



**INSIGHT REPORT**

# **Lessons in CX Excellence, 2017**

**INSIGHTS AND SUBMISSIONS FROM THE FIVE WINNERS OF  
TEMKIN GROUP'S 2016 CX EXCELLENCE AWARD**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This year, we named five organizations the winners of Temkin Group's 2016 Customer Experience Excellence Award – Business Development Bank of Canada (BDC), Century Support Services, Crowe Horwath, Oxford Properties, and VCA. This report:

- Highlights specific examples of how these companies' customer experience (CX) efforts have created value for both their customers and for their businesses.
- Describes winners' best practices across the four customer experience competencies: *Purposeful Leadership*, *Compelling Brand Values*, *Employee Engagement*, and *Customer Connectedness*.
- Includes all of the winners' detailed nomination forms to help you collect examples and ideas to apply to your own CX efforts.

## CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE EXCELLENCE AWARD WINNERS

Temkin Group created its Customer Experience Excellence (CxE) Award to recognize the exemplary work of organizations that deliver exceptional and sustainable customer experience. The judges evaluate applicants based on three criteria – customer experience transformation efforts, results of efforts, and the sustainability of efforts.

### Highlights of the CxE Award Winners

In November 2016, we announced the five winners of the 2016 CxE Award: Business Development Bank of Canada (BDC), Century Support Services, Crowe Horwath, Oxford Properties, and VCA.<sup>1</sup> Here's an overview of their outstanding CX efforts:

- In 2012, **Business Development Bank of Canada (BDC)** began implementing a full-CX strategy across the entire company. BDC kicked off these efforts by defining a clear CX strategy and developing a long-term plan for the organization. The bank's leadership team showed their support by approving a seven-digit budget aimed at helping these efforts succeed. Since 2012, the bank has worked hard to ensure that everyone throughout the organization both understands and positively contributes to the client experience. So, for example, BDC involves leaders in these efforts through its CX Governance Committee, which is made up of senior members from each business unit across the bank and meets each quarter to steer client experience

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<sup>1</sup> Organizations submitted nomination forms for the CxE Awards during October 2016, and five judges evaluated their entries: Ginger Colon (Chief Editor of CustomerAlchemy.net), Shep Hyken (Author and Chief Amazement Officer at Shepard Presentations), Ingrid Lindberg (Customer Experience Officer and Founder of Chief Customer), Aimee Lucas (CX Transformist & Vice President at Temkin Group), and Bruce Temkin (CX Transformist & Managing Partner of Temkin Group).

efforts. And to teach employees – both client-facing and not client-facing – about its customer experience strategy, it designed and rolled out a CX training program. The bank has also created company-wide CX objectives that apply to everyone, from a corporate scorecard for leadership to individual performance reviews for other employees.

