IMI

Irish Management Institute

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CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE – THE *NEW* BATTLEGROUND FOR BUSINESS WITH HARRY LARGEY

In the latest instalment from the IMI CPD Workshop Series, IMI Associate Faculty, Harry Largey, delivered his own "positive" customer experience to IMI members and customers.

In a session titled, "**Customer Experience – The Battleground for Business",** Harry noted that customer experience (or engagement) has moved centre stage for many companies and is now recognised as vital for business longevity. These companies make a **conscious choice** to be customer focused, step into the eyes and shoes of the Customer, and **adopt of a proactive, outside-in orientation across the entire Customer journey.** In addition these companies see that Customer Experience matters because the cost of acquiring a Customer is significant and if they don't fulfil the need, someone else will! Also these companies understand that Customer Experience is about brand and reputation.

Ad hoc approach

However, many organisations still have an ad hoc approach to Customer Experience and Engagement. This is reflected in a lack of process, goals and measurements which leads to reactive and panic behaviours, and poorly executed actions. Money is left on the table, space is left open for competitors and interestingly, according to the Aberdeen Group, only 2% of companies have achieved full penetration in all of their accounts.

Structured approach

In organisations that focus on Customer Experience, effort is spent consciously setting a standard or goal, and how best to word this standard or goal. Consider for example the difference between '*We want our Customers to be delighted*' and '*We want our Customers to be happy*.'

Interestingly, remember that the Customer Experience doesn't have to be the same for each Customer segment. Make a decision on which Customers should get which level of Customer Experience.

Customer lifecycle

Customer Engagement can be shown as a cycle of Awareness-Consideration-Purchase-Support-Loyalty-Advocacy as on this diagram. Companies need to consider **how** they will engage with each Customer Segment **at each stage of the cycle,** how they can ensure **consistency across the cycle.** Harry also mentioned the low tolerance level of Customers and potential Customers when searching for information online; they read from top left to bottom right looking for image recognition; and display a tolerance time of approx. 1.9 seconds before moving on. Harry also indicated that companies need to carefully consider **what it is Customers want to see on your site**, and suggested that what they really want is for you to **tell them why you are the right partner for them.** Harry noted that many websites are built **"inside out"** and suggests that companies should instead focus on making it an "**outside in"** approach, and to do this they should use the language of the Customer. He also noted to be aware that **cart abandonment** is a big problem online at the purchase stage. For some sectors it can be as high as 30-50%.

Harry cited Amazon as one to watch in terms of Customer Experience. Jeff Bezos has been quoted as saying to not just listen to your Customers, but more importantly understand them. Amazon's powerful use of Customer analytics is key to developing this understanding.

Customer Experience Framework

Great Customer experience is characterised by **Attentiveness** (listening to what Customers are telling you – and remembering it); **Recognition** (greeting your Customer by name is a very

meaningful and treasured detail that adds greatly to the way they experience doing business with you); **Personalisation** (really knowing what your Customer wants); **Consideration** (helping Customers is part of your or your team's DNA); **Appreciation** (showing it and saying sorry when you mess up) and **Delight** (putting a smile on the Customer's face and in their heart).

The Customer Experience framework was illustrated by an example with the Customer at the centre, and showed key Customer touch points including Personal and Non-Personal interactions and Social Networking and Website/Search engine interactions.
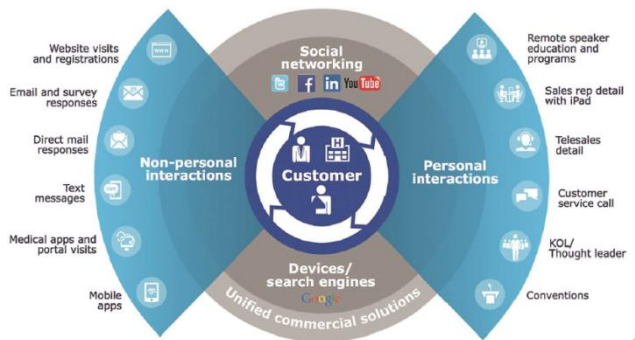
Customer Personas

The mapping of Customer Journey from Discover to Sales to Success was discussed. **Customer personas** can be used to build a picture of your Customers who are segmented based on factors that work best for the company –type of need, age, budget etc. The Customer Journey can be used as a context for positioning your people and exploring your capabilities (strengths and gaps). It is important that assumptions and ideas be tested, and personas and maps be revised as needed. Even if it isn't possible to do a full process mapping you could consider what small things you could change in your engagement with your Customers. Please find more details on Customer Journey Mapping see these links:

https://www.smashingmagazine.com/2015/01/all-about-Customer-journey-mapping/
http://bigdoor.com/blog/2013/11/01/a-quick-guide-to-Customer-journey-mapping/

The key ask from Harry was to open their eyes and ears, tune into their daily experiences as a Customer and see how much of what was explored at this session resonates with their experience.

So in summary, within today's complex world, your organisation must be armed with an exceptional customer experience in order to edge out the competition and drive growth. Traditional process and practices no longer effectively support the 21st century business so organisation's need to be "future fit" and embrace a customer centric view.