Customer Journey Design for Guiding Communications Service Providers

Abstract

In the past, communications service providers (CSPs) were focused on building and running a superior and efficient network with the next priority being telecom products that service providers sold. All this contributed to a more product- and network-centric organization.

Today, with a superior network and excellent products, a strong focus on customers is essential for success. Many organizations have embarked on a journey to transform from being product- or network-centric to customer-centric organizations. This paper offers a methodology for customer journey design, which can act as a toolkit for CSPs to enable their transformation.

The Busy Communications Highway

In the communications industry, interactions between customers and service providers take place far more frequently as compared to other sectors—each time a consumer uses a service, whether a call (voice, video, or data) is made or received over the service provider's network, or a TV channel is viewed. Moreover, customer expectations for seamless service delivery at affordable rates are always on the rise. Therefore, it is critical for the communications industry to enhance customer experience by designing the right customer journey during each interaction across the lifecycle.

Customer journey design will help CSPs address several challenges, including:

- Inconsistent experience across the company portfolio
- Non-integrated capabilities across multiple touch points
- Low customer awareness of service impacting events
- Ineffective mining of customer insights

Exploring New Pathways in the Customer Journey

The customer journey design should ensure that the customer is at the focal point, and articulate the desired customer behavior and expectations. This will provide critical inputs during the design of products, services, business processes, to ensure an enhanced and focused customer experience. The ideal approach to customer journey design needs to:

- **Define Customer Lifecycle Stages:** The customer lifecycle encompasses the entire journey applicable for all customers of a service provider. The typical lifecycle stages encountered are – Need, Find, Buy, Deliver, Start Using, Pay, Report Failure, and Modify or Terminate. By defining them, CSPs are able to demarcate interaction stages to a few major areas to target customer experience improvements.

- **Gain Insights on Customer Experience:** This step involves gaining an outside-in and inside-out perspective on customer experience across the defined lifecycle stages from customers, employees of the service provider organization, and through other sources. The outside-in perspective includes getting feedback directly from customers on various parameters. The inside-out perspective, on the other hand,

is about gaining insights from within the service provider organization. Generally, the outside-in and inside-out perspectives converge on certain areas for improvement, however there can be instances where they diverge. An analysis of convergence and divergence helps present a pragmatic view for deciding improvement areas.

- **Choreograph Customer Journeys:** The customer journey represents the path taken by the customer within a lifecycle stage or across lifecycle stages of procuring, using, and discontinuing the use of a product or service. The customer journey should capture the start and end points of the interaction, the medium of interaction (touch points) and the key stages of interaction. The choreography of the customer journey involves four key steps:

  1. Identify the customer group and customer interaction pattern, not just based on the revenue, but using micro-segmentation to better design the customer experience.

  2. Identify the touch points and managing each of them, the key to maintaining consistency of customer experience.

  3. Choreograph a generic journey for each touch point to understand existing journeys and define future journeys through that touch point.

  4. Choreograph the customer journey for different customer groups and business activities, taking care to represent happy path scenarios where processes are followed without any exceptions, and unhappy path scenarios involving processes with exceptions.

- **Define Target Experience:** All customer insights and each step within the customer journey are used to identify elements that improve the customer experience. Two important elements of this phase are:

  1. Identify and define the target customer experience of each journey, which can be converted into user stories (requirements) that can be addressed as part of the product, process, channel, and organization changes.

  2. Identify and define customer-related communication that needs to be sent to the customer as part of the customer journey, as communicating the right information at the right time goes a long way in improving customer experience.

- **Define Customer Experience KPIs:** The Net Promoter Score (NPS) provides a popular framework to measure customer experience. However, it provides overall measurement and not the split across lifecycle stages. Hence, it is important to define KPIs related to customer journeys covering multiple lifecycle stages. Key steps involved in identifying and defining key performance indicators include:

  - Define KPIs

  - Define measurement criteria

  - Define exclusion criteria

  - Identify baseline measurement

  - Identify target

  - Create business requirements

The customer experience KPIs then need to be linked to lifecycle stages, journeys, and touch points.

- **Establish Customer Experience Governance:** This step involves establishing customer experience governance teams with clear roles, responsibilities, and governance processes focused on managing customer experience on a continuous basis. Governance ensures the customer experience related KPIs are monitored, measured and corrective actions are taken if the targets are not met. This will also ensure that the customer journey designs are followed for any changes to customer engagement processes.

Conclusion

Communications providers are increasingly adopting customer journey design to improve customer experience and are becoming more customer-centric, driving customer-focused operations.

Customer journey design helps depict and capture important information that influences customer behavior and hence customer experience. It is an important input for designing everything that is related to customer engagement, which can either be the products and services that the CSP sells—how they sell, deliver, bill, and serve—or the underlying applications that support these processes.

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