NEXT-LEVEL CX
FOR B2B COMPANIES

A CX leader's guide to aligning your organization
to deliver exceptional customer experiences

◢◢ WALKER

AT A GLANCE

Next-Level CX for B2B Companies is focused on helping business-to-business companies rise to the next level of CX excellence – whether they are just starting out or they have an established program in place.

Walker teamed up with the Qualtrics XM Institute to assess the current state of B2B CX. By leveraging existing research and established frameworks from the XM Institute, the following conclusions were clear:

- CX maturity is alarmingly low. This is true for both B2B and B2C companies.

- B2C companies are setting the pace, while most B2B companies are just getting started.

- B2B and B2C companies have different priorities as they develop their CX programs.

- Characteristics that are common to B2B companies result in disjointed experiences for customers.

- B2B companies rely heavily (perhaps too heavily) on front line employees to deliver a positive customer experience.

In response to these findings, as well as insights from Walker advisors and other CX professionals, this report provides a series of recommendations based on two primary assertions:

1. **CX leaders need to align their CX programs**. Specifically, they must establish effective CX teams, activate a customer-centric culture, and use both experience data and operational data to create more value for customers.

2. **CX leaders need to proactively design a better experience for customers**. Specifically, they must use internal and external listening to identify broken processes, use intentional methods to design customer experiences, and find the human-digital balance that B2B customers expect.

For each of the recommendations made in this report, practical advice is provided to help B2B companies, regardless of whether they are just now planning their CX journey or are already on the path to CX maturity.

While CX excellence is a worthy goal for any company, it is our hope that this report can simply help CX leaders make steady progress to achieve the next level of CX excellence for their companies.

WALKER

B2B COMPANIES MUST TAKE CX TO THE NEXT LEVEL

When it comes to customer experience, B2B companies are behind. In fact, many of them have not even left the starting line!

Customer experience (CX) has established itself as one of the most effective ways to create a sustainable competitive advantage. Think about all the ways that hotels, delivery services, ride-sharing services, and retail outlets have revolutionized the way we shop, travel, and get things done. Entire industries have emerged by providing faster, easier, and better experiences.

However, B2B companies have been slow to follow these consumer examples. Instead, many are mired in old processes and siloed structures that make for a customer experience that is disjointed and frustrating. And yet, the opportunity is there for those leaders who are innovative enough to align the way CX works and design an experience that truly meets the needs of their customers.

Next-Level CX for B2B Companies will help CX leaders:

- Realize why CX maturity is so low among B2B companies

- Understand six key strategies to create "next-level" programs

- Implement practical methods to bring these strategies to life

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Although the study of customer relationships has been around for decades, CX maturity is surprisingly low for most businesses. What's more, B2B trails B2C companies in their attention to measuring, monitoring, and designing the experiences of customers. This section considers the starting point for next-level CX improvements.

Disjointed experiences and an overreliance on front-line employees are the focal points for the recommendations of this report. This section provides practical ideas, tips, and examples for CX leaders to consider as they seek to achieve next-level effectiveness.

FRAMEWORKS FOR CX COMPETENCY AND MATURITY

Two key frameworks developed by the Qualtrics XM Institute are frequently referenced and serve as a foundation for this report.

Six CX Competencies

Customer experience is a discipline. Much more than a list of activities, organizations must incorporate CX into every facet of their business. To do so, they need to develop the six key competencies shown and described in Figure 1.

Five Stages of CX Maturity

As organizations build and master the six CX competencies, they evolve through the five stages of maturity shown and described in Figure 2.

To learn more about these frameworks, download the XM Institute Insight Report, Operationalizing XM. This report and many other resources are available free of charge on the XM Institute's website, xminstitute.com.

