Delivering the continuous, connected customer journey
Create customers for life with seamless and personalized experiences
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Why you should be delivering a continuous connected digital experience

Today, most customers engage with brands through a variety of digital means. The digital world is driving a disrupt-or-die transformation. Allied with these trends is an increasing shift for as many physical and virtual assets in the value chain to become digitized, intelligent, and incorporated into the end-to-end business process. One way to address this need to transform is to look across the organization for opportunities to infuse great digital experiences into mission-critical processes.
For the first time, digital business truly puts people at the center of the activity

Digital business permits users to get what they need when, where, and how they need it.

The traditional model of finding a new customer, selling to them, and then moving on to the next opportunity has changed. Research has consistently shown that it costs less to sell to an existing customer than to find a new one, and that customers who feel engaged with a brand or product will spend more on repeat business through the lifetime of ownership.

Today’s world is an increasingly digital one, and most customers are engaged with brands through a variety of digital means. Digital business is blurring the distinction between the digital and physical worlds and creating digital transformation that leverages the integration of process, people, and things. At the center of this transformation is the customer.

Customers are increasingly in control, with multiple channels with which to be heard, they are dictating how business should be communicating. As a result, customer experience is becoming the battlefield for digital business transformation. It is now an essential objective and a competitive differentiator.
What is the connected digital experience?

In today’s business world, digitally sophisticated customers and partners increasingly research products, make purchases, track orders, and manage their accounts or subscriptions online.

More and more, customers expect these transactions to seamlessly transition from one digital platform to another while retaining a consistent personalized experience, with data, information, and assets moving seamlessly from one environment to another. To stay competitive in today’s environment companies need to reinvent themselves as fundamentally digital organizations, treat the customer experience as a mission-critical deliverable, and create superior digital experiences to win, serve, and retain these increasingly powerful customers.

The continuous connected digital experience takes things to the next step by delivering a multi-stage, multi-iteration journey for the customer by bridging your systems of engagement with your existing systems of record.

It has become critical to incorporate secure, personalized, and fully integrated self-service capabilities into every digital interaction. Every department has the chance to participate.

In practice, this means to foster long-term engagement and loyalty you must bring the same quality a customer may experience from a public facing touch point, such as a marketing site, to a follow-up logged-in experience, such as a secure, self-service portal.

By investing in a continuous digital experience, customers and partners will get a personalized content-rich experience while working in a secure environment they trust. The benefits for revenue, retention, and lifetime loyalty will fund the initiative. But firms may also find unexpected benefits, such as better departmental coordination, cost savings, faster invoice payments, and fewer customer service calls.

Recent research¹ shows that for the majority of companies, the top five business objectives in investing in new customer focused technology solutions are:

- Improving the customer experience
- Increasing customer loyalty
- Gaining a better understanding of customer behavior
- Reducing customer churn
- Up-selling and reselling to existing customers

In short, customer engagement has overtaken cost and risk reduction as the primary business objective.

Customer engagement technology is now connecting organizations with the customer journey by providing relevant, personalized, and timely information in each point of interaction.

¹ Use Business Moments to Identify Hidden Value Opportunities for Your Enterprise – Gartner Inc – 2015
The customer journey

The customer is at the center of every business transaction and keeping the customer engaged has never been more vital than it is now in a digital world.

Traditionally, a new customer initiates a relationship at the recommend or awareness stage and cycles through defining a need, researching a product, evaluation, making a purchase, taking delivery, using and maintaining a product. More and more of this type of behavior and interaction is happening online with the customer only choosing to engage with a business late in the sales cycle, if at all. If the customer has had little or no follow-up from the company they purchased from, or have had a bad customer experience they will generally move on to a new supplier for any subsequent purchase and the opportunity for additional revenue has been lost.

**Customer Experience**

Is the perception customers have of all of their (previous) interactions with an organization.

**Customer Engagement**

Is how a business engages with its customers. By engaging, the business provides an experience and builds relationships.
Redefining the customer journey for a digital world

“Today’s customer is at the center of every business transaction and keeping the customer engaged has never been more vital than it is in our digital world. The customer journey is changing and to leverage that change, every company needs a better understanding of the journey; one that is an infinite engagement rather than a linear process.”

