

B2B customer experience design: Aligning the moments that matter to The Six Pillars

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There are many moments that have the power to make or break a B2B relationship. They are often emotionally-charged, and rely on a company's ability to fulfil the teachings of The Six Pillars. Over-promising and under-delivering, for example, can result in a business failing to meet the Expectations of its client. Similarly, a partnership that is governed by a disjointed collective – rather than a sole account manager – can lead to a lack of Personalisation. As such, The Six Pillars should never be neglected when B2B organisations are looking to rejuvenate their customer experience design.

The experiential life cycle

It is helpful for companies to discern the most important pillars by first identifying the moments that matter. Typically, these can be understood in the context of an experiential life cycle, with a customer moving through the phases of pre-purchase, purchase, immediate post-purchase, ongoing collaboration, and renewal (or dissolution). These are critical periods in a B2B partnership, and different pillars rise to prominence depending on where the companies are in this dynamic continuum.

- **Pre-purchase**

At the very beginning of the relationship, the pillar of Integrity is the most important. The client will often be questioning whether the company has a positive reputation, whether it seems competent, and whether it is proficient in keeping its promises. Undoubtedly, the brand's reputational coverage (and references from other companies) are key moments here, and it is therefore important for a business' customer experience design to be consistently deployed across all of its other relationships.

- **Purchase**

However, the purchase phase takes a slightly different shape. Brands that are hoping to excel in this moment should pay close attention to the pillar of Personalisation, listening to the strategic needs of the client and adapting the customer experience accordingly. The company should demonstrate some knowledge of the organisation that it's dealing with and show a vested interest in its long-term goals, avoiding the temptation to become pre-occupied with a 'fast sale'.

- **Immediate post-purchase**

In the immediate post-purchase phase, it becomes more important than ever for a business to make good on its promises. This is where the pillar of Expectations matters. Companies should set these expectations accurately and deliver them in a way that makes life easy and straightforward for the customer, reducing the amount of effort that is required on their part. An organisation risks harming the B2B relationship if it is unable to provide solutions to predictable problems, or if there is a demonstrable lack of an efficient management process.

- **Ongoing**

The pillar of Resolution is an important one in the ongoing phase of the relationship. Companies should adequately prepare for the

possibility of things going wrong in their customer experience design, anticipating issues before they occur. But crucially, they should also respond with diligence and urgency when bumps in the road are met, demonstrating their continual availability and, ideally, providing a single point of contact for clients to reach out to.

- **Renewal or dissolution**

The final phase in the experiential life cycle is the point at which the customer chooses to renew or end the B2B relationship. As important as first impressions can be, last impressions can also be one of the key moments that matter, as they have the ability to influence the brand's reputation amongst other potential clients. In this instance, the pillar of Personalisation comes to the fore, and companies should aim to capitalise on the closeness of the relationship they have forged and prove their strategic usefulness to the client moving forward. Moreover, if the customer chooses to renew the partnership, the process should be a slick and seamless one.

Organisations that prepare for the moments that matter, therefore, are the ones that are much more likely to achieve success. They need to be clear on their target experience at each stage in the experiential life cycle, and use The Six Pillars in effective CX design to pinpoint the measurement and monitoring programmes that can ensure consistency of delivery.

The benefits of such an approach are summed up by one UK B2B respondent – a banking customer – who states: “Many years ago, an adviser took the time to discuss our situation in a holistic way that focused on me, my company and my aims – not the bank's. I felt I had been put first and listened to, and that has always stayed with me as we've worked together, and has earned my loyalty and trust.”

[Download KPMG Nunwood's B2B customer experience report: Winning in the Moments that Matter.](#)