specific account and talk about the specific action plans that are underway.”

“It’s important that customers know you’re taking their feedback seriously and doing something with it, and it’s also important for employee morale and engagement to ensure that internal folks know what is going on as well. So we have a two-pronged approach, for customer communication and internal communication. It started with education: why we’re doing what we’re doing. Each of our leaders talks about our Net Promoter Score and how it’s trending each quarter, in all-hands meetings and staff meetings — everybody knows that Net Promoter Score is one of the top four metrics in the company that our CEO gages our performance by.”



Empowering Regional Champions

“The business is always changing, and people move to different positions as well, so there’s a constant engagement cycle. I have a very small team, and we have about 18,000 employees, so to scale our efforts, we have volunteers regionally and functionally with responsibility for voice of the customer activities within their groups. Pretty much everyone in the company has someone that we interface with on a regular basis. We’re

constantly having dialogues about making sure our voice of the customer instruments are relevant to the business, and about advocacy to share what the customers need and drive action around that and then communicate back to us what they’re doing so we can communicate to the customers and employees. We’re working on a tiered structure for volunteers to make sure that this role becomes a career development opportunity and enhances their ability to be promoted.”

“Change management is also a very big part of this. There’s always fear, doubt and uncertainty. Executive sponsorship is key, and the persistence of showing up every quarter with ‘this is what the customers are saying’ leads to executives realizing that what the customers are saying makes sense, and confirms what they’re hearing from other listening posts, and they can see that they can drive the changes they’re most interested in, in a positive way with their employees.”

“We asked ourselves: How does the voice of the employee get inserted into all of this, to enable them to do what they want to do to help customers? About two years into our program we worked with HR to develop an employee Net Promoter Score program, and twice a year we get a full panel of employee input, and we’ve done some cool analytics around the employee experience and customer experience, and correlation for where we need to pull levers to make sure employees are engaged, to do the extra work and innovative thinking to help customers get what they need.”

Making Customer Experience Management Fun

“Sometimes things can get a little dry or repetitive when you’re doing this over the long haul, so we’re making it fun by creating a CNN-type newscast every quarter that features best practices around the company, executives, scores and what’s driving the scores. Transparency is very important. For all of our

activities, we have an internal “Customers First” portal with links to quarterly analysis, recognition winners, and sales-specific tools, and tricks of the trade for improving customer relationships.”

“What you measure is what gets focused on, and what you pay for gets more focus than anything else. We wanted to be very careful about how we went about doing this, and we do know that employees are key to all of it. To create positive buzz about what we’re doing we started out with a reward and recognition program to focus on certain types of behaviors, with specific criteria and a nomination process; there’s a lot of fanfare every quarter around who gets nominated.”

“We also wanted all our executives to know that customer feedback is very important to take action on, so one way to do that is to connect their compensation to survey results. We did it in a positive way, so that if we’ve made our end-of-year targets, there is a kicker goal, and that’s worked out really well. Because the work is very hard, we’re trying to create a positive sense of what it means to be customer-focused.”

Customer-centricity and customer experience management is a way of life. Use these tips to keep the energy flowing in your CEM strategy. *Access the entire interview at Energize Your Customer Experience Strategy (23:20). Also look for the related interviews with Coca Cola Enterprises: Employee Engagement & Customer Focus; and EMC: Customer Promise Keeper & Trusted Advisor Through Employee Engagement.*

Find out how to customize these tips to your situation; contact the author lynn.hunsaker@clearaction.biz.