The quote above from leading business consultant Peter Drucker may seem to be an obvious statement, but many companies traditionally focus on the first half of that statement to the detriment of the latter. It could be argued that keeping a customer is more important than finding a new one. For a repeat customer is often an engaged customer.

As OpenText CEO Mark J. Barrenechea points out in his book, On Digital, The digital world “helps you (...) by giving you more ways to know your customer better. Know Your Customer isn’t just a regulatory obligation, it’s a key competitive differentiator. The best way to satisfy your customer is to truly understand them. You can do this by mapping your customer journeys.”

But customer journeys are changing. The traditional models of a singular pre-determined linear path or funnel from awareness to purchase no longer apply in a digital world where flowcharts have given way to multiple interactions at whatever point the customer wants it to be. The customer is not only driving the decision on when and how interactions are made, they are also demanding a more personalized experience. In a CMS Wire article, columnist John Zimmerman outlined a vision of a digital experience platform that delivers “individualized content presentation for each customer interaction.”

To achieve this vision, organizations need a better way of engaging with the customer. It requires an enhanced understanding of the customer’s journey, one that is an infinite engagement rather than a linear process.
Investment in a strong customer engagement strategy and technology will result in a customer becoming a brand and product advocate who will recommend the product or brand to others, as well as wishing to continue to build on the existing relationship through additional purchases and interactions. Instead of leaving the sales cycle, the engaged customer loops back into it. The traditional linear sales funnel model is replaced by a potential infinite loop of continuous engagement that drives increased interaction, brand loyalty, and revenue growth.

**The process can be viewed from two different perspectives:**

- **The customer's perspective** is one of a continuous experience where they buy, then own (or use) a product (or service) throughout its lifecycle before repurchasing.

- **The enterprise perspective** is one of a continuous process where they acquire and then serve a customer to lead to a level of engagement where they will acquire additional revenue from that same customer and/or more customers “through recommendation.”

Figure 1: A potential infinite loop of continuous engagement that drives increased interaction, brand loyalty, and revenue growth with existing customers.
The full engaged customer journey cannot be addressed by separate applications at different parts of the process. To be fully effective, provide an exceptional continuous experience that is a combination of different experiences, processes, and systems that have to interact. These different aspects of the journey can be grouped into five separate but interdependent, layers:

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The key to delivering a better way to engage with your customers is to realize that it is no longer a linear, single function process. Understanding the potential of an infinite loop type of customer journey and delivering an exceptional continuous customer experience is vital in a digital world.
The customer’s perspective of the redefined customer journey

The digital customer journey is being redefined – it has never been easier to buy stuff. All it takes is a few clicks of a button. But there are an almost infinite number of websites and online sources from which to make purchases. How do you choose? In today’s digital age, a customer is more likely to create ongoing relationships with the companies that meet their needs and provide a good experience rather than simply buy something.

We have already discussed how the customer journey is being redefined in the digital age from a linear process to an ongoing loop of buy then own, with the companies a customer chooses to deal with becoming more and more engaged in every part of the cycle.

But how does that ongoing loop look like from a customer perspective? Although the overall experience is continuous, it is made up of 10 distinct stages:

1. **Awareness**: Do you know what is available in the marketplace that relates to your activities, business, or lifestyle?

2. **Need**: Why do you buy something? It is generally to fill a business or personal need. Is it something to solve a problem, make life easier, or just to provide pleasure? Defining a need is an essential part of the purchasing process.

3. **Research**: Once you have identified a need and you have matched that need to an awareness of what is available, you will often start to ask questions. What has anyone else used or purchased to meet a similar need? In the digital world, research is playing a more and more important role, with the majority of purchasers doing their own research rather than engage with a salesperson to get answers to questions.

4. **Evaluate**: How do various products and solutions compare? What are other people’s experiences in using those products and solutions? The collective experience of peer groups is becoming a significant part of the evaluation process in an increasingly connected social world.
5. **Buy**: Once a decision has been made, the ideal purchase experience should be frictionless and consistent irrespective of which channel you use to make the purchase.