Figure 1

Identify and create experiences that differentiate the organization

Prioritize and drive improvements based on insights

Provide actionable insights across an organization

LEAD

DISRUPT

REALIZE

RESPOND

ACTIVATE

ENLIGHTEN

Architect, align, and sustain successful CX efforts

Track and ensure that CX efforts achieve well-defined business objectives

Equip the organization with the appropriate skills, support, and motivation to achieve desired CX results

Figure 2

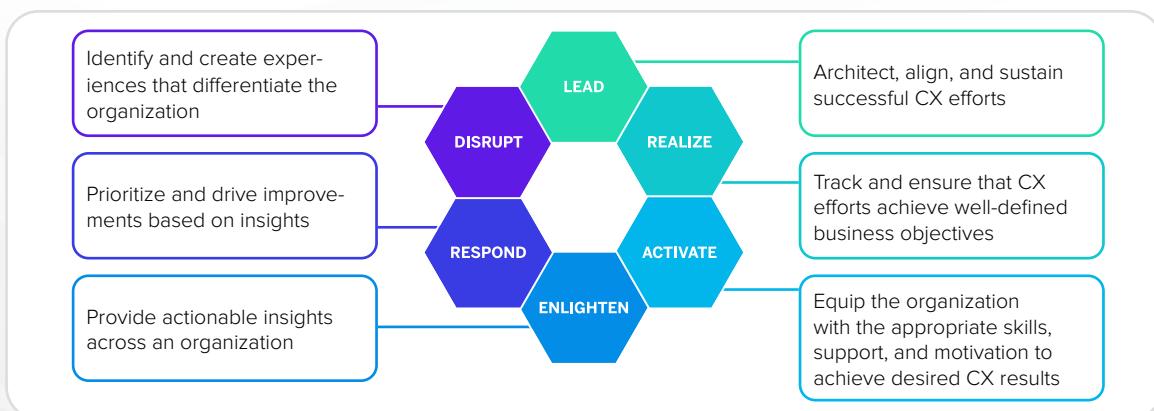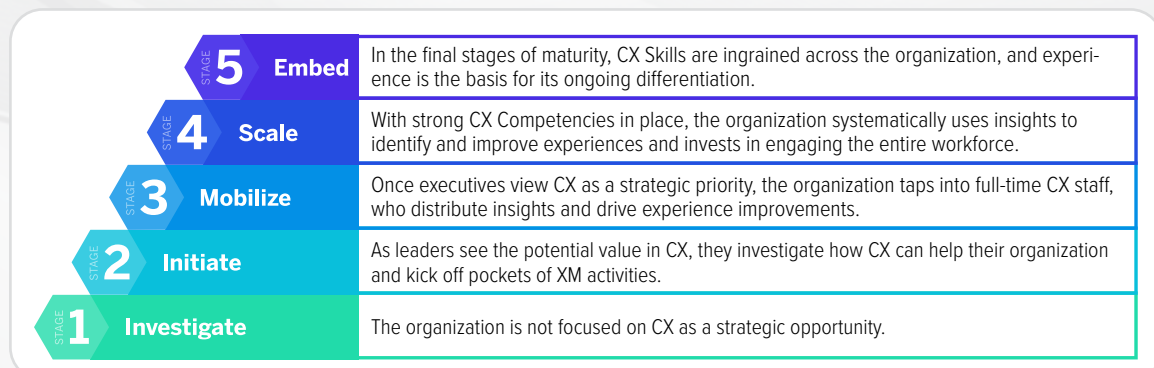| STAGE		Stage Name	Description
STAGE	5	Embed	In the final stages of maturity, CX Skills are ingrained across the organization, and experience is the basis for its ongoing differentiation.
STAGE	4	Scale	With strong CX Competencies in place, the organization systematically uses insights to identify and improve experiences and invests in engaging the entire workforce.
STAGE	3	Mobilize	Once executives view CX as a strategic priority, the organization taps into full-time CX staff, who distribute insights and drive experience improvements.
STAGE	2	Initiate	As leaders see the potential value in CX, they investigate how CX can help their organization and kick off pockets of XM activities.
STAGE	1	Investigate	The organization is not focused on CX as a strategic opportunity.