- **Century Support Services** provides debt settlement services to clients with trouble making the required payments on their unsecured debts. Century recognizes that clients going through debt settlement are experiencing one of the most difficult times in their lives and has therefore made it their corporate mission to help clients resolve debt in the shortest time possible by being responsive, innovative, and professional. To provide a remarkable experience for clients, Century focuses on *lifecycle marketing* (keeping customers informed and involved in the debt settlement process), *customer advocacy* (empowering employees to do whatever it takes to satisfy clients), and *customer experience metrics* (collecting and distributing customer feedback). For the past year, Century has been developing initiatives inside each of these three areas of focus. For example, to execute on *lifecycle marketing*, Century has expanded the number of contact points it has with customers across channels, including text, portal, phone, and email. The company has improved *customer advocacy* by making client feedback visible to employees and granting them the authority to break down barriers to deliver a better client experience. And it has enhanced its *customer experience metrics* by measuring and sharing NPS and using real-time retention tracking to determine if CX efforts are successful.
- Providing an exceptional client experience is one of **Crowe Horwath's** key organizational strategies. To accomplish this goal, the company developed an Exceptional Client Experience (ECx) Strategy, which starts with a brand promise to help its clients make smart decisions that create lasting value. The overarching goal of this ECx Strategy is to foster a client-centric culture throughout the organization so that employees are motivated to deliver great CX in every interaction. More granularly, this strategy has recently focused on developing analytical models to uncover and predict areas that will result in the biggest improvement for clients, using its ambassadors to drive key strategic initiatives, aligning CX efforts with refreshed brand strategy, and giving its internal groups feedback from its new Voice of the Internal Client survey. To measure the success of its ECx strategy, Crowe surveys clients annually. It's found that its client experience efforts are paying off as its client engagement index towers 35 percentage-points above the industry average and its employee recognition levels are 13 percentage-points higher than average.
- **Oxford Properties** is devoted to consistently exceeding industry standards in service and satisfaction. At the foundation of the company's customer service culture is *The Oxford Commitment*, which it broadcasts both externally to customers and internally to all employees. So, for example, this *Commitment* – which is the company's brand promise to customers – appears to customers in written communications, display towers, and inspirational videos. Oxford Properties also communicates this *Commitment* to employees through *The Dialogue Series*, *CX Guidelines*, *fold-out cards*, *oPositive intranet page*, and at its annual internal CX conference. The company's leadership team upholds its promise of service excellence by investing significantly in employee development and CX programs and embedding CX into the company's corporate strategic plan. And Oxford Properties makes sure that every

employee and leader focuses on delivering on *The Oxford Commitment* by tying performance reviews and bonus compensation programs to NPS scores.

- **VCA** has always been renowned for quality medicine, but in 2012, the veterinary hospital decided to focus on delivering best-in-class client experience as well. VCA knew that to become truly client-centric, it had to make CX a core component of its culture. It kicked off its efforts by holding focus groups with its employees, clients from its own hospitals, and clients from competing hospitals. VCA combined the findings from these focus groups with a study of its existing data to define precisely what the VCA Client Experience should look like. This work resulted in nine Client “I Wants,” a Client Journey Map, and an Emotional Motif. VCA recognized that employees were the key to its success, so in 2013, it began training its 14,000 team members on how to deliver outstanding client experiences. Since then, the company has been working on ensuring that brand attributes drive its decisions, that employees feel empowered, and that metrics are in place to measure the results of its efforts. Now, in 2016, the company evaluates everything – from the hospital to the support office – through the lens of the client experience.

## THE WINNERS HIGHLIGHT THE VALUE OF CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

We asked winners to highlight some of the ways that their efforts have enhanced the experience of their customers and improved their overall business results. Here are some highlights from the finalists:

- Since **BDC** began implementing a full-CX strategy in 2012, its percentage of “very satisfied” customers – those who chose 9 or 10 on a scale from 0-10 – increased by 15 points and the percentage of customers likely to recommend the bank increased by 10 points. In addition to signifying progress in BDC’s customer experience, these improved metrics also correspond to better business results. For example, BDC’s repeat rate has risen year-over-year, while the number of repeat loans went up by almost 65% between 2014 and 2016. Furthermore, the number of referrals it receives from its partner network has more than doubled in the past three years.
- Because **Century Support Services** negotiates debt settlements on behalf of clients, the company is able to reduce the amount of debt its clients have to pay by an average of \$4,600. Not only do clients enjoy higher savings, but Century also helps reduce the number of calls from credit collectors, stop all interest and additional penalties from accumulating on the account, and rejuvenate their credit once the account is settled. However, to receive these benefits – and for Century to see tangible business results – clients must remain in the program until at least the first settlement. Therefore, Century’s main metric for both client results and business results is Client Retention Rate and its inverse, the Cancellation Rate. Because Century has found that the Cancellation Rate is four times lower for clients who remain in the program past the first settlement, it focuses on three specific areas to retain clients until then: giving clients a Welcome Call, improving the ease of interactions, and reducing time to first settlement. By improving these three areas, Century is able to both enhance its client experiences and drive better results for its business.
- **Crowe Horwath** promises to help clients make smart decisions today that deliver lasting value into the future, and it measures how well it fulfills this brand promise by

