What Departments Must Collaborate to Drive Customer Experience?

Executive leaders responsible for customer experience should view their role as a connector of functions, people, processes and technologies. In order to be effective and create differentiating customer experiences, you must foster purposeful collaboration with key roles across the customer journey.

What departments or functions should collaborate to drive effective customer experience outcomes and culture?

- Customer service, sales and IT ranked in the top three roles as the ideal collaborators for CX Initiatives in Gartner's 2021 Customer Experience Baseline Study. Prioritize these roles as your starting points for collaboration — the minimum viable partnerships to establish that will help your organization work toward CX success.

- Start by understanding the objectives, span of influence and ownership of various departments to determine which groups are best positioned to contribute and add value to customer experience initiatives.

- To identify CX collaborators, use the end-to-end customer journey as an internal legend to identify the roles and departments that play a role in delivering and supporting the customer experiences at key stages in the journey.
- Expand collaboration beyond customer-facing roles. Best-in-class CX organizations take a more distributed approach to collaboration across

multiple functions rather than focusing collaboration with a select few departments. Different teams can provide insight into the operations, feasibility, employee experience and value analysis of customer experience initiatives such as supply chain, finance, HR and marketing.

- Implement governance structures to manage effective collaboration and to ensure that the right skills, competencies and roles are supporting the CX initiative where they are best positioned and where time is well spent.

Customer service is often seen as the most obvious point of collaboration due to its association with mitigating customer issues and indirect feedback from customers. Customer service is a valuable partner not just because of their proximity to the customer and their pain points with products or services. They experience operational inefficiencies created by internal technologies, policies and procedures that affect customers and employees in serving customers. An overlooked opportunity is the growing presence of customers using channels such as social media and online communities for resolution. The intelligence collected from social media engagement and resolution can be shared across the organization for better communication and collaboration on strategies that drive value to customers, such as demonstrating how customers can use products or services in new or untapped ways.

Sales partners are uniquely positioned to learn about the broader challenges customers face in their business environment and between stakeholders in the customer's own business ecosystem. The handoff between sales and other services partners, such as customer onboarding, can often be a make-or-break moment of customer experiences. The consistent sharing of that knowledge and understanding of customer expectations for partnership and success at specific touchpoints is paramount for continuity of service.

IT plays an important role in the customer experience given their influence and ownership over technology selection, implementation and governance that impact both the customer experience and the employees serving them. IT can and should play a role in ensuring that

business capabilities, such as the technologies that drive and support experiences, are aligned with customer needs. IT can also provide visibility into important data sources and capabilities that exist in silos across the organization and should be leveraged to create a common view of key customers and provide empathy and insight into their experiences.

Collaboration is not an outcome, but a necessary input into a well-functioning CX program. Collaboration, done well, takes into account who, when and where collaboration is most advantageous. These factors are influenced by your customers' journey and your organization's culture. To start this process, and if you have them, leverage your organization's customer journey maps. Journey maps can be used as both a discovery tool to understand your customers and also as a diagnostic tool that gives you a view inside of the backstage inner workings of your company. In this case, think of journey maps like an internal legend of the critical players that support the experience behind the scenes — who is involved, who should be, and who is on the hook for delivering the experience. Doing this prevents organizations from overlooking critical internal processes, systems and individuals that could be affected by or have an effect on the customer experience and your ability to measure results (e.g., UX, supply chain, quality, PMO, marketing operations, legal, finance and HR).

Richard Branson said that "succeeding in business is all about making connections." In this case, succeeding for your customers and your company is about connecting the dots to the right resources and capabilities at the right times to drive value for all stakeholders.