THE STATE OF B2B CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

IT'S TIME FOR B2B COMPANIES TO THINK STRATEGICALLY ABOUT CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE—AND TAKE ACTION

With competition reaching new heights, there has never been a more critical time for business-to-business companies to think proactively and more strategically about customer experience. Now more than ever, customers expect their interactions with businesses in both the consumer world and the B2B sector to be easy, personalized, and quick. In pursuit of competitive advantage, B2B companies must work harder at understanding their customers and designing the exceptional experiences that meet customer needs.

It won't be easy. Today's B2B companies rank among the lowest in CX maturity. Decentralized and siloed, B2B firms too often deliver experiences that are disjointed, impersonal and uninspired. The current state of B2B customer experience, highlighted on the following pages, sets the stage for productive discussion of how B2B firms can rethink and retool their approach to customer experience to achieve greater business success.

RISING TO NEXT-LEVEL CX: FIVE KEY TRUTHS

Progress always requires preparation. For B2B companies, this means understanding the factors at play in taking the next step toward greater CX maturity. Data from the XM Institute's State of Customer Experience Management, 2019 study and Walker's nearly three decades of experience working with B2B firms lead us to five key truths for companies eager to work toward providing better experiences for customers.

1 **CX maturity is alarmingly low**. B2B firms must strive to become more customer focused and build CX management programs that improve and elevate customer experiences.

2 When compared to its business-to-consumer counterparts, business-to-business firms have significant **ground to make up when it comes to CX maturity**. While the characteristics of B2B companies explain why they lag behind, these firms must overcome a sizable gap to keep pace with customer expectations driven by everyday B2C interactions.

3 The **paths to CX maturity are different**. Commitment, organization, and some degree of culture change are necessary for B2B companies to act on customer insights.

4 Often hampered by "the silo effect," decentralized B2B companies often **deliver disjointed experiences** that negatively impact the customer journey.

5 **Over-reliance on front-line employees** to save the customer experience poses risks for B2B firms as they work to progress to Next-Level CX.

These five truths are detailed on the following pages.

1 MATURITY IS LOW;
THE TIME TO ACT IS NOW

Investigate.

Initiate.

By definition, these words connote an environment poised for activity and action. But in the five stages of CX maturity, they're just the beginning. And that's where most companies find themselves when it comes to effectively managing the customer experience.

In fact, the vast majority of companies—a whopping 79%—surveyed by the XM Institute are in the bottom two stages of maturity. Some have managed to initiate pockets of CX activity in Stage 2, but more than half—54%—are *investigating*, or not focused on CX as a strategic opportunity.

CX skill building is a critical need
With maturity comes competency, and companies tend to fall short here too. When evaluating their performance in the six CX competencies, 63% of companies rated themselves as "very weak." By and large, today's businesses lack the skills needed to prioritize and drive improvements based on customer insights. This shortfall makes it harder to identify and create the kinds of experiences that truly differentiate.

The time to act is now
The good news is that there's potential for progress and significant room to grow. While maturity takes time, companies that want a competitive edge must make CX a priority or risk being left behind. If firms are willing to look for it, there is a path to maturity in building the kind of robust CX management programs that elevate the customer experience and help achieve greater business success.

63%
of companies rated themselves as having "very weak" performance on the CX competencies

THE VAST MAJORITY OF COMPANIES ARE IN THE BOTTOM TWO STAGES OF MATURITY

54% — STAGE 1
25% — STAGE 2
15% — STAGE 3
5% — STAGE 4
1% — STAGE 5
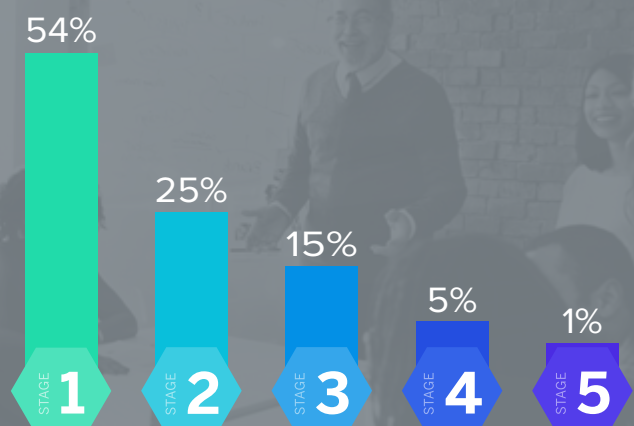
2 B2B VS B2C: THERE'S GROUND TO MAKE UP

