

HOW TO SELECT A CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE PLATFORM FOR MAXIMUM IMPACT



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An effective customer experience (CX) approach pays for itself by creating significant opportunities for profit and growth.

The Temkin Group determined that even a modest rise in customer satisfaction indicators can make an impact. Just a 10% increase in CX scores can lead to additional earnings of \$471 million to \$823 million over three years for a typical \$1 billion company¹. Results vary by sector, with hospitality, travel, fast food, and insurance enterprises reaping some of the most dramatic rewards, growing upwards of 20%.

But the key word here is “effective.” Poorly-executed efforts will fail. Only a rigorous approach will get results.

An Avaya survey of more than 1,000 companies found that 81% of CX initiatives didn't deliver appreciable benefits². Why? They stumbled when it came to turning information into action.

Too often, CX leaders fail to demonstrate the value of CX programs to the rest of the organization because they aren't using the technology that helps them collect and analyze data to also track results and promote accountability and long-term success.

This whitepaper will show you what it takes to be part of the 19% that succeed at CX initiatives and teach you:

- **What defines a strong CX platform**
- **The components of a successful CX program; and**
- **What software features to look for to get a dynamic, customizable platform that meets your company's unique needs.**

There is no shortage of platforms out there, but the right one has to provide critical support at every stage of a simple (but not simplistic!) process that will take your CX efforts to the next level. Once we define the requirements, it will be easy to understand how a strong CX platform can help your strategy transition from inception to analysis to action - maximizing the impact of every effort along the way.

1

WHAT DEFINES A
STRONG CX PLATFORM?



The right customer experience platform utilizes today's technology to bolster tomorrow's bottom line. Innovations in software as a service (SaaS) systems are what have brought us Office 365, Salesforce, and many other tools that have transformed businesses' day-to-day processes. We reap the benefits in our personal and professional lives every day, and it's time to incorporate them into our CX practice.

By partnering with a CX platform that is built on a modern, dynamic code base and can rapidly develop new features to continuously improve the platform for its customers - you'll have a solution that can scale with your company.

A strong CX platform does much more than handle your voice of the customer (VoC) data. It also offers predictive analytics and artificial intelligence; imports and synthesizes relevant data and metrics from throughout your organization; and provides real-time, actionable results that you can easily share with various teams. A CX platform that provides this actionable intelligence is critical; but, **a world-class platform also provides your organization with the ability to drive, track and measure the impact of action company-wide, in order to provide true value.**



2

PLAN YOUR
**CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE
APPROACH**



Before selecting a CX platform, your organization needs to have a defined approach to customer experience. If you've already [planned your CX approach](#), that's huge! You're off to a great start. Feel free to skip ahead to [page 11](#) to learn more about the key features that make up a strong CX platform.

There's no CX magic wand to wave that turns customer data into dollars, or prevents reports and action plans from gathering dust. It all comes down to defining a problem, figuring out how to solve it, then - most importantly - following through on a plan:

1 Listen

2 Learn

3 Act

This three-step model requires a business-focused approach toward your CX practice from the get-go.

“Too many cooks spoil the broth” might be the case in the kitchen, but **when it comes to CX, assembling a broad, cross-functional team that includes key stakeholders, and buy-in from business leadership, is essential.** But getting upper management on board is one of the biggest challenges CX professionals face - and without it, you can't get the ongoing support needed to maximize results.

So, how do you get everyone on the same page when they come from departments with different strategies, concerns, and priorities?

You need to make the *entire* company data-driven.

If you approach the VP of Marketing with a stack of survey data about customer satisfaction and ideas for improving CX scores, you're likely to be met with resistance. Why should they shift their existing strategy in order to boost “your” scores, when they're focused on generating the new leads and website hits that will improve “theirs”?

