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ECOSYSTM PREDICTS

The Top 5 Trends for Customer Experience in 2022

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Introduction

Since early 2020 nearly all organisations have strengthened their online presence and commerce abilities – irrespective of their industry. They have come to terms with the fact that the ability to win and retain customers, is largely linked to the digital customer experience (CX) they are able to deliver.

They have invested heavily in their CX roadmaps and technologies; but will find themselves solving for the same challenges they have faced the last 2 years (Figure 1). 2022 will be the time to consolidate and build the capabilities required to analyse the immense amount of customer data that they have access to – to finally be able to offer personalised customer experience.

FIGURE 1: BIGGEST CUSTOMER CHALLENGES FOR ORGANISATIONS

- ✓ **Continued growth of digital experiences**
- ✓ **Gaining insights from customer data**
- ✓ **Customer churn**
- ✓ **Catering to customer channel preferences**

Ecosystm Rates the Customer Experience Predicts for 2021

Customer Experience Will Go Truly Digital

This one is a no brainer. If a brand didn't have a digital presence in 2021 then they didn't have a presence.

Digital Engagement Will Expand Beyond the Traditional Customer-focused Industries

This happened due to necessity as well as because of good planning! All brands expanded their digital presences to increase mindshare with customers and prospects.

Brands that Establish a Trusted Relationship Can Start Having Fun Again

We certainly saw more lighter hearted and less "earnest" marketing campaigns than the previous year. But as the pandemic continues, many brands stayed in the "trust zone".

Customer Data Platforms Will See Increased Adoption

Larger enterprises adopted customer data platforms in 2021 – but adoption rates in mid-sized business continue to lag. It will become increasingly important as more businesses offer personalised services.

Voice of the Customer Programs Will be Transformed

Organisations have started looking beyond surveys. There is a push to invest in technologies to understanding of customer sentiments for a holistic view.

#1 Businesses Will Redesign Their CX for the Great Bounce Forward

Since the beginning of 2020, brands have had to pivot their CX towards trust, digitise overnight, redesign processes for a contactless world, redefine processes for a digital world – and much more. We now move into the Great Bounce Forward – where businesses have to be ready and "fit for change". The hard questions businesses need to answer in 2022 is – what stays and what goes.

Should retailers continue to focus on curbside pickups and carpark deliveries? Should eateries reopen their table seating or utilise the real estate more profitably? Do retailers retain special return/refund provisions? Do events remain digital, go hybrid or return to in-person? How do B2B sellers find and sell to their prospects? How do businesses expand their customer base?

Businesses need to decide how they balance their CX – do they maintain existing capabilities on top of the pre-pandemic ones? This may add cost and complexity; and sometimes choice is the enemy of a great CX. Businesses have many hard decisions ahead of them in designing a modern CX.

> Customer journeys have changed significantly in the past few years as we adapted to a digital and contactless world. With economies opening up, businesses have to decide what the current and future state of the CX looks like – what stays, what goes, what changes.

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#2 Chief Experience Officers Will Become More Important

Globally CX is a key business priority, with impacts on multiple lines of business – Sales, Marketing, Digital, Contact Centre. Organisations will need to align the dots, especially when it comes to data being made available to all relevant stakeholders. The reality is that organisations have struggled and CX projects have failed to involve Digital or Contact Centre teams. But organisations are waking up to the fact that they cannot provide proactive CX when the information and insights reside in silos. Aligning these different teams is a role by itself.

A Chief Experience Officer becomes the "CEO" of CX for the entire organisation. The role involves revamping traditional ways of delivering customer outcomes; introducing KPIs in line with the organisation's CX priorities; ensuring that they are met; liaising with multiple lines of business to understand their pain points; monitoring the success of CX measures and; identifying the need to go back to the drawing board when projects fail or priorities change. The role will also require an understanding of the technologies available to deliver better and integrated CX.

> Without a role responsible for a holistic view of the CX an organisation provides, enterprises will be in danger of fixing CX related issues depending on individual department needs. 2022 will see organisations appoint these "CEOs" of CX.

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#3 Supply Chain Challenges Will Impact CX Professionals

Supply chain issues are hitting businesses hard across the world. These challenges are expected to extend into 2022 and it is not immediately known whether global shipping and movement costs will continue to rise or decrease over time. These issues will impact every business – whether they ship physical goods or virtual ones.

Customers are being impacted. Automobile manufacturers don't have the cars that people want to buy, computers are hard to find, stores have emptying shelves and international shipping times are not only slow but hard to predict. Customers are not happy, and CX professionals need to build experiences that continue to deliver on the brand promise, while not over-promising and under-delivering.

This is a tricky line to walk – and CX professionals need to create this line. One where customers are delighted with their experience – even if the product is delayed or hard to buy.

> During this supply chain crisis, we can learn a lot from the "hype brands" and how they manage CX. They live in a world where product supply is always restrained. Some have loyal followings, whereas others are despised as they don't manage their "aspiring customers" well.

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#4 Businesses Will Map Their CRM to Customer Journeys

During a recent analyst briefing, SugarCRM mentioned that their CRM is more and more being mapped to actual customer journeys. This mirrors other recent conversations with tech providers and customers regarding their CRMs. With all the work being done to improve the customer experience, CRMs are still just a place where there is a lot of information and data – often with little real insights – and are rarely mapped to the customer's specific journey.

CRM users are not prompted to the next step in the journey and have limited – or zero – visibility of where the customer is in their overall journey. Therefore, leading organisations are beginning to map their CRM to the customer journey. This makes the system easier and more valuable to use for customer care employees and salespeople. It also minimises the time that agents take to find the information customers ask for, as it has the ability to anticipate their needs based on their stage in the customer journey.

> CRM systems – even modern ones – suffer from lack of use by salespeople and customer service employees. They don't help them do their job, and don't help the customer navigate the journey with brands. It's time for businesses to make their CRM more reflective of their customers' journeys.

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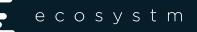# #5 The Battle for Leadership in CX Technology Will Heat Up

Tech vendors in the CX space currently address different aspects of CX that are almost equally critical. This includes CRM, marketing automation, contact centre solutions, CDP, analytics and more. All these different vendors are focused on empowering organisations to deliver better CX and measure the outcomes in a more efficient way. As they speak to organisations about how they can "solve" CX problems better than others, they are realising that there are gaps in their offerings simply because there are too many areas to be addressed in the CX value chain. We can expect greater acquisitions and partnerships across these domains in the next 12 months to fill this gap.

CX decision-makers and tech buyers will still need guidance from tech vendors on ways to deliver on a proactive customer engagement strategy; organisations remain confused about their vendor choices and the solutions that will provide the best outcomes. In the end they will look for tech partners that can help them map customer journeys better, measure the outcomes of their CX initiatives and give them a unified view of their customers.

> The CX tech market will consolidate over the next 2 years; the solutions that can help organisations to measure CX outcomes holistically and effectively help solve the "data synchronisation" challenge will emerge as leaders.
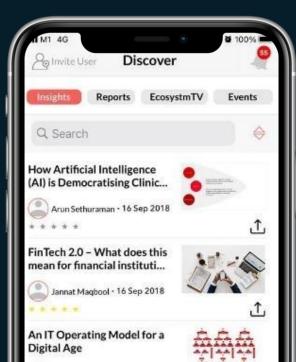
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