There's no denying that B2B firms are often compared to their business-to-consumer counterparts. With more customer transactions going digital and the increasing value consumers place on the "one click" ease of doing business, there is little chance B2B firms will dodge such comparisons anytime soon.

Using data from the XM Institute's 2019 study, we took a close look at how B2B stacks up to B2C in CX maturity. While data reveals that maturity is low across the board, B2C companies are outpacing B2B even in the earliest stage of maturity—*Investigate*.

Analyzing the six XM competencies and the skills tailored for CX, there are no areas in which B2B companies outperform B2C firms. The most prominent gaps between the two sectors appear in:

- Analyzing CX and operational data to uncover insights (B2B: 18%, B2C: 32%)

- Forecasting business value of CX efforts (B2B: 3%, B2C: 15%)

- Making changes to operational processes based on ongoing CX insights (B2B: 18%, B2C: 25%)

The fact that B2B firms lag behind B2C in CX maturity isn't surprising. Arguably, it makes sense based on several key characteristics:

Product-centric culture. A strong focus on product and operational efficiency fueled the rise of many B2B firms. Product centricity has permeated their culture, making it harder for customer focus to take root and grow.

Organizational complexity. With multiple business units and a matrixed approach to doing business, B2B companies struggle to work cross-functionally across silos to improve customer centricity.

Distance from the customer. B2B's built-in channel structure creates distance from the end user of products and services. Without a clear line of sight to the customer, the experience is camouflaged, concealing its true impact on business success.

Less volatile customer relationships. Many B2B firms benefit from having a customer base for which the barriers to switching are high. Contracts, subscriptions, and the increasing prevalence of delivering a solution rather than just a product mean B2B customers are more likely to stay.

64% B2B   51% B2C
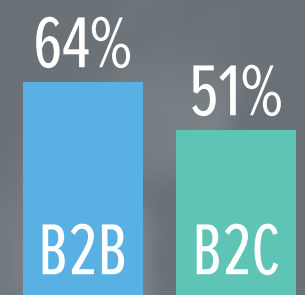
Nearly two-thirds of B2B companies are at the lowest stage of maturity (Investigate), meaning the organization is not focused on CX as a strategic opportunity.

3 B2B VS B2C: THE PATHS TO MATURITY ARE DIFFERENT

There are many differences between B2B and B2C companies, and how they advance in CX maturity is one of them. As the average B2B firm builds CX maturity, it initially shows the largest increase in skills related to *Activating CX*—equipping the organization with the right proficiencies, support, and motivation to achieve desired CX results. The focus then shifts to making concerted improvement in the skills required to use customer insights to drive improvements.

In contrast, many business-to-consumer companies appear to gain traction sooner in the skills related to *Enlighten* and *Respond*, which involve providing actionable insights across the organization and driving related improvements. Their attention then turns toward building CX leadership and activating CX within their organization.

For B2B, commitment, organization, and some degree of culture change must come first.

In reality, every company's path to CX maturity is unique. However, when considering the organizational complexity inherent in most B2B companies, it's easier to understand why their path might start with efforts to:

- Communicate broadly about the customer experience

- Build CX expertise across the enterprise

- Ensure employees have the tools, skills, and training to act on CX

To circumvent silos and break down barriers to collaboration, B2B firms must cultivate an organization-wide commitment to CX and have some infrastructure in place to promote customer centricity before they can listen and respond to customers. It's about beginning a culture shift that can lead to a greater focus on the customer.

WHY IT'S EASIER FOR B2C TO RESPOND AND ENLIGHTEN

In the early stages of maturity, B2C companies are more prepared to respond to customer insights. Why?