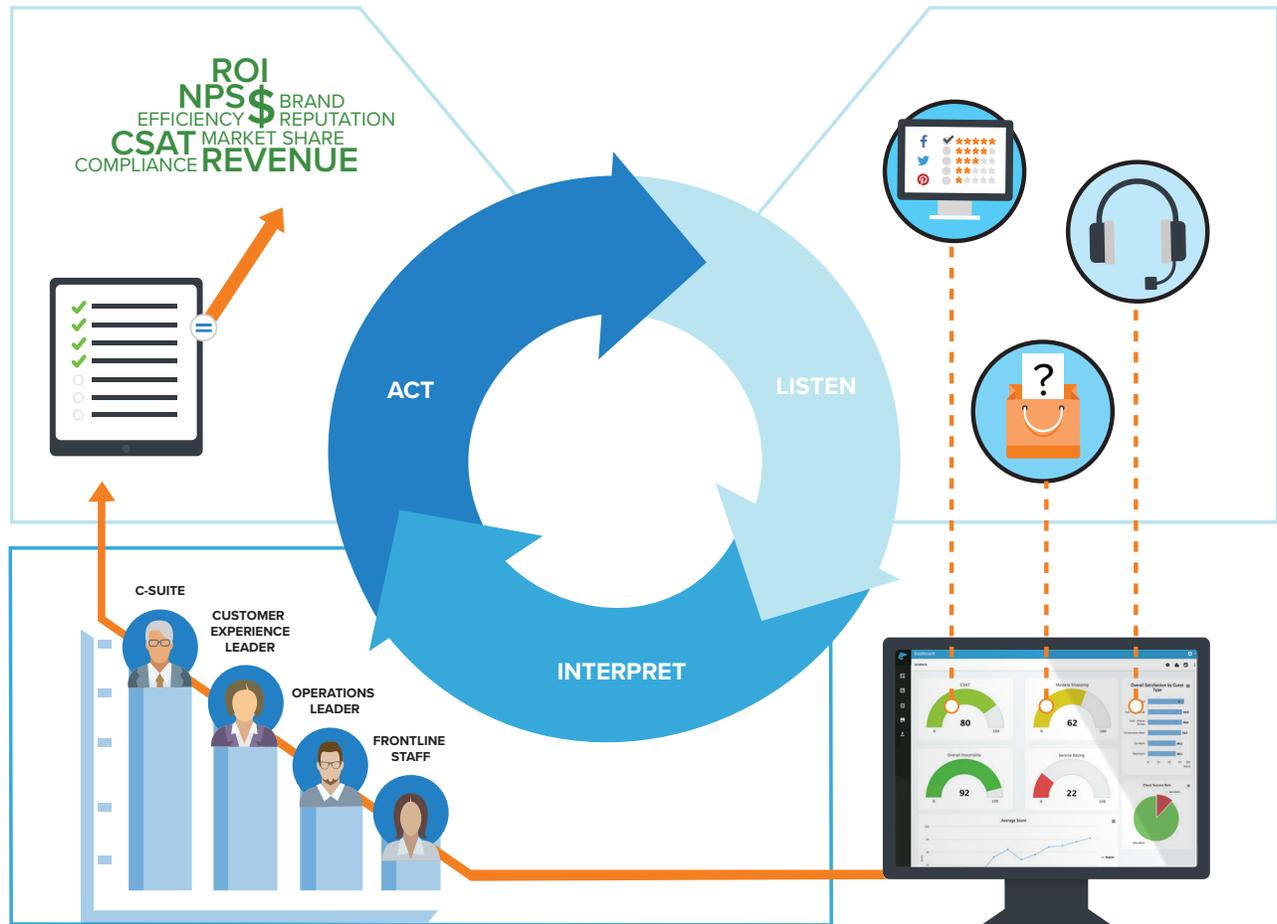
Presenting CX initiatives as real business needs helps stakeholders understand that you're all headed to the same destination, and meeting customers' needs is simply the best route to get there. There's no shortage of data about the power of CX. But to wield that power effectively, you have to get the attention of the people who sign off to take action and institute change.

Patrick Gibbons, Senior VP of Marketing at Walker argues, "Ultimately, I think it must make business sense (which leans toward the "logic" side). If upper management sees that a CX project led to cost savings or revenue gains, it will garner some attention. This is more persuasive than observing industry trends, monitoring Net Promoter Scores, or believing it is the 'right thing to do.'"³

By framing a CX issue in terms of business needs, it becomes clear that you all share the same objective - improving the bottom line. Your metrics drive their metrics. The right CX platform will help that VP of Marketing visualize the direct, positive impact an improved customer experience will have on the numbers that keep them up at night. Craft your presentations in the appropriate language, and know which business metrics to focus on, and you'll win over leadership.



The Three-Step Model



Listen

By now, most of us are pretty good at gathering information about our customers' experiences. We tap into a multitude of listening posts, from relationship and transactional surveys, to call center reporting, business analytics, sales reports, and journey maps.

