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Accelerating CX Excellence: Everywhere!

CX Excellence Needs to Shine Everywhere!

One of the lessons we have learnt about Customer Experience (CX) excellence is that sustainable commercial, political, or social benefits cannot be realised unless it is practised in all areas of the organisation. It's not sufficient to train and focus your customer experience initiatives on front-line staff only. CX excellence needs to be part of every employee's belief system, values, and actions on a daily basis. All staff in the organisation need to be singing from the same song sheet to ensure there is a **coordinated and harmonious rhythm in what they do, how they do it and when they do it for customers.** Back-office staff are as crucially important in their involvement of CX excellence as front-line staff.

Often the broken links in any transformation implementation are based on the **inability to scale up CX excellence across the organisation**. Pockets of excellence may exist but mediocrity and poor behaviour cloud the CX, preventing the organisation as a whole from enjoying the rich fruits of success normally available when excellence shines everywhere.

CX excellence is often not adopted across the entire organisation. This is because it's an extremely difficult accomplishment which requires multiple different strategies to change human behaviour across diverse departments. Very few leaders have an in-depth understanding of the complexities and challenges faced when embarking on a CX excellence initiative. Many leaders will start a CX project but very few are able to successfully achieve transformation. They miss out on the type of outcomes that lead to sustainable long-term benefits only available to the few who are able to claim the privileged top position of their industry or sector.

Prepare the Soil Before Planting your Crop

One of the key mistakes made in a CX excellence project is the eagerness of the leaders to realise the fruits of CX excellence before the organisation is ready. Scaling up CX excellence requires careful planning and a healthy dose of realism. It's important to have a good grasp of the challenges you are likely to face when attempting to spread CX excellence. **Incompetence of management, impatience of leaders, and ignorance of the basic fundamentals, are the primary forces preventing successful implementation of a CX excellence project.**

Tending to the soil first is critical before planting your crop. It's a dirty job with little visible benefits but a necessary step to achieve a healthy crop. In any organisation preparing the soil for planting is all about **getting the basic functions and processes working well first**. Delivering basic services according to your customers' expectations is the foundation for determining the quality of any customer experience.

There is no use preparing for a luscious fruit harvest when the soil is dry, lacking nutrients and poorly aerated. The fundamental and critical step to take is to focus on fixing the basics offered to customers. Firstly, examine your key customer touch points and the services offered, then identify **what's currently not working well and focus on fixing these before you attempt a CX excellence program.** It's a serious mistake to commence spreading CX excellence when your basic services to customers are not performing well.

Preparation also requires you to remove the obstacles most likely to prevent your crop from flourishing. These obstacles come in the form of any inequality or unfair practices currently existing and also any 'noxious weeds', such as incompetent or negative employees likely to strangle or kill your crop. These elements need to be addressed or removed prior to planting, to ensure the highest chance of success. Prepare the ground well before planting your seeds to avoid disappointment.

CX Excellence Needs to be Proven Before Spreading it Everywhere

There is no use embarking on a major exercise to spread CX excellence when you have no idea what CX excellence truly looks like for your organisation. CX excellence is not about replicating a text-book model used for another organisation. Excellence is ultimately defined by the customer and not the organisation. To have the proper definition of excellence requires a thorough understanding of your customers and what they most value. Once you have this knowledge you will be able to begin determining what values, beliefs and actions are required from your staff to deliver a consistently high level of customer experience.

It's best to first test your program with a small group of employees and then to compare the results against another group performing a different version of the CX program. This will enable you to arrive at a proven model that leads to the desired outcome before you scale it across the entire organisation. Knowing the expected outcomes from a smaller test case will give you the confidence to make the necessary investments required in scaling up CX excellence across the entire organisation. Ensure the results from the test are significant and not marginal, otherwise it will not warrant the investment in scaling it up.

Values and Beliefs are NOT Enough: It's about Action

CX excellence projects fail to transform an organisation because there is often a missing link between the values and beliefs associated with CX excellence and the type of action required from employees to deliver experiences that actually make a difference for the customer.

For customers the only thing that matters to them is the actions taken by the company which impact them. They really don't care about any poetry used internally to make employees focus on how to better serve the customer. **It is the effectiveness of each interaction with your company that makes all the difference and**

leads to CX excellence. Ultimately it is the customer that defines what is excellent and what is poor.

Organisations often fail to achieve excellence because they don't embark on the journey of changing how employees act to achieve customer experiences in line with their values and beliefs.

CX excellence is all about **having employees that know when to take action, what action to take, how to get action from the organisation, and why the action is necessary in the first place**. Each employee needs to know they play an equally important role in delivering an overall excellent experience to your customers and what is required from them to perform this role to your expectations.

Multiple Strategies Are Required to Spread CX Sunshine

As mentioned earlier, spreading CX excellence across an organisation is no easy task. It not only requires careful analysis, but multiple different strategies to ensure a transformational outcome, which will lead to sustainable points of difference compared to the competition. This section outlines a summary of some of the key strategies we have identified necessary to lead to widespread organisational change in the delivery of CX excellence:

1. **Find evangelists who can spread the sunshine**. Employees with a high energy level, the right attitudes, and competency levels, can coach others in the organisation on how to deliver CX excellence through their actions. A positive and infectious attitude will help transmit new forms of behaviour in others and help accelerate the process of transformation. These evangelists need to be from diversified departments in the organisation and need to represent the organisation as a whole and not just the marketing or the customer service areas.