routinely calculating the percentage of its clients who are “fully engaged” with the company. Since 2011, the proportion of “fully engaged” clients has risen by 21%, which in turn is driving better business results. Crowe has found that “fully engaged” clients increase their revenue spend at a higher rate, have higher average realization, and are much more likely to recommend Crowe. Furthermore, “fully engaged” clients are more likely to recognize exemplary service from employees, leading to higher employee engagement and thus lower turnover rates. Crowe has calculated that “fully engaged” clients are 25% more likely to expand their business with the company than their “engaged” peers, spend 22 times more money than clients who are “on-the-fence,” and generate 1.6 times more revenue.

- **Oxford Properties** uses correlation analysis to establish the ties between customer experience, employee engagement, and business results. For example, one customer experience metric Oxford Properties looks at is the response time to support tickets – currently 95% of office and residential support tickets get addressed by the site team within 30 minutes and 89% of those tickets are resolved within 24 hours. As a result of this kind of dedication to CX, 94% of tenants report being satisfied with office facility management, 98% say they are likely to recommend staying in their office building, and – over the past 10 years – the Office customer retention rate has increased by 10 percentage-points. Oxford Properties also correlates employee engagement metrics with CX and business results. For example, at one of its shopping centers, it found that when employee empowerment increased by 16 percentage-points, NPS increased by nine percentage-points and sales per square foot rose by \$170.
- **VCA** tracks client experience using an overall Client Satisfaction metric. Since it began actively focusing on CX in 2012, the percentage of customers who give VCA a seven out of seven for satisfaction has increased from 64% to 76%, while the percentage of customers who give it a five or lower has dropped from 18% to just 10%. This jump in client satisfaction has created value for the animal hospital in several tangible ways. First, when VCA tracked revenue per year per client according to the satisfaction score they gave the company, it found a 148% increase in revenue for clients who give VCA a seven compared to those who give a score below a four. Second, since 2012, VCA has increased prices four separate times, yet almost a quarter of clients feel that its prices are fairer today than they were historically. And finally, VCA compared its CX scores to clients’ return rates and found that the higher a client’s satisfaction score, the more likely they are to return to one of the VCA hospitals.

## LESSONS LEARNED ACROSS THE FOUR CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE COMPETENCIES

We have identified some of the winners’ best practices from across the four customer experience competencies:<sup>2</sup>

- **Purposeful Leadership:** Leaders operate consistently with a clear, well-articulated set of values.
- **Compelling Brand Values:** Brand attributes are driving decisions about how you treat customers.

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<sup>2</sup> See Temkin Group Insight Report, “Four Customer Experience Core Competencies” (April 2017).

- **Employee Engagement:** Employees are fully committed to the goals of your organization.
- **Customer Connectedness:** Customer feedback and insights are integrated throughout your organization.

## **Purposeful Leadership Best Practices**

Here are some of the best practices from the winners:

- In 2012, **BDC's** CEO and President kicked off the bank's full-CX strategy. To underscore the seriousness of this commitment, he himself has a specific CX objective integrated into his performance review, and this objective trickles down to other leaders in the organization. Senior members from each business unit across the bank sit on a CX Governance Committee, which meets every quarter to review CX efforts, suggest future directions, and make recommendations for improvements. And while all employees do have access to BDC's VoC platform, the bank's leaders – who are CX ambassadors – get a deeper view into the insights and information housed in the platform. Furthermore, whenever possible, leaders take responsibility for owning specific CX initiatives and then presenting the CX results to their teams.
- Shortly after assuming the role, **Century Support Service's** CEO – John Ioannou – unified the leadership team around a common purpose and mission. This transformation started with a deep-dive analysis into the Century brand, its mission, best practices, culture, and employees. The team even developed a new mission statement, which promises to “help each and every one of our clients resolve their debt in the shortest time possible and to perform in a way that we are extraordinarily responsive, innovation, and professional.” After developing a unified focus for the entire company, the leaders created a Customer Journey Map along with a companion map of critical customer behavior. The leadership team then used these materials to generate a new strategic action plan, which includes key initiatives to help every Century employee fulfill its mission statement. As a result of the push from the CEO, everyone – from the frontline employees to the leadership team – are now aligned around achieving Century's new mission.
- The President and CEO of **Oxford Properties** shares the company's formal strategic plan extensively throughout the organization. This plan consists of ten guiding principles – two of which explicitly focus on customer experience. The first of these pledges “to strengthen [its] relationships with customers, partners, and the industry at large,” while the second aims “to be a global real estate leader in our operations, sustainability, and customer service.” Senior leaders hammer home the importance of these two principles – and CX at large – at every annual internal leadership conference and in all regular leadership communications. Because leaders at the top continuously communicate the link between business success and CX, other managers throughout the organization are able to use those leaders' communications and tools to reinforce the importance of CX to their own employees. Furthermore, every leader and manager is held accountable for Oxford Properties' customer experience through its Performance Review process as NPS scores influence bonus calculations.