Choose a CX platform that can help you collect and combine data from any important data source. Your platform should help you truly understand what your customers are saying and how they experience your brand. But don't stop here - listening alone doesn't help customers; we need to be better about learning and acting on what we hear.

Learn

When selecting a software, you need direction. Your CX platform needs to be able to analyze data from any source and make it easy to understand the key drivers of customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction.

Most CX professionals can rattle off boatloads of information about customer pain points and growth opportunities, so this isn't about you learning - you know your stuff. This step needs to address *organizational learning*, i.e. transforming the company culture that impedes progress and prevents meaningful change. This is where there's typically room for improvement.

Act

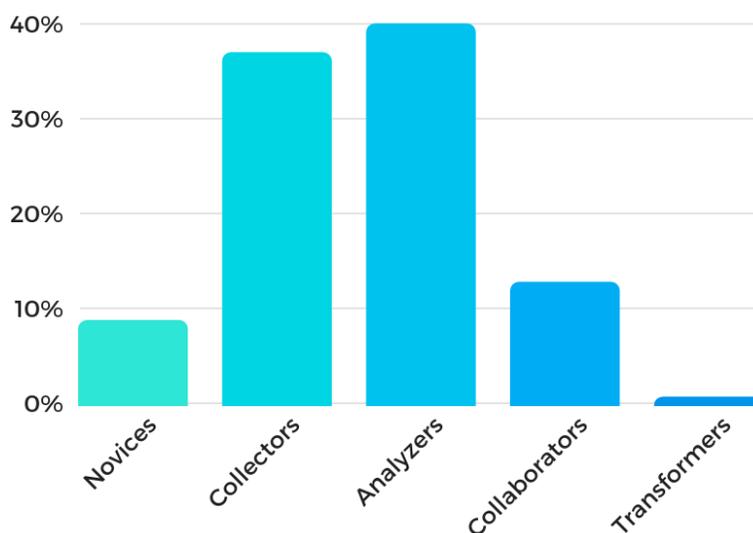
Data without action is worthless. You can't get here if you haven't listened and learned, but you can't succeed until you act on what you've discovered.

Action requires you to align teams and leadership. Selecting the right platform can help you improve your VoC maturity by involving the rest of the organization in action.

The Temkin Group defines five levels of VoC maturity⁴ and only one out of seven companies rank in the top two tiers, because of their inability to collaborate and drive change⁵.

Your work is only valuable if it leads to a substantive, productive response. That's why most CX planning stalls before making an impact.

Temkin Group
VoC Competency



3

KEY ADVANTAGES OF **A STRONG CX PLATFORM**



The ideal CX platform provides you with four key advantages that enable your company to avoid stumbling when making the leap from learning to acting. Your platform should allow you to tap into its features and tools to:

- 1 Smash data silos
- 2 Speak “business”
- 3 Show metrics visually
- 4 Drive action

Smash Data Silos

The biggest barrier preventing your company from absorbing and learning from customer experiences is data silos (which reinforce working silos). Avaya found that 43% of CX leaders think the top reason for CX failure is project misalignment with customer preferences, commonly called “inside-out thinking,” because it indicates communication barriers within organizations themselves.⁶

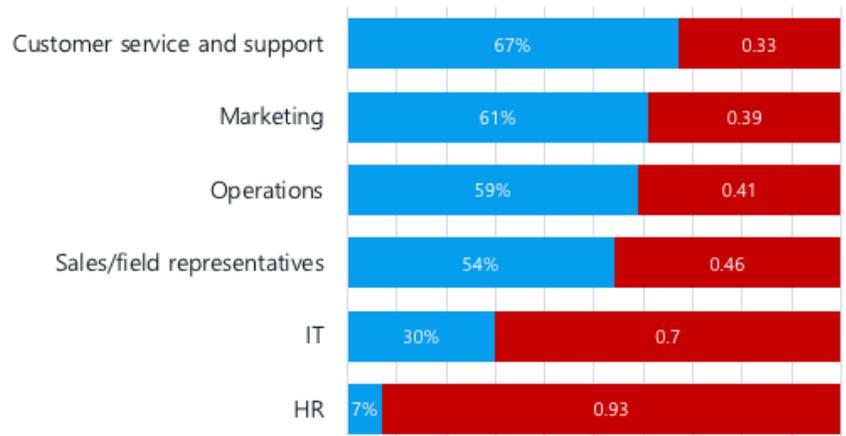
Let’s see if this sounds familiar... when data is strewn across an organization, interdepartmental collaboration is limited. Each team operates vertically, relying only on their own strategies and decision-making. But that data is dangerously incomplete.