6. **Delivery**: This is the point where the experience moves from the BUY to OWN part of the process, and is often the point where many companies step away from the relationship with the customer. Delivery, be it digital or physical, should be well documented, well communicated, and as fast and efficient as possible.

7. **Use**: The everyday use of a product or solution is the longest part of the customer experience, and yet is often to most overlooked. How easy is it to actually use what you have purchased? Does it meet your needs and expectations? Does the company you purchased it from provide information on its continued use or ways to connect with other customers to compare experiences?

8. **Maintain**: What if something goes wrong? How easy is it to get help or receive product updates?

9. **Advocate**: Do you talk about products, services, and solutions that you enjoy? So will your customers. Customers who have a positive experience will become brand and product advocates.

10. **Recommend**: And good advocates will recommend to others or they will self-recommend and make repeat purchases based on having been engaged as part of a well-designed and delivered continuous journey.

The full engaged customer journey cannot be addressed by separate applications at different parts of the process. To be fully effective, it has to provide an exceptional continuous experience made up of a combination of the many different experiences and processes.
The questions you should be asking along the redefined customer journey

The second layer of the Continuous Customer Journey loop (above right) maps the customer’s activities to those of the organization as it attracts the customer, informs, teaches, and converts the customer so they will make a purchase that then needs to be followed up by logistical operations, onboarding, and ongoing support. Winning organizations also use engagement assets, such as loyalty programs, to up-sell and cross-sell to the existing customer, thereby generating revenue at a lower cost of sales.

Although the overall experience is continuous it is made up of 11 distinct stages:

1. **Attract**: Before any relationship with a customer can be built, it is essential to first make potential customers aware of the company and attract them to find out more. Do people in your potential market know you exist?

2. **Inform**: The company should then inform any potential clients about the products and/or services they offer. It is surprising how many companies miss this step, just relying on building brand awareness without actually telling you what they do. What is it that you do?

3. **Learn**: Another step often overlooked is learning about the potential customer. In today’s digital world, customers expect a more personalized experience and service that meets their particular needs and requirements. Do you know who your customers are, and why they need your products?

4. **Convert**: Perhaps the key moment of the customer journey is the transition from prospect to customer. Ensuring that the previous three steps outlined above have been well executed can ease the conversion process. Unfortunately, a lot of companies are focused on this stage of conversion and see it as the culmination of the process, when in fact it is the start of a potential ongoing relationship that can drive more revenue.

5. **Transact**: How easy is it to do business with your company? For example, if a company makes it difficult for you to give them your money, that company will probably lose the sale. The easier it is for the customer to complete a transaction, the more likely they are to want to repeat the process.

6. **Logistics**: Once your customer has paid for the product and/or service, how do you deliver their goods? Is it a quick frictionless process or is it a long drawn out experience?

7. **Onboard**: How do you make it easy for your customers to set up and start using your product? Do you welcome new customers to your company and community?

8. **Support**: Supporting your product is not just about helping to fix problems, although that is an
essential part of it. Do you make it easy for your customers to own and operate your product? Do you connect with them on a regular basis? In a digital world, do you use analytics and trends to be proactive with your customers? You should be supporting the customer, not just the product.

9. **Loyalty**: How do you make your good customers into great repeat customers? Loyalty programs can be an excellent way to do that, but they need to be proven to benefit your customers as well as the company.

10. **Up-sell**: Do you understand your customer’s needs well enough to be able to anticipate when they need to upgrade to the latest iterations of your services?

11. **Cross-sell**: Can you identify what other products from your portfolio will help your customers meet their business or personal needs? Do you know how to attract their attention and inform them about those other offerings? Have you built a solid ongoing relationship that means you can continue on the customer’s journey together?

I believe that this layer of the customer journey is best summarized in a recent tweet from Mark Hurst, Founder and CEO of Creative Good:

“Did you know that your company has a team responsible for managing the customer experience? That team’s name is ‘the entire company.’”
Customer journey redefined: The departmental view

As we dig deeper into the journey map, it is time to take a look at what parts of the organization are directly involved.

The third layer highlights the various departments involved in the continuous customer engagement model. It is no longer sufficient to leave customer relations to the sales or support groups. Customer experience is now a mission-critical, cross-functional activity. As Robert Rose of the Content Marketing Institute says, “It is the totality of all the individual experiences that make up a Customer’s experience.”

