



# **WHY OUR CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE TEAMS NEED MORE HELP THAN EVER BEFORE**

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**iconda**

**BNB** markets



## FOCUS

The Customer Experience (CX) is the set of emotions and feelings that a customer traverses during the entire sales process. It's the complex result of the interactions they have with their supplier.

In the semiconductor industry, it's the sales, support and marketing groups that have the greatest influence on this experience, so we call them the Customer Experience teams.

Although sales personnel are the most visible, the people behind the scenes - support and marketing engineers - are heavily involved. Sales are complex and the number of players involved is often more than ten. According to Watermark, who have specialized in this area for more than a decade, a successful customer experience will be rewarded with significantly improved cross-sales, recurrent sales, and retention, while reducing expenses – see their latest published illustration, opposite.

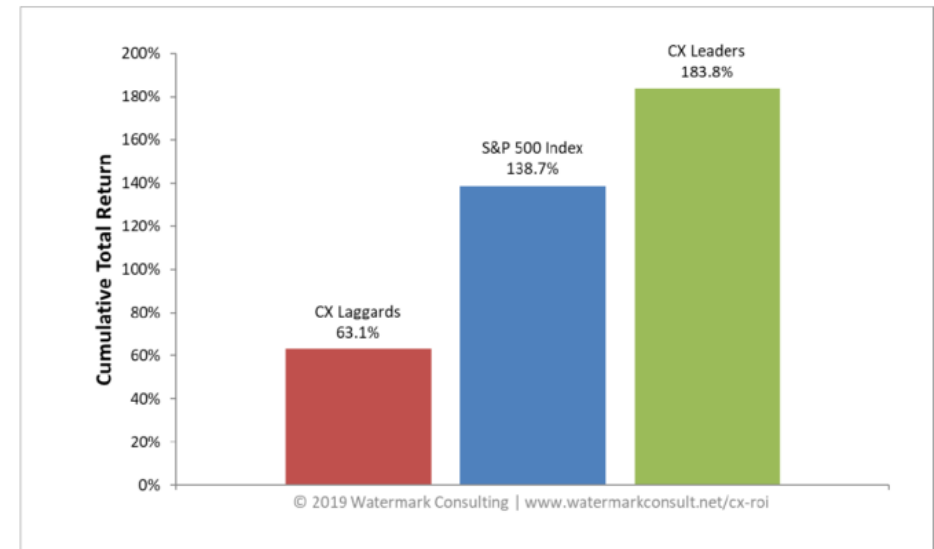
As the data shows, the overall performance of customer experience companies over a ten-year period outperforms the benchmark. By contrast, those whose approach is lagging behind, underperform by a truly staggering margin.

To see the benefits of an effective Customer Experience strategy, it's crucial to measure the time horizon in years, not quarters.

So, think long term ! ... which is something that marketing experts have been telling us for years ;-)

### Customer Experience Leaders Outperform The Market

11-Year Stock Performance of Customer Experience (CX) Leaders vs. Laggards (2007-2017)