They are looking at the “big picture” through a very small lens. Everyone is, ultimately, aiming to boost revenue, but they’re not working together to do it, so they’re limiting the effectiveness of their own efforts and wasting resources by unknowingly duplicating the efforts of other departments.

Successful CX professionals understand that achieving real results requires a top-to-bottom company-wide change in approach. Yet even seasoned pros often doom their efforts by failing to assemble a full team at the outset. For example, it’s rare to find a journey map for any large company that doesn’t in some way touch on or impact HR and IT departments. But in a survey conducted by Heart of the Customer, most CX professionals failed to include a broad range of groups in the mapping process. IT was left out 70% of the time, and HR was left out a staggering 93% of the time. That lack of coordination leads to inaction. It’s important in journey mapping – and even more critical here.

Which departments were represented in your journey mapping project?



It’s no wonder four out of five companies aren’t winning the CX game. It’s up to you to provide a path to collaboration for stakeholders.

Gathering all of your raw data within one unified system aligns front-line teams and leadership. But, you have to be careful; oftentimes, CX providers make sharing information amongst teams appear easy and affordable, but as you grow and get more buy-in from departments, all of a sudden it becomes much more expensive to add additional users and dashboards. **Your CX platform needs to adapt as your organization does and shouldn’t penalize you on cost when new departments see the light.**

The right CX platform has the power to synthesize data quickly and seamlessly, while also offering omni-channel listening feedback tools such as surveys, social media, mystery shopping and mobile forms. By combining your VoC research with critical data from other departments, your platform organically becomes the go-to source for reliable information across your organization. Putting all the pieces of the puzzle in one place leads to solutions, because it's easier to see how everything fits together. In this way, your platform becomes the source of truth: It doesn't just offer useful content, it provides valuable context.

Speak “Business”

Both you and your CX platform need to be able to link business Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) with CX metrics. This will make your platform more compelling to all stakeholders, because it provides the most accurate picture of the company's standing.

Each division within a company has different needs, so the incentives that drive behavior don't align across the board. Your efforts need to illustrate how each department's specific goals can be met by focusing on the customer experience. Select a CX platform with features that benefit all departments within your organization. This is the key to engaging the change-makers who are vital to the success of your CX efforts.



The right platform has the capability to calculate and incorporate a broad array of KPIs to turn analytics and surveys into a fuller measure of a company's financial health, drive action, and show whether objectives are actually being met. Link the scores you're familiar with - Customer Effort Score (CES), Net Promoter Score (NPS), Customer Satisfaction (CSAT) - with scores your business partners care about - Average Transaction Value (ATV), Customer Lifetime Value (CLV), Customer Acquisition Cost (CAC), Problem Resolution Time (PRT), and others⁷. These statistics quantify information about business value and ROI, which really mean something to CFOs, and the like.

This also prevents the costly missteps that can occur when you look at CX scores in isolation, because not every bump in scores denotes success, or translates into an increase in net revenue. Both you and your platform need to focus on the business KPIs as well as your own. Make your platform so compelling that all silos view it as the source of truth!

This can be easy to do when your CX platform has the ability to integrate with other common platforms, from your CRM to POS system. What matters to your departments? For HR, it might be an integration into Workday, but you need the ability to connect to the tools you're already using. If your CX platform does not allow for this, it will be next to impossible to get that inter-departmental buy-in. **Select software that integrates with any third party system - regardless of department or industry - connecting all of your customer data to get the full story.**

As argued in the *Harvard Business Review* article, "The Most Common Reasons Customer Experience Programs Fail,"

"Most CX programs use their own tracking measures as emblems of success or failure. If a score improves, that number is heralded and CX teams use it as evidence of innovation and improvement by the team. Often, these results are accepted at face value.