2. **Make evangelists exchange learnings** by meeting and communicating on a regular

basis to share ideas, learnings and any obstacles they face. These regular meetings help maintain momentum and focus the team.

3. **Remove blockages preventing employees from achieving CX excellence.** Leaders of organisations need to recognise there are processes, behaviours and beliefs in their organisation currently preventing their staff from achieving CX excellence. It's imperative that leaders take the initiative to change these and remove the obstacles preventing excellence from scaling across the organisation. Simplifying processes, and uprooting obstructive behaviours and values is key towards making it easier for employees to deliver excellence.

4. **Empower and increase employee accountability.** Leaders of organisations can't hope for widespread organisational change without increasing both the level of empowerment and accountability of employees. Customers all over the world spread bad experiences to anyone who will listen far greater than any good experiences. To prevent the spread of bad experiences, organisations need to empower staff to fix customer problems as soon as they identified. A cumbersome process that is designed to escalate the problem internally will only lead to greater customer frustration.

   A key behavioural change required to achieve transformation is a high level of accountability. All staff in the organisation should have a high sense of accountability centred on the attainment of CX excellence. No staff member should ever say that it's not their job to help a customer. A high level of accountability is not only achieved through a change in mindset, but also through how employees are rewarded and recognised internally.

5. **Evolve your SOPs to SSPs**: most companies have Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) telling them how to follow a certain procedure and process according to the organisation's standards. **What is required to evolve these SOPs into Standard Smiling Procedures (SSPs).** Employees are taught how to follow procedures to achieve an operational outcome but few go to the next level and properly outline a procedure staff can follow to address a customer's unhappiness. The inability of staff to know how to act when a customer is unhappy is one of the fundamental obstacles preventing an organisation from achieving widespread CX excellence. It's not sufficient to simply provide soft skills training on how to deal with complaining customers. Problems escalate for customers when employees don't act to remedy the issue. Providing employees with a SSP gives them a structured procedure to follow when they encounter such an event. A structured process also helps make others in the process clearly accountable in making the customer happy. **It's often the lack of structure that prevents employees from knowing how to act when they encounter an unhappy customer.**

6. **Customer emotions rule, not productivity or administrative KPIs**. Scaling CX excellence cannot be effectively achieved without changing Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) so they are based around customer emotion levels and customer feedback. Often a major hindrance in spreading CX excellence is the use of conflicting KPIs making employees focus on productivity or administrative outcomes rather than customer satisfaction. Employees feel conflicted as they are measured on how efficient they can perform the task although the organisation is now telling them that customer happiness is the new mantra. Changing employee KPIs is as critical as coaching your staff on how to better serve your customers. Aligning KPIs

to customer emotions is an important component in ensuring a sustainable long-term transformation.

7. **Link "going the extra mile" with a higher purpose**. Employees will not go the extra mile simply because they get paid to do it. A motivator and driver towards achieving more is the sense that employees are doing it for a higher purpose other than for themselves. By linking their actions to a highly sought after emotive state, employees become driven to achieve excellence for a higher purpose. Often this high purpose is linked to the "greater good", a sense of achievement and being part of a winning team. The sense of being proud to work in an organisation that is "exceptional" is a powerful motivator for employees in any organisation. Employees want to be proud to be part of achieving something "extraordinary".

8. **Employees need to feel like they own the organisation**. Organisations need to make employees feel like they are part owners. This can be achieved in a number of ways. It can be accomplished by directly linking compensation with overall organisational performance, and also ensuring there is constant and clear communication to employees to help shape the mindset. The aim is to directly link the success or failure of the organisation with the actions taken by the employees, ensuring there is an obligation to the company to make it successful. This sense of ownership and obligation is reciprocated as employees know they will be rewarded for their efforts by the organisation.

Not All Crops Work in Some Conditions

An organisation may have the right customer philosophy and prepared the foundations for a transformational CX program, but after all efforts they are not able to achieve the desired outcomes. Why? The answer to this question lies in knowing the type of people you need to achieve your desired CX excellence outcomes. The profile of the right type of employee needs to be known, just as you would need to know the type

of crop to plant best suited for the weather conditions experienced.

A large part of making CX excellence a widespread organisational success is **to match the types of employees hired with the type of mindset and behaviours you desire**. It's significantly easier to scale CX excellence when you have employees that naturally believe what you believe.

Organisations such as the Taj Hotel in India have some of the most exceptional displays of CX excellence. A review of their practices highlights that a large part of their success comes from hiring staff who have a natural tendency to serve and look after others first. Their recruitment strategy plays a key role in their success and their recognition as a CX leader in the hospitality industry.

Knowing what motivates your employees and what they value the most is as important as knowing what your customers value in an experience. It's only once you have a good understanding of both that you will be on the path to widespread and sustainable CX excellence.

CX Excellence Comes in All Sizes, Colours & Shapes

As a final word, we would like to highlight that there is no single approach towards achieving CX excellence across an organisation. Although there are common themes and practices that have worked well for some organisations, there are no shortcuts for attempting to achieve transformational goals.

Each project should be customised to tightly fit the goals of the organisation, the competency levels of the staff, and the degree of remedy required to repair the basic levels of service expected by customers.

If you would like to know more about how we can help you improve your customer experiences, contact us at:

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