It can be argued that customer experience and responsibility for the customer journey is the remit of the company as a whole, and it’s a good axiom, but in actuality it tends to primarily fall within the following areas: Marketing, Sales, Finance, Distribution, Operations, Services, Support, and Customer Care.

Delivering and supporting a positive customer experience is all about removing the friction from the process. The smoother the transition from department to department, the easier something is to do, the better the experience. This means that each department should invest in the overall customer experience, not only in terms of systems, but in terms of training, education, and a commitment to customer advocacy.

Serving your customers across a continuous digital experience journey maximizes Customer Lifecycle Value and increases revenue potential. The more other departments invest and buy into the overall concept of a frictionless process, the greater the experience and the greater the customer’s investment.

The benefits from committing to a combined, systematic approach to growing Customer Lifecycle Value across the enterprise include:

- Increased customer retention rates
- Increased customer satisfaction scores
- Increased revenue

By taking this a step further, managing and delivering outstanding customer experiences, you will drive benefit for the customer, as well as sustainable growth across the enterprise.
The redefined customer journey: Remove system friction

As we continue to dig deeper into the journey map, the fourth layer (to the right) connects the departmental level activity to the typical enterprise systems that record, drive, and promote the various aspects of the customer’s journey. These processes and systems have to interact. Technology bridges need to be established to allow data to flow between them to ensure a consistent experience and to maintain a relevant, valued engagement. The platforms in use must promote a sufficient degree of interoperability that allows the multiple interactions to work together.

Unfortunately, the truth is that they rarely do. How many times have you transitioned from trying to do something on a website, called a help desk to complete your goal and they already know your account details and what you want to accomplish? Rarely, if ever. It should not be that way.

Ideally, silos between systems need to be broken down, but as a minimum they should be bridged by data sets that can be easily transferred. Such data sets should reflect the information to support the customer at any given point in their journey and grow incrementally in detail as the customer progresses through their series of interactions with the company. At no point should a customer have to provide information they have already supplied earlier in the process. It’s all about removing the friction from the process.

By making the data silo walls permeable, allowing the data to flow freely to and from the different repositories, a company can make the most out of its investment in the technology being used to garner that information, and keep the data owners happy at the same time. Data bridges allow the flow of information. Once enabled, the company can collect a piece of data once and share between systems in a way that respects system ownership and allows each repository to use the data in the best possible way to fulfill its own line of business needs and tasks.

The processes and systems you employ shouldn’t define the customer experience, they should support it.
Measuring the redefined customer journey

You can’t manage it if you don’t measure it,” has been a business cliché for decades. Not everyone agrees with this sentiment as not everything worthwhile can be measured; but measurements can provide useful insights to trends and behavior patterns. So how does measurement (or lack of it) relate to the redefined customer journey? So far, we’ve looked at four different aspects of the customer journey: the customer perspective, company activities, departments, and the systems involved.

The final level examines the means to measure and manage the return on the investment in a continuous customer engagement strategy by linking various key performance indicator (KPI) metrics to different stages of the engagement. Typical measurements used in the various stages of the customer journey include KPIs such as:

- **Net Promoter Score**: NPS is calculated based on responses to a single question: How likely is it that you would recommend our company/product/service to a friend or colleague? The scoring for this answer is most often based on a 0 to 10 scale
- **Revenue**: The income that a business has from its normal business activities, usually from the sale of goods and services to customers
- **Total Cost of Ownership**: TCO is usually a summation of the total cost of acquisition and operating costs plus any costs related to replacement or upgrades to a product at the end of its useful life
- **Return rate**: Usually expressed as a percentage of the number of products sold that are returned
- **Call resolution time**: Within a support group, this measures the elapsed time between a customer reporting a problem and the issue being reported as being resolved. Most support groups have target resolution times to meet, and the duration of those target may vary depending on the customer’s status
- **Churn**: Measures the proportion of contractual customers or subscribers who leave a supplier during a given time period. It is a possible indicator of customer dissatisfaction or issues with the overall customer experience
- **Likes/impressions**: Usually a collection of web and social media metrics such as page views, followers, and the number of posts that receive comments, likes, or are shared online. All of which contribute to an overall brand equity, or a measure of how the overall brand, its promise, products, and experience are perceived.
This is not an exhaustive list, you may be using other ways to measure and manage customer interactions. Yet, whatever measurements are used tend to be the indicator of success (or failure) for individual operational departments or groups, and rarely, if ever, looked at in a holistic way to provide an overall measurement of customer satisfaction. It is possible that you could be scoring highly in specific categories, yet still deliver a poor overall customer experience due to a disconnected journey.

