

# 5 CX trends that will define 2022

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While the definition of a 'first-class CX' evolves constantly, and organisations need to similarly adapt, tweak and innovate their CX programme to match changing needs and preferences, customer experience (CX) remains a major point of differentiation.



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In fact one in three consumers (32%) say they will walk away from a brand they love after just one bad experience.\* With this in mind, here are some of the major trends that will define CX in 2022.

## 1. Privacy and trust-by-design

With governments around the globe introducing stringent privacy laws, all companies now have a baseline to work from. South Africa is no exception.

The Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA) came into effect in mid-2021 and organisations that fall foul of it can expect to start seeing fines. But simply meeting those basic requirements won't be enough for customers who are increasingly concerned about how their personal data is used and stored. Organisations shouldn't view customer privacy as just a legal imperative, but also as an ethical priority.

That means adopting a privacy-first approach for their business operations including product management, supply chain networks, software partner choices, CX programmes, and workplace culture. Customers will switch to brands that offer more privacy and take data security extra seriously - they will even pay a premium for offerings from such brands.

This is already starting to be true and will only get stronger as a trend. Additionally, customers will be increasingly drawn to brands that demonstrate trustworthiness through focus on inclusive and sustainable growth, responsible sourcing practices, thoughtful waste management, and fair wages, among other things.

## **2. Self-service increasingly critical**

Today's customer prefers to be in control of their interactions with companies. Whether it's billing, commerce, or account management, customers would rather handle it themselves than have to deal with a number of people within the organisation. Self-service has long been in play in the B2C space, it's now growing in importance in the B2B segments as well.

It's also important for organisations to think about how they deliver self-service functions. Zero UI, for instance, is gaining popularity. Organisations need to understand invisible user interfaces that are activated by voice, gestures, and movements. While these technologies may not be as prevalent in South Africa as they are in more developed markets, it's still important that organisations work on them now and not risk getting left behind.

## **3. Unified technology platforms to the fore**

Creating seamless customer experiences depends to a huge extent on how well your internal functions and teams can converge and collaborate during every customer touchpoint. That internal collaboration can be made a great deal smoother through the use of unified CX technology platforms that blend organisational functions and show the entirety of each customer's story.

Unified platforms help your organisation avoid wasting time trying to integrate disparate pieces of software and instead bring together data from across the organisation for various needs such as cross-referencing customer context, performing automation, and coaching employees.

## **4. Reliability matters**

With so many areas of everyday South African life plagued by unreliability, customers are desperate for reliable experiences. So much so, that consistently good experiences will probably win you more favour than the odd exceptional experience.

That's not to say organisations shouldn't try out fancy ideas and experiences from time to time. But they should only do so if they have the basics firmly in place. A birthday gift from a bank is meaningless if you can't move your money around when you direly need to.

## **5. Personalisation will pay off**

While there was a time when simply including a customer's name on a piece of communication counted as personalisation, that's no longer the case. Today, personalisation is about reaching customers with the right message on the right platform at the right time.

Achieving that level of personalisation requires data. That means organisations have to balance the usefulness of personalisation with the responsibility of upholding customer privacy. For brands with an international presence especially, this means having a firm grasp of the technological and regulatory environments they operate in.

As these trends may indicate, CX leaders and programme managers have a tricky year ahead, with both technology and customer expectations evolving alongside the pandemic itself. The best attitude is a mix of flexibility and pragmatism.

(\*PwC's 2018 consumer intelligence report)

## ABOUT PRASHANTH KRISHNASWAMI

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