## Compelling Brand Values Best Practices

Here are some of the best practices from the winners:

- **Century Support Service**'s brand promise consists of three words: *trust*, *experience*, and *integrity*. So, for example, Century starts building *trust* with clients from the very beginning by giving them a Welcome Call on the first day they enter the program. Welcome Call representatives reach out to new clients to discuss the details of the program, to educate them about the process they are about to embark on, and to listen to the hardships that have led them into debt. Century also increases new customers' *trust* by sending them a series of emails over the course of several months to provide them with information about the program and help them feel at ease in the relationship. Meanwhile, Century delivers on its brand promise of *integrity* by giving customers access to the new MyCentury client portal, which transparently shows customers the activity happening on their accounts, such as recent activity, program progress, and total savings. The company also offers customers a free UCAN (United Consumer Advocacy Network) membership when they join the Century program to ensure that creditors and debt collectors treat them legally and with respect.
- **Crowe Horwath**'s Exceptional Client Experience (ECx) starts with an explicit brand promise to its customers – *Smart Decisions. Lasting Value*. To keep this promise, Crowe cultivates industry expertise, uses the best available technology, and has made a company-wide commitment to client services. For example, Crowe uses innovative technology to help clients make better decisions for the future. Its New Product Development (NPD) process encourages its employees to think up ideas for new technological solutions that will create lasting value for customers. Crowe then invests time and resources into developing the best of these ideas. Last year, revenue from these innovative solutions reached \$88 million. Furthermore, Crowe's User Interface/User Experience team is responsible for helping to align its products with client expectations, thus ensuring that the client's needs and expectations are always considered during the technology development process. Crowe monitors how well it is delivering on its promise of *Smart Decisions. Lasting Value*. by asking clients questions about their engagement levels with the company, how likely they are to recommend the company, and if they will do business again with the company.
- *The Oxford Commitment* is the foundation of **Oxford Properties**' customer service culture. This commitment consists of five statements that make up its brand promise to customers. First, Oxford Properties promises to "deliver a world class experience," which it keeps by hiring and developing the best possible employees. Second, it promises to "earn [customers'] respect in every interaction, every day," which it delivers by anticipating customers' needs, being considerate, and treating customers like partners. It also promises to "empower [its] teams to deliver effective solutions fast" by being accessible, creative, and responsive with its solutions, and it pledges to "take great pride in leading the industry" through innovation, service excellence, and a focus on customers. Lastly, Oxford promises to "work with purpose" as it works in the name of over 400,000 pensioners. To communicate all of these brand promises to customers, Oxford Properties created a short video called "The Oxford Way" and shares *The Oxford Commitment* on its website and in its lobby towers. The company shares this brand promise internally with employees as well through training and

communication programs, and it ensures employees fulfill *The Oxford Commitment* through its hiring and performance management criteria.