But the problem with this approach is you really can't control for all other things that could cause scores to rise, and you can't assume that a rise in scores is good for net revenue. When it comes time to set KPIs for the program, be sure to match them up against input from both your CMO and CFO.”⁸

For example, the CX team at a nationally-known chain of sports-themed restaurants was elated when customer satisfaction survey scores shot up after they implemented a series of changes. The initiative appeared to be a resounding success, and they claimed a win. However, company revenue continued to fall. It turns out those changes made hardcore fans happy, but drove away new and neutral customers, which actually accelerated, not halted, the decline in revenue. Linking NPS with other KPIs (such as new customers, traffic, and order size) would have set off an alarm.

Show Metrics Visually

Too many CX reports are glorified Excel spreadsheets. And the negative impact is multiplied when each department is generating their own disorganized and dull presentations. The fact is, if it's not visually stimulating, it's not going to get read. Reports need to be read to be acted on, and information needs to be presented concisely and clearly to be digested and understood.



As Dr. John Medina explains in his book *Brain Rules*, “The more visual the input becomes, the more likely it is to be recognized – and recalled. It’s called the pictorial superiority effect.”

The right platform transforms your data into attractive, educational visuals that draw readers in and give them quick insights or invite them to drill deeper. It allows each individual to customize how they want to chart and visualize data, and provides location or role-based dashboards that display only data that is relevant to that stakeholder. Additionally, a strong platform will map your data to the customer journey and display it on journey map dashboards so you are able to understand your customers’ path and see which areas need improvements.

Drive Action

According to Forrester, just 33% of CX professionals say that their voice of the customer program is effective at driving action to improve the customer experience⁹. If your CX platform doesn’t enable action, you’ll be hard pressed to prove the value of your CX initiatives or see a positive impact on business results.

No matter how mature your CX initiatives are, there’s a three tiered approach to action that every organization can follow based on their level of maturity:



A strong CX platform will provide you with the ability to take all three levels of action, whenever you are ready.

Sometimes all that’s required - or all that your organization is ready for - are triggers that send email notifications to teams when a score is low or a customer has complained.

When you want to automate customer workflows to be able to manage, resolve and track issues to ensure your teams are closing the loop with customers, you can use the case management tools available in your CX software.

While these approaches will help you rectify issues, eventually you will want to take proactive actions that will boost business success. This means putting together strategic “Action Campaigns” that are aimed at improving specific business metrics by defining a series of actions different levels of the organization must complete to fix the root cause of issues. A platform should allow you to verify whether tasks have been completed, and track the impact actions are having on business metrics in real-time.



CONCLUSION:

SELECT YOUR PLATFORM FOR SUCCESS

As long as you're in business, you're going to need a steady - or better yet, growing - stream of happy customers. The right CX platform provides the computing power, analytics, scalability, and flexibility to track and share real-time results, presenting a broad measure of the successes and trouble spots in your CX programming, and executive guidance for the direction of future efforts.

END NOTES

¹ <http://temkingroup.com/product/roi-of-customer-experience-2016>

² <https://www.avaya.com/en/about-avaya/newsroom/news-releases/2014/pr-140429>

³ <http://customerthink.com/3-strategies-to-sell-the-ceo-on-customer-experience-management-cxm/>

⁴ <https://temkingroup.com/product/state-cx-management-2018>

⁵ Temkin Group, State of Voice of the Customer Programs, 2017

⁶ <https://www.avaya.com/en/about-avaya/newsroom/news-releases/2014/pr-140429>

⁷ <https://www.intouchinsight.com/blog/the-roi-of-customer-experience-16-kpis-you-should-be-tracking>

⁸ <https://hbr.org/2016/12/the-most-common-reasons-customer-experience-programs-fail>

⁹ Forrester, How To Drive Action With Your Voice Of The Customer Program, 2018

ABOUT THE AUTHOR, JIM TINCHER

With a lifelong passion for customer experience, Jim founded Heart of the Customer to help companies of all sizes increase customer engagement. Before launching the company, Jim led customer engagement initiatives at Best Buy and UnitedHealth Group.



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Intouch Insight offers a complete portfolio of customer experience management (CEM) products and services that help global brands delight their customers, strengthen brand reputation and improve financial performance. Intouch helps clients collect and centralize data from multiple customer touch points, gives them actionable, real-time insights, and provides them with the tools to continuously improve customer experience. Founded in 1992, Intouch is trusted by over 300 of North America's most-loved brands for their customer experience management, customer survey, mystery shopping, mobile forms, operational and compliance audits, and event marketing automation solutions.

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