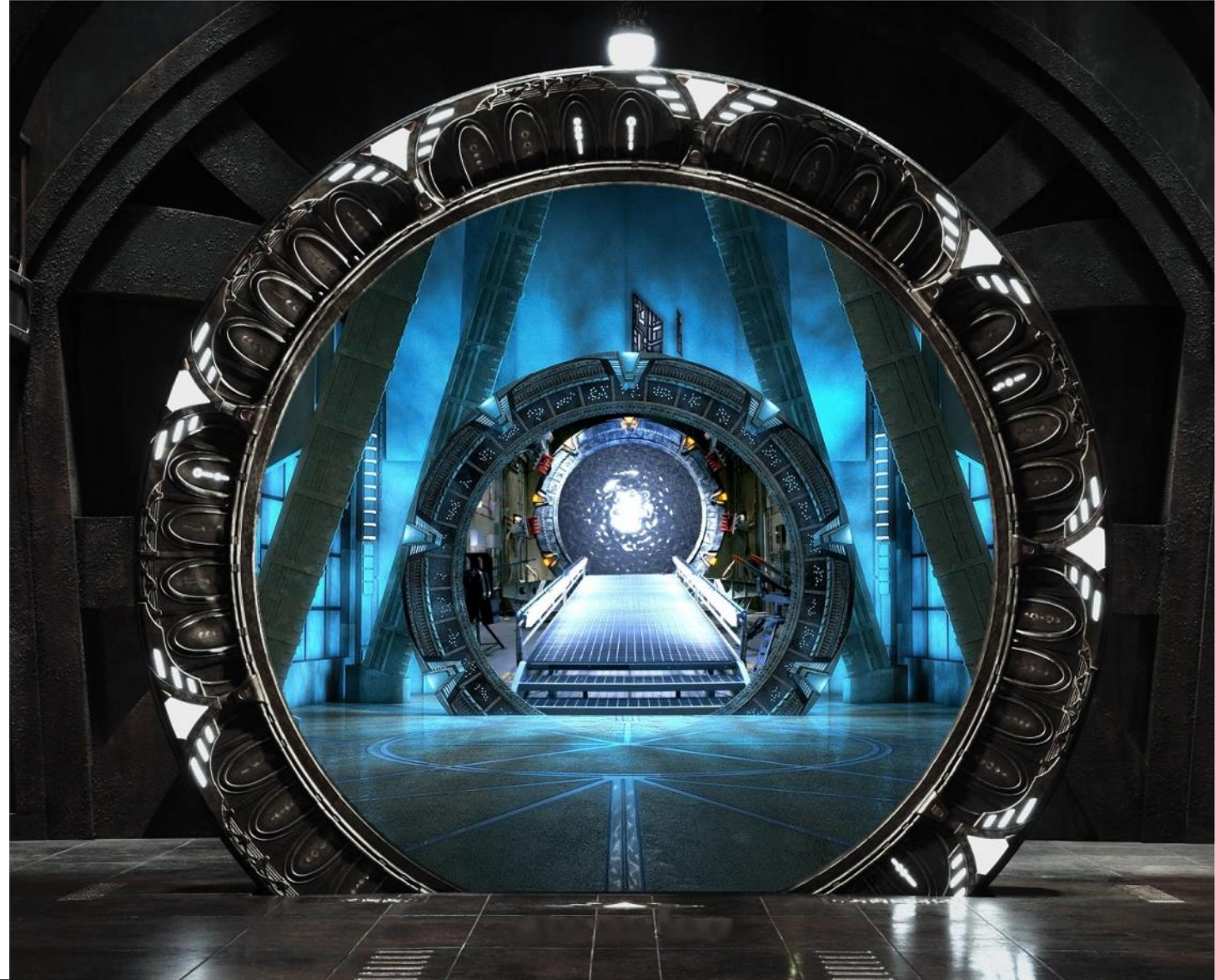
**Convinced that we must focus on the Customer Experience?**

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**Today's customer support technology opens the way to both increased sales and more harmonious, productive supplier-customer relationships ...**

**... provided companies can enable their Customer Experience teams to exploit its potential.**



## IN TECHNOLOGY-BASED COMPANIES TODAY...

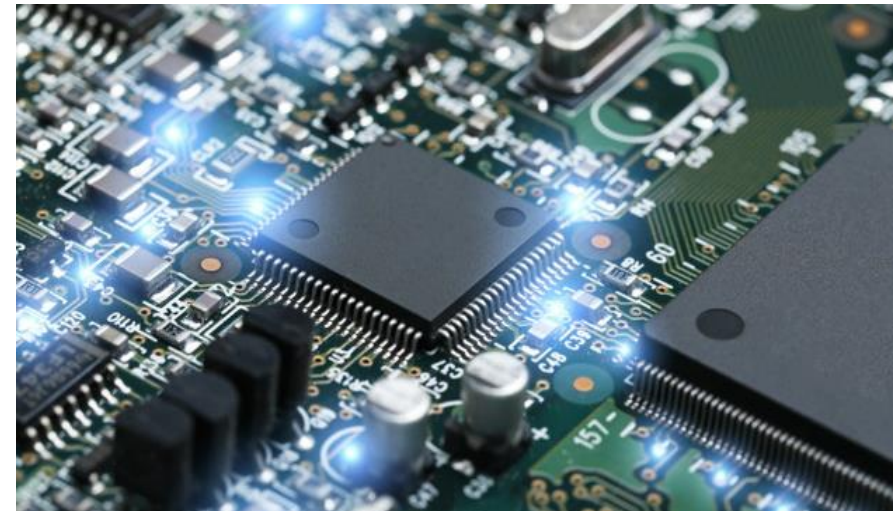
... the situation for Customer Experience teams is challenging, to say the least!