- **VCA's** journey towards making client experience part of its culture starts with nine Client "I Wants," which it developed after speaking to hundreds of clients and identifying what they desired in their interactions with VCA. These "I Wants" include statements like, "Know me and know my pet," "Be efficient," and "Demonstrate staff competence." These nine statements not only make up VCA's brand attributes, they also drive all of the company's decisions. For example, after launching these "I Wants" in 2014, VCA realized that it wasn't adequately delivering on two of the statements: "Provide sensitivity, privacy, and flexibility around my payment options," and "Offer treatment plan options that enable me to make good decisions for my pet, for me, and for my wallet." Consequently, clients were only coming to VCA when their pet was sick, not for basic wellness needs. So to meet these two "I Wants" when pets were healthy, the company launched VCA CareClub in 2015, which allows clients to pay for services on a monthly reoccurring billing cycle and includes all basic wellness service needs by life stage. To ensure that it is delivering on these "I Wants" to VCA CareClub customers, it surveys them about their likelihood of recommending the service – 94% of whom say that they would or they have.

## **Employee Engagement Best Practices**

Here are some of the best practices from the winners:

- To educate employees about the importance of the client experience, **BDC** developed and launched a CX-specific training program. This training consists of a three-hour, in-person class, which is mandatory for all employees, regardless of whether or not they are customer-facing. After attending this training, employees understand why BDC cares about customer experience, what a positive experience feels like for clients, and how they personally can deliver great experiences to internal partners and external clients. Within the past year, BDC has also started internal "brand roadshows" – a mix of in-person and webex sessions – specifically designed to educate employees about how they can deliver experiences that align with the bank's newly launched brand. And once employees have finished the training, BDC keeps employees focused on CX by providing them with a dedicated CX area within the employee portal. Here, employees can find information about best practices, tips, client stories, client journey maps, etc. The bank also keeps employees focused on the client experience by rewarding exceptional customer-centric behavior through its *President's Award of Excellence*, which includes a Client Experience category that highlights great teams or initiatives. Furthermore, to ensure continued excellence, BDC measures how well its employees meet CX objectives through individual performance reviews.
- **Crowe Horwath's** employee engagement efforts stand on two pillars: *Deep Specialization* and *One Crowe*. *Deep Specialization* – which encompasses industry knowledge, functional expertise, and technological skills – helps employees achieve personal growth and value through deep market credentials and innovation. So, for example, in 2015, Crowe launched Crowe Horwath University, through which employees can receive both customized learning specifically for their role and more general industry knowledge to help them better understand the industries Crowe



serves. *One Crowe*, meanwhile, refers to how employees collaborate across business units. *One Crowe* breaks down silos in an effort to minimize conflicts and to reduce organizational complexity. Breaking down these divisions ultimately gives employees the broadest possible view for potential leadership development. Crowe offers both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards to employees who deliver exceptional client experience through efforts like Recognize Alerts, Pay It Forward, ECx Awards, ECx Ambassadors, and Customer Experience Day.

- To reinforce its culture of CX excellence, **Oxford Properties** created *The Dialogue Series* – a set of facilitated and interactive conversations with employees. The company designed this series to communicate to employees why customer service is key to their collective success, to solicit employee insights, and to help employees think about and understand their unique and specific roles in delivering *The Oxford Commitment*. All employees participate in groups of 20 and are encouraged to speak candidly and specifically about the topic. The first series – “Defining Service Excellence” – worked on getting employees to define exceptional CX and have them build specific action plans for both their properties and for themselves on what to stop, start, and continue doing to deliver this exceptional CX. Employees across the company made suggestions about increasing employee empowerment, reinforcing a positive mindset, creating consistent processes, developing team cohesion, and many, many more. Oxford Properties took employee feedback about what they wanted to discuss from the first series and created the second series, entitled “Trust and Empowerment.” So far, the company has nine of these series planned.
- **VCA**'s goal from the outset was to make client experience part of its culture, which requires employee buy-in. To ensure that employees understood, owned, and delivered on this shift towards customer-centricity, VCA incorporated client experience into its training, which begins by asking employees *why* they got into the field of pet health care. Inevitably, most employees joined VCA because they are passionate about animals and want to help them, so the training explicitly links client experience to pet health. This training also focuses on empowering, recognizing, and rewarding employees who positively impact clients, and it frequently shares success stories about employees going above and beyond. To make certain that its efforts to engage staff are successful, VCA kicked off an Employee Experience Program. It recently completed focus groups with employees across the country and has now defined what is important to employees, where they think VCA is delivering, and where they think it has gaps.