Looking at customer-related metrics as part of an overall ecosystem, rather than separate KPIs, allows you to develop a clearer picture of a customer’s overall journey and their lifecycle value.
Delivering the continuous, connected customer journey

Customer Lifecycle Value (CLV)

The traditional model of finding a new customer, selling to them, and then moving on to the next opportunity has changed. Research has consistently shown that it costs less to sell to an existing customer than to find a new one, and that customers who feel engaged with a brand or product will spend more on repeat business through the lifetime of ownership. However, traditional measurements like Net Promoter Scores or customer satisfaction scores are reactive, descriptive, and sentiment-based, while what is needed is something that is predictive and performance based—a measurement of the Customer Lifecycle Value (CLV) to the business.
What is the Customer Lifecycle Value?

Customer Lifecycle Value is usually described as the amount of revenue or profit that a customer, or defined group of customers, generates over their projected lifetime of interaction with a company. It could be argued that this is a somewhat myopic viewpoint as it presupposes a traditional sales cycle and a finite, pre-defined timeline of customer engagement. However, in today’s digital world, by delivering a continuous connected customer experience, it is possible to grow a customer’s interest and investment in a redefined relationship that benefits both the customer and the enterprise, resulting in a CLV model that measures interaction and investment at different stages of interaction.

In today’s business world, digitally sophisticated customers and partners increasingly research products, make purchases, track orders, and manage their accounts or subscriptions online. Customers increasingly expect these transactions to seamlessly transition from one digital platform to another while retaining a consistent, personalized experience, with data, information, and assets moving seamlessly from one environment to another. To stay competitive, companies must reinvent themselves as fundamentally digital organizations, treat the customer experience as a mission-critical deliverable, and create superior digital experiences.

Serving your customers across a continuous digital experience journey maximizes Customer Lifecycle Value and increases revenue potential.

Recent research shows that for the majority of companies, the top five reasons to invest in new customer focused technology solutions are:

- Improving the customer experience
- Increasing customer loyalty
- Gaining a better understanding of customer behavior
- Reducing customer churn
- Up-selling and reselling to existing customers

In short, customer engagement has surpassed cost and risk reduction as the primary business objective.
Calculating Customer Lifecycle Value

If you invest in your customers, they will invest in you with their time, information, brand loyalty, recommendations, and ongoing sales. Investment in customer experience means delivering a continuous connected digital experience that will increase a customer’s lifecycle value to you as a business.

The CMO Council recently looked at how marketing executives quantify customer engagement. More than a third of respondents said that metrics, such as CLV, revenues per customer, and overall revenue increases were the primary metrics they used to measure consumer engagement. Traditional measurements like Net Promoter Scores or customer satisfaction scores are reactive, descriptive, and sentiment-based, while what is needed is something that is predictive and performance based—a measurement of the CLV to the business. CLV focuses on the future financial impact. Mathematical models have shown that changes as small as a five-percent increase in customer retention can bring increases as high as 80 percent or more in CLV.

In mathematical terms, maximizing the CLV in a continuous connected digital engagement model can be expressed as:

\[
CLV = \sum_{i=1}^{\text{Dept}} \frac{DX \text{ Investment}}{\text{Customers}} (Customer \ Interest \ Rate)
\]

A group of customers’ relative amount of interest in a particular process can have a direct incremental impact on that group of customers’ overall CLV score. For instance, if customers have a greater investment and feel more involved in the marketing process than they do the sales process, the following comparative results may be typical.