- It's easier to identify with the customer. Because B2C companies tend to be closer to the experience, they often have a more customer-focused culture that's capable of acting on customer feedback.
- B2C customer interactions are inherently simpler.

- Business-to-consumer CX teams can conduct customer research without assistance from functional areas across the organization. They can acquire customer panels or marketing lists and send surveys on their own without buy-in and involvement from other groups.

4 DISJOINTED DELIVERY PUTS THE CUSTOMER JOURNEY AT RISK

Decentralized and siloed, B2B companies are often their own worst enemy when it comes to providing positive customer experiences. With numerous business and operating units, acquired entities and channel partners involved in delivering the experience, the disjointed journey is fertile ground for experiential breakdowns that lead to customer frustration and dissatisfaction.

- While standardization can contribute to seamless experiences in other business sectors, standardizing customer transactions in the specialized B2B environment is difficult. To manage and troubleshoot unique and complex customer issues, highly skilled employees—representing various operational and support organizations across the company—require a lot of leeway to get the job done. This human component, while a benefit for B2B in working with savvy customers, also can lead to inconsistent interactions that fracture the experience.

- Without a coordinated and designed strategy, it's inevitable that B2B customers will have different experiences—putting both the customer journey and the business relationship at risk.

Customers typically have multiple contacts in their work with B2B companies. Unfortunately, these are often not well coordinated and frequently make for a disjointed experience.

INSTALLATION

TECH SUPPORT

SALES

CONTACT CENTER

ACCOUNT MGMT

5 THE FRONT LINE SHOULDERS TOO MUCH

It's nearly impossible to create seamless, integrated experiences without the right customer intelligence. To quickly and easily resolve issues, front-line employees need resources, information, and support from functional areas. When it's absent—which we know is all too often—B2B companies look to the front line to play the hero, scrambling to ensure customers have a good experience.

Account managers heavily involved in issue resolution.

*Customer service reps handling product feature requests.*

Implementation teams re-scoping solutions.

These are just a few of the examples we've heard from the front-line heroes who are frequently forced to don their proverbial capes to save the day. And while front-line employees can and do make important contributions to the customer experience, relying too heavily on them often means key processes don't get fixed. It also becomes easier for companies to ignore the inefficiencies that are frustrating for customers.

Recognizing that putting too much on the front line's shoulders poses risks, there's also the flip side: personal interaction has benefits, especially for B2B firms that build their reputations on the skills, expertise, and relationship-building qualities that only humans can provide.

It's an important consideration, and finding the right balance between human interaction and digital experiences is something B2B companies will need to undertake more aggressively if they want to progress to Next-Level CX.

