

Is your customer journey a map to failure?

 By Carmen Murray

21 May 2019

I've done my fair share of keynote addresses and training on customer experiences and what it means to deliver exceptional brand experiences that lends itself to loyalty, customer obsession and to drive the behaviour to grow, retain and acquire new customers.



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The departure point I would like to take is this:

For many, the moment you join a company, you no longer represent the voice of your customer. Once you start drinking the 'cool aid', slowly but surely you become corrupted and influenced by corporate politics and being politically correct.

The corporate culture, your KPI's, ambition and paycheck dictate your actions. Sadly, the moment you lose your voice, you can no longer be the voice of your customer. Now, don't get me wrong, this is no fault of your own. This is the system, unfortunately.

In order for us to build exceptional customer journeys, our starting point should be unbiased without prejudice.

What is customer journey mapping exactly?

A customer journey map is a visual diagram that depicts the different stages of customers when interacting with the company across every touchpoint and the needs and frustrations of the customer.

This can be a very effective tool to create memorable experiences and improve the overall customer experience if it's done correctly. Sadly, we fall in love with beautiful diagrams and visuals but pay no attention to the devil in the detail.

Where the lines become blurred

Building customer personas and journey maps are buzzwords and terms used very loosely, but under the microscope, it has become an exercise in many organisations that become more theatrical, fluffy, full of “fairytales” and assumptions about customers.

The journeys do not truly reflect the state of how customers experience the interaction with the brand, its product and services. They call it assumptive journey mapping or as I would like to call it “faux journey mapping”. The assumptions lead to little action to ultimately address the customer experiences and get added to a stash of “to do” lists.

Ultimately, what you do today, will impact tomorrow. By not taking active measures to resolve the customer journeys will impact tomorrows profits.

In most of our interactions with our clients, when we start asking if they started mapping their customer experiences the answer is usually a wholehearted yes.

When we start to define the journeys, why every journey should be mapped and how they should be used to integrate the experience and to simplify, synergise and scale their business, we start seeing the patterns why customer experiences don't improve.

Here are 3 reasons why customer journey mapping fails

1. The customer is missing from the journey map?

The map is a reflection of how the company wants to sell and not how the customer wants to buy. Building exceptional customer experiences require businesses to experience the customer journey from the customers perspective and not from the stakeholders' perspectives.

It is essential to audit the customer journeys with an independent consultant that can point out the blind spots and be the voice of the customer to bring neutrality. When company stakeholders immerse themselves in their own customer journeys it can be counterproductive, especially when departments start the pointing of fingers, making excuses rather than finding innovative solutions to the barriers that impact the loyalty and profitability of the business due to broken experiences.

One of the biggest pitfalls for organisations is the fact that they don't co-create with their customers and allow them to validate the customer journey map and guide businesses on their personal experience and interactions with the brands.

2. Lack of empathy mapping

It is a very important tool for teams to gain a deeper understanding of what their customers are thinking, feeling, loving and hating during their interaction with the brand. This unveils all the moments of truth that exists for customers and why they decide to engage or abandon their journey with a particular product or service.

Everything a person hears, sees, say and do and the overall pain points and influencers that customers are faced, influences the decision. By not understanding all these influences and using superficial tactics in marketing initiatives can cause more harm than any good.

By only focusing on lifecycle and touchpoint mapping and not the story and thinking behind the customer journey, could lead to an unsuccessful attempt to customer journey mapping.

3. Not honouring the connection architecture

Customer experiences are based on linear customer journeys. Customer decision making is non-linear. As much as we would love for customers to neatly fall in line with our step-by-step approach how to engage with our brands, the reality is, that will never and can never happen, because we don't follow a sales funnel when we make decisions in our day to day life.

The reality is, customers view the brand experience across all touch points as one brand experience. If your call centre failed to meet the customer expectations, no matter how amazing the experience was in store, you have failed the overall brand experience.

Mapping customer experiences are no longer about a presence in every channel but a holistic, cohesive customer journey, no matter where the consumer decides to enter within the sales cycle. They should be receiving the exact same experience online as they would experience offline. The power is all in connected marketing, by merging the physical, digital, emotional and sensorial experiences as one united experience.

I would like to encourage you to take out your customer journey maps and look at ways how you can involve the customer to co-create and help you design better experiences and improve the overall customer journey.

Connect the overall brand experience through synergy and simplicity and look at how you can scale the customer journeys to lead to increased profits and brand loyalty. More importantly, go beyond touch point and lifecycle mapping and stay away from "faux" journey mapping and abandon all assumptions to avoid failures that do not serve the customer or the business.

“ What you think is right isn't the same as knowing what is right. -E.A. Bucchianeri ”

ABOUT CARMEN MURRAY

Carmen Murray is one of the most influential modern marketers in South Africa. Her strong background in content, digital, mobile, innovation, and data analytics allows her to identify emerging trends and conceptualise disruptive communication strategies deployed with precision. The customer and their needs are always at the heart of her approach.

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