

# Customers 2015: Will YOU Be Ready?

Evaluate how your brand touches, influences, and serves customers by identifying, measuring, and understanding the critical touchpoints that drive desired customer experiences and business results.

ARTICLE | TUE, 9/21/2010

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Organizations are losing control over their customer experiences, altering the landscape of customer experience forever—yet those that understand and embrace this today will be closer to their customers than any competitor will in the years to come.

Not that long ago, you advertised, and customers bought. Correspondence came by mail. Replies in a week were considered swift. But today, the rise of always-on Internet has changed the pace and velocity of interactions between companies and their customers forever.

From instant ordering and social media to your competitors, control of customer relationships has shifted into the hands of anyone with a connection. Negative word of mouth is only a mouse click away—and it can cost a business dearly.

Consider a recent Google search for a \$10 billion bank—which yielded only three mentions of the bank on the first page of search results, including a consumer Yelp! review denigrating the bank as “... Not even worthy of one star. [They] have obscene fees.” A competitor’s ad appeared above this bank’s lone search result (a regional competitor had purchased the bank’s brand name as a keyword), making these damaging online references available to anyone, including prospects, customers, investors, and the media.

Unfortunately, the bank is representative of many businesses today that have not yet recognized that no matter what product or service you provide, customers are more savvy and demanding than ever. Armed with an increasing ability to control what they see and hear, consumers are more informed and connected than ever.

Today, complexly interconnected touchpoints occur at every point of interaction between you and your customers, driving customer experience. Over the next five years, a lack of customer touchpoint awareness can leave the door wide open to brand erosion and smarter competition. And the velocity of this change is staggering.

The costs of ignoring customer experience are immense. In 2009, 86 percent of consumers said they’d stop doing business with an organization after a single bad customer experience, up 27 percent in just four years. Yet the cost of acquiring—and the danger of losing—customers is high. Acquiring a new customer can cost up to six to seven times more than retaining a current one. The price of poor experiences can be high enough to shutter your doors.

Fortunately, recognition of the critical nature of customer experience has been building. Recent research shows that 90 percent of executives in the U.S. feel customer experience is “very important” or “critical” to their firm’s strategy in the coming years. Those organizations that track customer experience enjoy 40 percent better marketing performance than those that don’t—and see 35 times *more* leads in their sales pipeline that result in closed business.

## Taking Charge of Customer Experience

What can companies do to deliver a differentiated customer experience in a world where customer expectations are changing as fast as touchpoints are multiplying? It starts by accepting that customer experience is no longer within your complete control, but now is defined by how your organization is perceived by your customers.

Most companies don't have a complete picture of their existing interactions or touchpoints—even the ones they control. Your organization must evaluate how your brand touches, influences, and serves customers by identifying, measuring, and understanding the critical touchpoints that drive desired customer experiences and business results.

Ask yourself this: “In 2015, will we be in closer touch with our customers than our competitors?” The best way to answer that question is by knowing the answer to this one: “What is our customer experience—and how can we improve it?” By moving to control the touchpoints you can—and influencing those you cannot control—you will build better experiences, stronger relationships, and drive customer loyalty over the next five years and beyond.

### So where do you start?

First, identify all your touchpoints—every interaction between you, your prospects, and your customers—to create a map of exactly where you are today. This will help you leverage new insights to chart a path to where you need to go tomorrow. This exercise is called Touchpoint Mapping. Among other key measures, your Touchpoint Map should highlight:

- The “moments of truth” where you interact with customers;
- All touchpoints at each interaction, including categorization by type (human, interactive, or static);
- How touchpoints work individually or in sequence (“touchpoint paths”) to move customers through the relationship lifecycle and closer to your company;
- The most important touchpoints with regards to:
  1. Acquisition and retention;
  2. Value to your business and value to customers;

3. Ability to generate revenue (or cost to create and maintain);
4. Efficacy at meeting both business and customer needs;
5. Gaps where touchpoints should exist but don't;
6. Redundancies where touchpoints exist but shouldn't.

With this data in hand, you'll have a road map for constructing a specific plan to move forward.

A plan that helps set priorities, maps out costs and benefits, and provides specific metrics for measuring results.

Perhaps most importantly, this map is an opportunity for organizations to measure and quantify the effectiveness of each touchpoint and its ability to positively (or negatively) influence customer experience.

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