

Customer journey mapping: The Six Pillars in a digital world

The principles of The Six Pillars are essential for customer journey mapping. And this is just as true in the digital world as it is in a human one.



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Customers are emotionally intelligent, and they will respond to emotional hotspots whether prompted by a physical person, or by a piece of tech. Identifying these hotspots, and planning for them, means that brands are better equipped for delivering customer experience best practice.



Personalisation

In the first instance, brands need to be aware of the 'human' factor. Customers respond emotionally to machines that appear to act as if they were human, and yet when a machine merely attempts to look human, there is a higher likelihood of suspicion and distrust. However, even a simple occurrence of a smart phone app addressing the customer by name can make a significant difference. Moreover, the brand needs to demonstrate that its digital initiative is relevant and present in the person's life, without coming across as a 'hard sell.'

Time and Effort

In the pillar of Time and Effort, brands need to break free of the 9-5 mentality, which is no longer applicable to the customer of 2017. Social media touch points are significant in this respect, and the best companies have employees monitoring these channels 24 hours a day. In addition, there is a lot to be said for those organisations who can recognise where a digital service is actually better than a human one. For example, for the retailer Starbucks, the brand has handed the responsibility of managing consumers' loyalty points and pre-orders to its cell phone app, which now handles 7 million purchases. This also means that 16 per cent of all users can collect their orders without having to queue.^[1]

Expectations

Success in the pillar of Expectations relies upon a company's organisational agility. Departments shouldn't be siloed but should work together, all moving in the same direction towards a common goal. In customer journey mapping, the simplicity of the touch points is paramount; customers expect straightforward, intuitive interfaces that make life easier rather than more difficult. The consumer of 2017 often expects to be able to pick up a smart phone or tablet device to start their journey, be it through social media or through a bespoke app. In America, InterContinental Hotels and Resorts has led the way in this area, having become the first brand to provide an app where guests could book rooms, make changes to reservations, and indicate date preferences.

Integrity

Before a customer places their trust in a brand, they often refer to their social networks for insight and direction. This is a trend that is increasing and, according to Digital Intelligence Today, 90 percent of significant purchase decisions are now subject to social influence. Moreover, research shows that, on average, individuals consult 11 different information sources before making a decision. It is important, therefore, for brands to join their customers' circle of social trust if they are to remain relevant and connect with them emotionally. For example, with the US airline JetBlue, emotions play an important role in the customer journey. "Brands such as Disney create a true feeling for visitors," the company notes. "That's similar to what we're aiming to create at JetBlue. Through our promises, we're aiming to become world-class in hospitality by elevating everyday transactions to meaningful

interactions.”

Resolution

Resolution is a particularly important pillar in customer journey mapping. The best brands are able to identify the greatest emotional hotspots, especially the ones that may cause obstructions for certain individuals. In this respect, the art lies in being able to anticipate – and fix – these issues before they arise. This is increasingly relevant in 2017, when experiences are more socialised and negative reviews can trigger an ‘it could happen to me’ response amongst existing, and potential, customers. As such, the way in which problems are addressed is an important area for brands to concentrate on, as bad experiences can often be turned into excellent ones, depending on how well a situation is managed.

Empathy

Finally, brands need to understand that empathy is vital for psychological satisfaction amongst customers. In a social world, people’s attention tends to focus on those who demonstrate an understanding of their interests, challenges and options. For instance, the financial brand USAA, which tops the 2017 US CEE, has a customer base which is largely made up of people who serve in the US military. Because of this, it has focused its efforts on delivering digital services that cater to this group’s specific needs, one such service being a virtual assistant known as Eva. Eva enables customers to carry out over 200 transactions – including paying bills and transferring money – and this is something that they are able to do regardless of where they are in the world, and what time of day it is.

[1] Forbes. Starbucks’ Success with Mobile Order and Pay is Too Much of a Good Thing, 2017