Greater economic stress, ever more complex work and customer expectations verging on the surreal. Where does this stress come from and how do these these complexities and expectations arise?

Let's start with the economic equation - the right product, the right price, the right service, the right support. The tensions between these equation components are directly related to, on the one hand, increased exposure of businesses to worldwide competition and, on the other, the fragility of our economies. It is widely acknowledged that these two factors are constantly increasing, leading mechanically to an increase in the overall economic stress.

Turning to the complexity issue, our products are increasingly layered, composed of standard upon standard to the point where the basics are lost sight of. Long gone are the days when a product was built from repairable and accessible components - diodes, transistors, switches, etc. – and when software programs had nicely delimited functions (these days, half the apps on a PC seem to be able to browse the internet, create a video and make a cup of tea!).

A more serious example: the Xilinx Zynq RFSoc, a phenomenal single chip system incorporating multiple ARM cores, huge amounts of reprogrammable logic as well as an RF Analog-to-Digital signal chain and multiple interfaces (Display Port, USB 3.0, SATA, PCIe, CAN, SPI, and others). This part is destined to become a subsystem in even more complex products, so just imagine the time and effort required to understand such systems and their associated tools!



Finally, a word about customer expectations...



## EXPECTATIONS AND CONTEXT

Rapidly understanding a customer's situation, problems and needs is essential if we are to have a chance of meeting their expectations before the competition. Every customer interaction must therefore be relevant.

The key to doing this is adapting our approach to each and every customer according to their context.

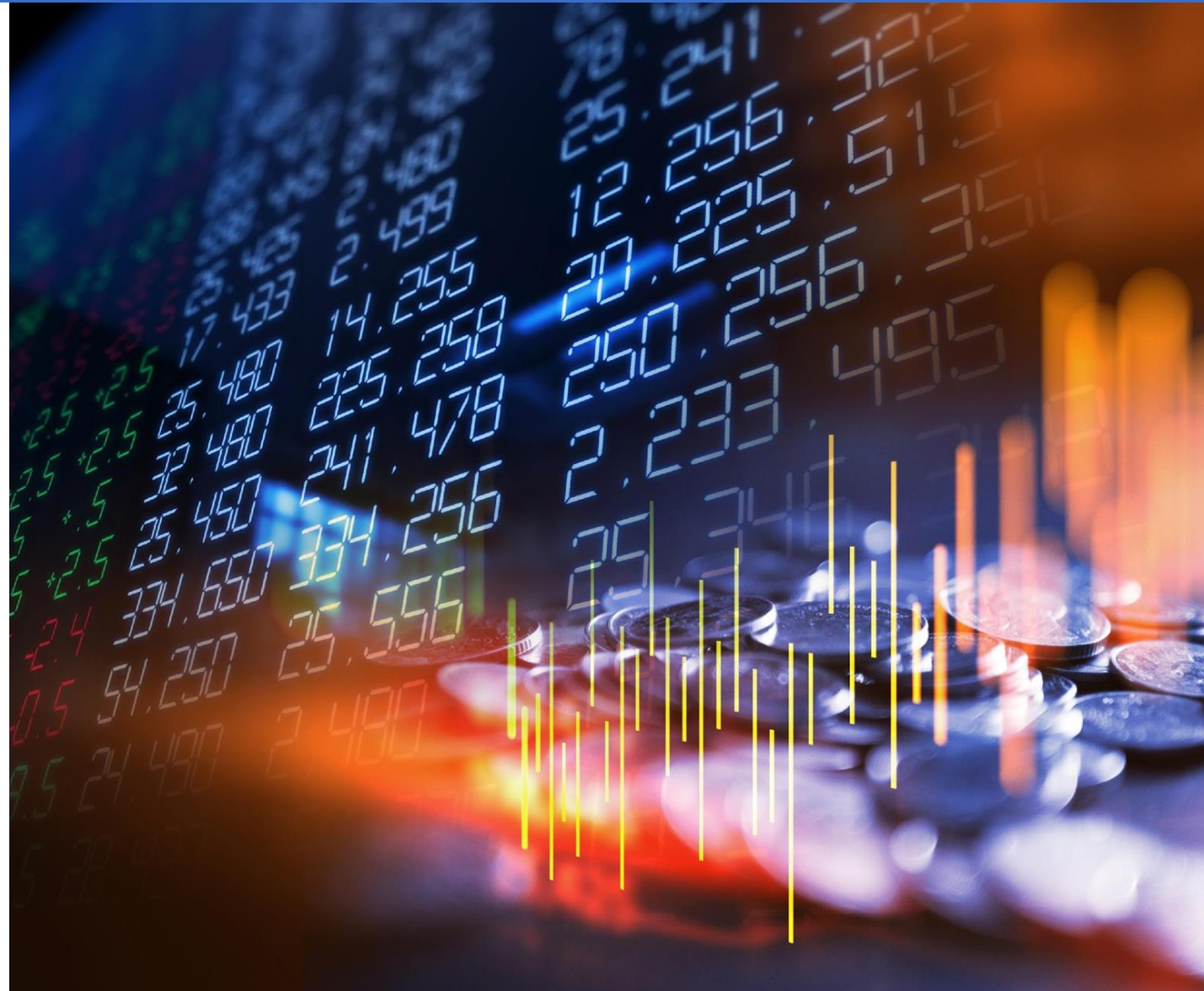
Cheetah Digital's figures presented during Signals 21 in March speak for themselves: with context-based personalization, we can expect an increase in sales of 10% to 30% and an increase in conversion rates of 10% to 20%.

