



A photograph of a hot air balloon being inflated at dawn. The balloon is partially inflated and has a bright orange and red color. A person is standing next to the balloon, and a large basket is visible. The background shows a desert landscape with jagged rock formations under a blue sky with scattered clouds. The overall scene is illuminated by the warm light of the rising sun.

# Ready, set, elevate!

The race to elevating  
the human experience

The recent, tough reality forced upon us by the COVID-19 pandemic has brought on unprecedented challenges shared by citizens, businesses, and governments alike. This new environment has had an immense impact on customer behavior, one that is quick and merciless in its quest to reshape the landscape of nearly all businesses and trades. Financial analysis and reports demonstrate a downward trend of combined global spending across practically all industries, plummeting sales, and a shift to alternative digital channels—all of which is driven by an all-time-high customer expectation for contactless experiences.

These unique customer behaviors are here to stay. Amid this new normal, regardless of field or craft, businesses should be prioritizing the four following contemporary objectives to elevate the customer experience to considerable competitive levels:

#### Acceleration of digital delivery

Consumer demand for digital solutions has never been greater or more warranted. Unfortunately, many organizations that opted for delaying their digital transformation efforts have been caught off-guard and found themselves powerless and unable to provide the now necessary digital experience for their customers. The good news is that the opportunity to build sophisticated digital platforms has never been greater, nor more justified.

To achieve digital delivery acceleration, businesses must, intelligently and carefully, merge their digital capabilities and their digital behaviors. They have to boost their internal digital awareness and enhance their digital efforts by

incorporating agile operations (Lean Thinking) methodologies and evolving new capabilities to drive and manage extensive and complex operational shifts on which the future of the business may very well depend on.

Adaptability, the ability to endure change, implies agility, which is essential to establishing a culture capable of making the best out of difficult circumstances, and finding success in the thick of hardship. This newfound adaptability will aid the business in making use of technology in creative ways to deliver on customer-led opportunities and rapid development, starting with blurring the traditional line between business functions and IT—in turn embedding technology as a core function to support the business needs instead of remaining an operational silo.

Businesses must, inevitably, evaluate their value chain in the context of the relevant ecosystems, and ensure their partners are assisting to shoulder the various roles necessary to maintain the integrity of the value chain. They should also acclimate to detecting appropriate

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external partners to generate a competitive advantage resulting in the potential birth of products and services with quicker delivery and time-to-market due to their newfound ability to leverage the advantages of the ecosystem impacting their business.

#### Construction of contactless customer journeys

Considering the present climate, and if businesses are expected to survive, pre-pandemic innovation initiatives should be halted. Only the initiatives likely to benefit the business in this harsh post-pandemic world should be allowed to persist, giving priority to any exhibiting contactless, touchless, or remote interactions compatibility.

As customer needs develop and evolve, the longer the pandemic lingers, the more popular digital touchpoints become. Allowing customers to fully carry out the buying or service journey from the comfort of their homes could eventually become a business' most attractive selling point, and a solid reason for many to switch brands. To achieve such a feat, end-to-end digital customer journeys should be understood and mapped accordingly before resuming any past projects or kickstarting new ones.

The new contactless digital age has boldly declared its arrival, and digital customer journeys should comply and ensure the path traversed by the customer is not restricted by location or time. Any action in the journey should virtually be performable from anywhere, and at any time. Realignments and alterations of each of the steps of the journey should be expected and given immediate attention and enough resources to address as soon as identified.

### Anticipation of customer needs

This modern digital age we live in today has come to benefit from active, meaningful interactions. Businesses are expected not only to meet the immediate needs of their customers, but to anticipate them in advance also, and provide a service or product that the customers themselves may not know they need, yet. Traditional marketing strategies alone are simply not sufficient anymore.

Data Analysis and Artificial Intelligence are two emerging movements currently leading the pack, and for all the right reasons. To not be left behind, businesses should begin utilizing their available data to initiate an internal analytics and AI advancement. The foretold benefits include, but are not limited to, accelerated identification of customer needs, and hyper-personalized experiences capable of quickly attracting new customers, and efficiently retaining current ones.

To stay ahead of the curve, the most promising technique is to look for the next big problem to solve. Problem-solving is one of the key pillars of any business, and customer data is the best possible ally for such an unpredictable journey. Making rational decisions based on solving problems results in a better, more satisfying overall experience for the customers.

### Consideration of customer emotions

A crucial, yet common mistake most businesses make is failing to empathize with their customers or engage them emotionally. They continuously neglect the emotional connections they could forge with them and make a meaningful difference in their lives beyond mere transactions.

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The science of emotional intelligence should not only be thought of in the context of daily human-to-human interactions. Some of the largest, most influential businesses devise and maintain deep emotional affiliations with their customers, attempting to monitor and understand what motivates them to take certain actions, and cleverly await the right opportunity to provide assurance and a helping hand.

This approach is not an easy one, and it primarily aims for long-term gains. Once a customer is successfully recruited into the "loyalists' club", it becomes easier to satisfy and retain them. That being said, these emotional bonds often remain fragile and could still be broken by an overconfident or arrogant business decision, hence they should never be overlooked or undervalued. If a business manages to successfully care for their customers, listen to their needs and concerns, and always meet them where they are, they are bound to thrive and prosper, provided they never ignore the human in Human Experience. ●

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