**Marketing CLV=100/5 (10%)=2 vs Sales CLV=100/5 (1%)=0.02**

As with customer investment, the impact of different levels of commitment to the customer across different departments in an organization can also have an influence on CLV calculations. The more that other departments buy in to the overall direction, the greater the experience, the greater the customer’s investment.

An example of an ideal situation would be a model similar to this:

**Overall CLV =**

- Marketing Investment (Interest in Brand) + #Customers
- Sales Investment (Interest in Product) + #Customers
- Customer Service Investment (Interest in Support) + #Customers
- Operations Investment (Interest in Automation & Visibility) + #Customers
- Communications Investment (Interest in Advocacy) + #Customers
Where the overall CLV is determined as a cumulative effort across the organization. The benefits from this sort of commitment to a combined, systematic approach to growing and measuring the CLV across the enterprise include:

- Increased customer retention rates
- Increased customer satisfaction scores
- Increased revenue

Increases in Customer Lifecycle Value can drive revenue. By taking that a step further and managing on CLV to deliver outstanding customer experiences, you can also drive sustainable growth across the enterprise.

How to orchestrate an exceptional digital experience

Positive customer experience is all about removing the friction from the process. The easier something is to do, the better the experience. As mentioned earlier, customers increasingly expect these transactions to seamlessly transition from one digital platform to another while retaining a consistent personalized experience, with data, information, and assets moving seamlessly from one environment to another.

It is tempting to try to address this by breaking down as many operational and siloed business and technology platforms as possible. This is often an impractical approach that leads to mismanaged expectations, delays, and higher than expected costs. It is better to bridge the silos in a way that allows data to flow between them and to build on a suite that can work with established Business Process Management (BPM) tools. Instead of trying to break down silos, bridge them into irrelevancy by delivering a Customer Experience Management solution that focuses on delivering high impact content (usually visual), strong transactional integration, interactive customer communications, and allows you to conduct meaningful analysis to continuously refine the experience.

With an exceptional digital experience in place, it is not only the customer, but also your supply chain, distributors, and even employees who can benefit.
The OpenText™ Experience Suite Platform

OpenText Experience Suite is a comprehensive, integrated Customer Experience Management solution helping to foster engagement and maximize Customer Lifecycle Value. Companies using Experience Suite have transformed how they reach their customers, how they work with their partner and supplier ecosystem, and how they empower their employees.

Experience Suite 16 is a modern platform to create, curate, and manage media, web, communications, and any other digital engagement with an audience. Solutions can be rapidly built on the Experience Suite platform to address the entire customer lifecycle from digital marketing, customer self-service, business communications and loyalty initiatives. The platform accelerates an organization’s ability to adapt information and orchestrate secure, consistent, and compelling interactions across multiple devices and channels.

Experience Suite is the only enterprise solution that can meet the broad set of content presentation and interaction needs, from managing libraries of media assets to formatting print communication or digital self-service portals. For IT, there is also a broad spectrum of development options for custom business apps that leverage the content management capabilities within the Experience Suite. OpenText is uniquely designed to facilitate the digital relationship between an organization and its users by intelligently activating the right channel for the user from a number of available systems, apps, or output channels.

Enterprises juggle many priorities, but top initiatives are about increasing revenue by fostering customer loyalty and lifetime value. It’s a pretty simple concept: create great experiences that inspire people to buy more, again and again.
Operational benefits of Experience Suite

Operational benefits come from focusing on systems of engagement that leverage your existing systems of record (ERP, CRM or SFA systems) and combining these with the customer profile needed to deliver a secure, contextual experience, with content and transactions drawn from existing systems. Integration with your core systems is the key to delivering a continuous connected digital experience. Have you considered all the systems of record that need to feed in to your customer’s digital experience?

Experience Suite enables better creation, management, and publication of secure, personalized, and authenticated digital experiences to ensure that each user gets the best possible experience at every point of interaction—whether physical or digital on any device – in every phase of the lifecycle. Experience Suite helps organizations maximize the customer lifecycle value and deliver a better way to work; addressing better engagement, better insight and better innovation across customers, partners, and employees while improving digital operations and control associated with managing information across the enterprise.

OpenText Experience Suite helps organizations maximize the Customer Lifecycle Value and deliver a better way to work

About OpenText

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