### CONTEXT-BASED PERSONALIZATION

**+10-30% Sales**

**+10-20% Conversion rate**

Mastering the context allows us to better anticipate and understand customer behavior and to better respond to their expectations.



## FIVE TRENDS

In the semiconductor domain, in the current transition period, five trends seem particularly important.

# 2021 ➤ 2022

Looking more closely, we see that these trends are closely linked.

And, although they may seem daunting at first, there are good reasons to believe that they will lead to new opportunities and a bright future.



THE NEW NORMAL: REMOTE

PERSONAL EXPECTATIONS

INBOUND MARKETING GROWING UP

CLIENTS BECOMING CONSUMERS

FIVE TRENDS TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT

THE RELATIONSHIPS PARADOX



## #1 THE NEW NORMAL: REMOTE

Prospecting – building new relationships - is more difficult remotely. Maintaining relationships is also more complicated. There is less time for interaction and customers can limit their contact time with impunity, by clicking on a button.

We are not complaining about our customers – they have their own problems and legitimate needs. Like us, they are impacted by this disruptive period. And if our Customer Experience teams show skill and empathy, they will establish and consolidate relationships of trust and success. Our role is therefore to provide them with the tools and methods to do so, allowing them to be both more effective and more comfortable at the same time.

As business and relationship standards are constantly changing, teams that adapt the fastest will have a significant competitive advantage.

The tools and methods we are talking about must help our employees communicate. We never win alone, and it is therefore imperative today that Customer Experience teams can count - directly or indirectly - on all the players in the company. This collaboration will enable them to lead discussions with prospects and customers while sustaining the various stakeholder dialogues.

The requirement for greater and more effective collaboration between worldwide teams is hardly new. We believe, however, that the rate of change to this way of working is increasing fast and that it is particularly noticeable in the globally intertwined semiconductor industry.

Our existing Customer Experience should be able to cope with this sea-change to remote working, provided they are willing to adapt! But it is up to the leaders to start the process, and this requires a clear understanding of what is happening and what is at stake. With sufficient lucidity, the right strategic decisions can be made.