## **Customer Connectedness Best Practices**

Here are some of the best practices from the winners:

- To support its new full-CX strategy, **BDC** improved both its VoC platform and its understanding of clients' journeys. All employees now have access to the new VoC program with its enhanced reporting capabilities, and the bank also increased the frequency of its organization-wide updates on findings and insights from this program monthly rather than quarterly. To supplement this data, BDC's marketing department does deep-dive interviews with current customers, who provide testimonials and impact statements that are then shared with employees. Through client research, the bank uncovered the three emotions that are most critical to its customers: impressed,

enabled, and understood. Armed with that knowledge, BDC trained all employees how to both recognize and elicit these emotions. For example, employees can make clients feel enabled by taking the time to educate them, and they can make clients feel understood by anticipating their needs. In addition to actively gathering feedback, the bank also furthers its understanding of clients by carrying out Customer Journey Mapping exercises by line of business or by a specific type of interaction. The bank then shares these maps across the organization so that all employees can use them as a tool for improving the customer experience.

- To gauge its clients' satisfaction and identify areas for improvement, **Century Support Services** solicits client feedback through Transactional Surveys, Interval Relationship Surveys, and Client Focus Groups. Century's Client Advocacy Team reads all of the comments from the Transactional and Interval Surveys and then assigns each of them a sentiment and a category. These sentiments and categories then get added into a macro dashboard showing comment trends, and this dashboard, along with a micro view of the classified comments, gets sent to executives and managers each week. The combination of macro and micro reports helps Century identify both what the program weaknesses are and how it can go about improving them. So, for example, when the macro dashboard showed that a significant amount of negative comments concerned "communication," the micro report contained comments from clients explicitly describing how Century could improve in this area. As a result of these findings, the company created a targeted weekly email campaign that offers clients advice on what to expect in their first six weeks of the program.
- **Crowe Horwath** believes that everyone is responsible for delivering an exceptional client experience, and it therefore makes customer feedback and insights available to all employees across the organization. At the end of a project or engagement, Crowe invites clients to take a web-based survey about the company's services, the results of which provide immediate, actionable feedback that Crowe then shares with engagement partners – who in turn share it with their teams. And Crowe doesn't just measure the performance of client-facing employees. In 2016, it implemented a Voice of the Internal Client survey, which gives internal groups the opportunity to understand how they impact the client-facing part of the business. Crowe sends this survey – which mirrors the structure of the client-facing engagement survey – to its partners to solicit their feedback about the service they receive from internal business units. The VoIC program helps non-client facing employees understand that providing an exceptional client experience applies to everyone in the firm and gives them feedback on what they are doing well and where they should focus on making changes.
- **VCA** brought together all its disparate feedback formats – mainly surveys, client phone calls, and social media – and analyzed the commonalities between those clients who feel "extremely satisfied" and the commonalities between those who feel "extremely dissatisfied." Through this analysis, the animal hospital discovered that a great opportunity existed in moving a "good" client experience to a "great" client experience. Consequently, it launched *Recover Well* training with staff, which teaches them to focus on the little things, to maintain awareness, and to be proactive. In addition to using feedback to train employees, VCA also distributes insights from its VoC program to the appropriate business units. For example, one of VCA's "I Wants" is, "Impress me by applying the best available yet affordable technology." So when

client feedback indicated a problem with the website's ease of navigation, VCA shared it with the marketing team, who is now redesigning the site to take into account clients' natural journeys, like searching for information or booking an appointment. A mobile technology unit is also helping by setting up online appointment booking and text appointment reminders and developing a mobile device in the hospital that enables clients to check in, update pet/client information, take pet photos, and sign forms.