ANALYZE

COLLABORATE

NOTIFY

SOLVE

IGNORE

SECURE RESOURCES
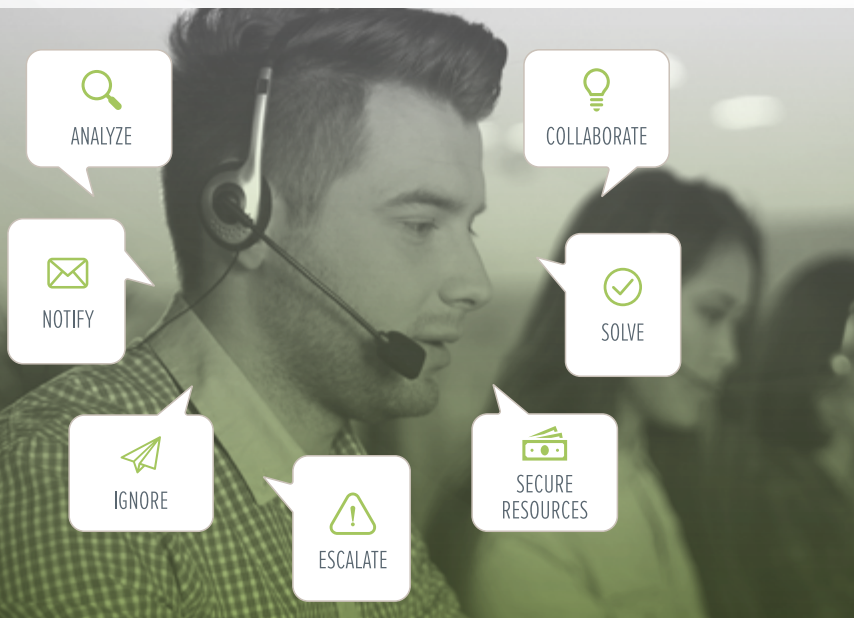
ESCALATE

WHAT TO DO?

Front-line employees are often confronted with issues, many of which they have no control over. Dealing with these requires going outside their sphere of influence to inform, collaborate, escalate, analyze, or secure resources. Or, if the obstacles are too numerous, they may simply be ignored.

CX IMPERATIVES FOR B2B COMPANIES

ALIGN AND DESIGN — WHETHER YOU ARE JUST STARTING OUT OR TAKING CX TO THE NEXT LEVEL

If there is one prevailing imperative for B2B companies, it's to get started. Focusing on customer experience can no longer wait. B2B customers expect more and if your company won't deliver, plenty of competitors will.

There are other imperatives too. They involve streamlining disjointed experiences and looking at new ways to make customer interactions easier and exceptional. To do this, B2B firms need to align their organization to take on the heavy lifting of designing experiences that truly differentiate.

This section explores ways for CX leaders to align and design their programs. Six recommendations are provided — three for aligning and three for designing. What's more, we recognize that many companies are just beginning their CX journey while others are already on their way. With that in mind, practical strategies labeled "Starting Out" and "Next-Level CX" are provided for each of the six recommendations.

ALIGN THE EXPERIENCE

Before you can go, you must get ready. Launching an effective, results-oriented CX program requires thoughtful planning and preparation. In complex and highly decentralized B2B environments, much of the prep work involves ensuring the organization is properly aligned to engage in CX.

To do this, B2B CX leaders must:

Establish a CX Team With Accountability and Governance

With the right leadership, accountability, and governance, CX teams are the engines of successful customer experience programs.

Activate a Customer-Centric Culture

For B2B firms, transforming into a more customer-focused culture can be eye opening and is one of the key steps in aligning the organization to work collaboratively to improve the customer experience.

Use X- and O-Data Integration to Create the Most Value From CX

Meaningful integration of operational and experience data enables companies to deliver a more fine-tuned experience consistently across all customer accounts and touchpoints.

DESIGN THE EXPERIENCE

Today's B2B customers want a thoughtful, intentional approach to interacting with their suppliers. No longer can companies rely primarily on front-line employees to deliver the experience. Instead, the experience must be a well-designed journey that is mindful of the customer's situation and their perspective.

To do this, B2B CX leaders must:

Identify Broken Experiences Through Internal and External Listening

Finding customer interactions and touchpoints that are broken leads companies to develop an effective CX strategy that strengthens relationships with customers and boosts the bottom line.

Use Customer-Centered Design Methods to Differentiate the Customer Experience

Achieving differentiation nearly always depends on applying human-centered design methods to design or redesign the customer experience.

Find the Human-Digital Balance That B2B Customers Expect

Armed with customer insights, CX can work alongside digital and user experience teams to find the human-digital balance that leads to better, easier, and more seamless customer experiences.

ESTABLISH A CX TEAM WITH ACCOUNTABILITY AND GOVERNANCE

Building a solid customer experience strategy that adds value to your business requires leadership and teamwork. There's clear evidence that firms achieving higher levels of CX maturity have some type of centralized team responsible for overseeing and executing customer experience strategy. In preparing to implement a CX program, establishing a dedicated team is one of the first and most important steps to aligning customer experience within an organization.