### CX IMPACT

**Customer Experience teams need to clearly redefine their communication channels based on this “new normal”.**

**It's no use hankering after the old ways of working and the associated travel budgets now!**

## #2 CLIENTS BECOMING CONSUMERS

Customer Experience teams are not only responsible for informing and influencing, they're also the primary discovery channel for the business. In addition to creating an audience they must identify growth drivers and capture expectations for the evolution of current products, for example. In the semiconductor market, 5G, IoT, cloud or AI are important drivers at the moment. We want phones that consume less energy and perform better, electric cars that don't need to be recharged, low-power objects, HD++ image sensors, intelligent energy-positive homes... the list is long.

So how can Customer Experience teams possibly do all this?

In order to inform and influence, they need the right information, of course. But the obvious solution of giving them as much information as possible, to ensure that they have everything they could possibly need, is terribly flawed. As Saint-Exupéry once pointed out:

**“Perfection is achieved not when there is nothing more to add but when there is nothing left to take away”.**

We have to give them just what they need, when they need it, and nothing more. This approach ensures that the most relevant information is noticed and used, thereby making the customer interaction more effective at the same time as increasing the ROI on the production of

the information itself. A further benefit can be that, by virtue of receiving relevant and timely help, Customer Experience people will feel understood and motivated.

In the other direction, we've got to make it easy, even pleasurable, for Customer Experience teams to pass discovery information upstream. Again, this can only be done with the right tools and methods – no amount of pleading with people to inform others of their discoveries is going to help!

The key to all this, as mentioned in the introduction, is for tools that understand the context of the work in hand. Only with knowledge of this context – of the type of customer interaction, of the profile of the customer, of the topics, projects and products in question – can automation be used to filter information coming downstream and label information upstream. By producing tools and methods that understand and exploit contextual knowledge in this way, we can contain the galloping trend towards consumerism.

**The general trend towards consumerism, frequently exemplified by a customer's desire for an "effortless experience", means that Sales and Support personnel are in trouble if they are not 100% relevant.**





## #3 PERSONAL EXPECTATIONS

In these challenging times, brands need more than ever to build strong relationships with their customers *on a personal level* in order to engage and retain them over the long term. This is what we mean when we say 'personalization'.

It goes beyond the "customization" of products, which has been done for a long time and which concerns the company-company relationship more than the company-person one.

Historically, customer loyalty was mainly ensured by sales and support staff in an ad-hoc manner, a system that worked very well until the number exceeded a certain threshold. With CRM tools allowing Customer Experience teams to manage more and more accounts, this threshold is now a distant memory.

Ironically, these teams need help to *protect* the customer relationship that was sought after by CRM systems, but which has fallen victim to them! For the type of personalization that we have in mind, CRM systems are of little help.

In fact, most 'automatic personalization' devices are self-defeating. Chatbots, for example, try to tailor their responses to the user, but the overall effect is that the user feels like they are being treated by a machine.

To find inspiration, we can look at the B2C world, where both personalization and loyalty tools - the Miles & More programs of German airlines, for example - are common. It will be a long time before we see loyalty cards used in semiconductor B2B, so let's focus on personalization for now. Used correctly, it will bring you loyalty without spending a euro specifically for this.

**AS MENTIONED BY SALESFORCE IN THEIR TRENDS SHAPING 2021 ANALYSIS, 82% OF MARKETING LEADERS SAY CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE IS THE KEY COMPETITIVE DIFFERENTIATOR**

What does a more personalized experience mean to a customer?

Customers want smooth interactions. They don't want to have to repeat themselves, they don't want to have to re-explain their story/needs and they want to receive something tangible and effective as quickly as possible.

We need to support these needs through the tools and methods provided to our Customer Experience teams. B2B has become more demanding, and more like its cousin B2C.

## ■ #4 INBOUND MARKETING GROWING UP

Driven by customers' expectations for a personalized, effortless experience, inbound marketing is bound to evolve in the semiconductor industry. At the moment, the most widely used techniques are somewhat crude, consisting of broadcasting "tempting" material to as many targets as possible in the hope of the odd "hit".

Enterprise database access systems (SharePoint being the most commonly deployed) are often difficult to use. They can be very powerful and provide access to a large database, but search and filtering is complex and response times can be long - painfully so if you are working remotely. And traditional CRM systems don't really allow a proper and contextual flow of information.

The Marketing Automation technology available today should allow us to prepare our customer experience activities in a much more relevant and efficient way. The data can be made to circulate between the different "information stakeholders" in a controlled fashion, bringing far more value to each information consumer, including both the Customer Experience teams and the customers themselves.

We should expect and demand a seamless, automated flow of data, essential to marketing and sales performance.

### CX Impact

**Intelligent use of Marketing Automation will allow us to better identify and calibrate the expectations of prospects and customers. Marketing will be able to get constructive feedback on the customer journey. Associating contacts with their interests and automating the maintenance of these associations will enable the most relevant information to be channeled in an optimal way.**

**This scientific approach also makes it possible to consolidate the data from each vertical to gain relevance and efficiency when conquering several others. What better way to boost sales?**





## #5 THE RELATIONSHIPS PARADOX

So, the world is becoming more remote and depersonalized? Not necessarily.

Although we have noticed the trend to more remote working, we've also noticed that everyone is getting better at it! This is obvious when you look at the efforts of your Great Aunt Edith who didn't even know what a browser was two years ago but is now happily ordering Japanese video games on Amazon 😊. It is perhaps less obvious when we consider our own industry, since we have been familiar with (and perhaps weary of) teleconferences for some time now.

Nevertheless, the health crisis has transformed the expectations of all company stakeholders so that communication channels and processes are being reinvented at an impressive rate. And just as meetings, trainings and conferences have been transformed, so has our approach to building and maintaining interpersonal relationships.

The necessary, trending technology improvements that we have identified seem to have a common thread – they are related to people's expectations for a less robotic and more personal experience when dealing with companies. Hence the importance of Customer Experience teams but also for the software that supports them.

Perhaps, we are reaching the end of an era where automation necessarily meant mechanized depersonalization? Could we be moving to the use of technology by skilled practitioners to make the customer experience more agreeable and productive? And, by extension, to make the job of Customer Experience teams more rewarding?

Let's hope so.

### CE Impact

**As mentioned by Salesforce in its Trends Shaping 2021 analysis, brands need to demonstrate a more human connection. Indeed, 68% of customers expect brands to show empathy and 66% expect brands to understand their unique needs and expectations.**



**Recognizing customers as individuals and building real, human connections during the customer journey is what everyone wants. If this is what we aim for, we will surely achieve it, sooner or later. Hence, paradoxically, the pressures that have literally pushed people apart in recently time could ultimately help us come closer together.**

## WHAT NEXT?

Refocusing, communicating differently and perhaps even more deeply, externally with customers but also internally with colleagues: this period of transition forces us to reflect. Above all, it shows us how quickly something that was initially insignificant can change the world. It encourages humility and flexibility and our business strategies, together with the tools and methods use to implement them, must incorporate these two principles.

Introducing sales approaches that are more understanding and empathetic to customers while faithfully reflecting the ambitions of our organizations has thus become a major challenge in 2021. Although it is a formidable one, it pushes us to rethink our business models and give new meaning to the offerings of our sector and to consider the changes that we wish to see in the wider society. With this in mind, let's look at how empathy, fresh objectives and a new way of thinking can produce a positive long-term dynamic ... going way beyond the survival of a crisis.

Empathy is about understanding another person's *feelings*. Until now, Customer Experience teams have had to limit their collective ambition to understanding the *factual* situation of their clients. Of course, *individuals* in these teams could demonstrate empathy towards their customers, but this quality of empathy belonged to the individual, *not to the team or company*.



We are advocating tools and methods that support *collective* empathy, enabling Customer Experience teams to deliver a service that is truly personalized. By this we mean a service that takes into account not only the factual context of a given customer but also their feelings about that context. Crucially, this level of service must not depend entirely on the presence of a certain individual in the team but must continue when there are changes in personnel.

We believe that, to achieve this, much experimentation will be necessary. At the same time, we are optimistic because the simple existence of this objective is reassuring. It was not obvious at first, but we believe that we've identified the right destination.

We have set a course and we're prepared for the wind to change!



## ■ A PROPOS DES AUTEURS

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