If you're envisioning a conference room full of stakeholders or dozens of team members on Zoom, keep in mind that CX teams can—and often do—start out small. It's also helpful to know that company CX teams aren't one-size-fits-all. And similarly, while there's no defined starting point, CX teams typically emerge within organizations in a couple of different ways. In some cases, a team originates from the bottom up when a single business unit or functional leader expresses interest in gaining customer insights on a particular transaction such as delivery or installation. When CX improvement efforts are successful, the functional team can gain credibility, draw wider attention, and prompt the formation of a larger CX team encompassing more operational areas across the organization.

Conversely, a more centralized team is often initiated from the start in a top-down approach when a CEO or senior executive calls for a company-wide focus on the customer. In such cases, we've seen B2B firms establish a centralized CX steering team to oversee and manage CX strategy across the enterprise and CX centers of excellence to serve as organizational resources for CX activities. As the CX program gains traction and matures, improvement work fans out to multiple organizational areas, most often resulting in the creation of unit- or function-based teams. While maintaining a connection to the centralized team, these smaller functional teams, like in the bottom-up

origination, play a crucial role in meeting the company's overall CX objectives.

The conditions under which a team arises don't really matter. The objective is to get a CX team started and then build from there. In the end, using customer insights to elevate the experience always involves a committed team of individuals. With the right leadership, accountability, and governance, CX teams are the engines of successful customer experience programs. Whether a B2B company is new to CX or looking to advance in maturity, there are important considerations and strategies for building a team that effectively supports a CX program.

CX TEAM

STARTING OUT

For B2B firms—the majority of which are in the earliest stages of CX maturity—forming a customer experience team is essential. It begins by building a network of CX allies—people who care about and are committed to improving the customer experience. As the team takes shape, employing some fundamental formation strategies will help lay the groundwork for growth as the CX program matures.

Establish a dedicated CX team. A benefit of being new to CX is the opportunity to start fresh. With that in mind, be deliberate in efforts to create a distinct team dedicated to CX. Resist the urge to make CX an offshoot of another team, even if the work is loosely related. Depending on the size of the program, an appropriate number of team members should be dedicated full time to CX initiatives. Other members can be part time—attending meetings and executing tasks as needed.

Gain leader buy-in or executive support. In complex organizations with competing priorities, initiatives tend to move forward faster and with greater purpose when senior leadership is engaged. Support from a C-suite executive or an influential leader within the organization will lend credibility to the new team's efforts, promote progress, and ensure cooperation.

Start with cross-functional membership. The success of many CX initiatives, including the delivery of consistent, meaningful customer experiences, depends on working effectively across the silos inherent in decentralized B2B organizations. A team with cross-functional membership has a number of distinct advantages:

- Promotes the development of a 360-degree view of the customer experience, creating awareness among all team members of the various points of customer interaction.

- Provides a clearer line of sight to the customer data and insights that exist across the company, helping to ensure meaningful allocation of resources and avoiding duplication.

- Supports the development of partnerships, bringing functional areas together to initiate action.

In assembling CX teams, be sure to include representatives from ancillary departments such as information technology and corporate communications and marketing. IT expertise will be needed to help with systems integration and transactional surveying. Communications and marketing professionals can assist with program branding and telling the success stories that result from the team's work.

Set up a framework for accountability and governance. Inaugurating the CX team with at least a simple charter will provide structure for accountability and governance as the team evolves. Adding legitimacy to the effort, a charter clearly establishes the team's ownership of the customer experience, states goals and objectives, and sets expectations for team members. It's also important to develop a clear plan and meeting schedule to stay on track and keep team members engaged. Finally, a charter helps prevent duplication of effort and serves as a catalyst for driving change and shaping a more customer-focused culture.

CX CHARTER

A written CX charter adds legitimacy to your CX effort. Done right, it provides structure for accountability and governance by outlining responsibilities, objectives, and expectations.

NEXT-LEVEL CX

B2B companies with some experience in CX are more likely to have a team or teams in place. As the company seeks greater CX maturity, or next-level CX, the focus should be on how best to tie efforts together, create greater accountability and governance, and get more functional areas and people involved in impacting the customer experience.

Cultivate a company-wide network of CX champions. Increased governance and accountability of CX initiatives often run parallel with a push to accelerate organizational engagement in the customer experience. This occurs when companies identify, train, and formally assign employees to be responsible for customer experience. Representing the various functions and business units involved in CX, these employees form an influential, organization-wide network of CX champions.

Move to a federated CX team model. Regardless of whether CX originated from the top down or the bottom up, it will be necessary for B2B companies to align CX efforts under the direction of a centralized CX function or team. From there, companies should strive to move toward a federated model in which more of the action around CX (customer listening, improvement initiatives, etc.) is implemented by functional teams. The centralized CX organization then becomes responsible for coordinating activities, organizing resources, training, and best practices. In some cases, this results in the formation of a center of excellence dedicated to CX.

Formalize accountability and governance. To facilitate sound decision-making and support the CX program as it scales, accountability and governance structures should be more fully developed and formalized. Governance includes a wide range of considerations, including CX procedures, resources, and program cadence. Formalizing governance could also include detailing program specifics such as frequency of meetings, survey deployment and reporting, direction for implementing the close loop, and integration of existing processes like Six Sigma or Lean.

> It will be necessary for B2B companies to align CX efforts under the direction of a centralized CX function or team.
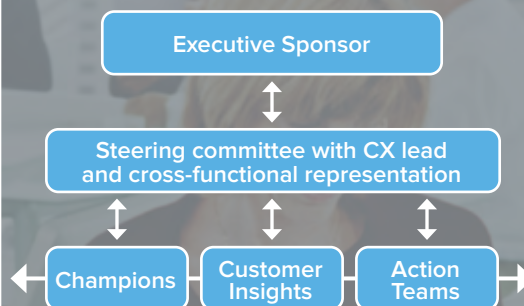
XM GOVERNANCE & STRATEGY

Lay the foundation for successful and sustainable CX by investing time early to gain buy-in, enlist advocates, ensure the right information reaches the right people at the right time, and plan for continuous execution.

1 ENGAGE STAKEHOLDERS THROUGH COMMUNICATION AND INTERVIEWS

ACTION
BELIEF
UNDERSTANDING
AWARENESS

2 ESTABLISH CX OPERATING STRUCTURE WITH A 6-12 MONTH OPERATING PLAN

Executive Sponsor

Steering committee with CX lead and cross-functional representation

Champions — Customer Insights — Action Teams

3 CRAFT A COMMUNICATIONS PLAN FOR ENGAGING THE ORGANIZATION

Communications Strategy
5 Steps

Define Your Audience
Craft the Message
Choose the Vehicle
Deliver the Message
Reinforce the Message

WHO'S INVOLVED IN CX?

While every employee plays a role in successful CX, here are some common contributors that are deployed within organizations:

- **Central (Core) CX Team:** Dedicated team that guides CX strategy and implementation across the company.

- **CX Steering Team**: Cross-functional team to review strategy and guide the Central CX Team.

- **Executive Sponsor**: Senior executive who advocates for CX and helps clear obstacles to success.

- **Action Teams**: Formed on a project-by-project basis to implement CX initiatives and comprised of a CX Champion and relevant subject matter experts based on the tasks to be performed.

- **Satellite CX Teams**: Separate teams focused on CX within a department, function, or geographic region.

- **CX Champions**: Cross-functional group that promotes CX and acts as ambassadors for the program.

- **Support teams**: Groups that support overall CX deployment (communication, technology, HR, etc.).

- **Consultants**: External CX specialists who provide services and advise from an outside perspective.

FEDERATED TEAM MODEL EXAMPLE

Central CX Team

- Customer Success
- Product Development
- Customer Support
- Channel Partners
- Continuous Improvement

ACTIVATE A CUSTOMER-CENTRIC CULTURE

Companies tend to shy away from talking too much about culture. Discussions about business culture, particularly when they involve change and transformation, are complicated and often take a backseat to more pressing business priorities. For B2B firms, many of which have spent years building the product-centered cultures necessary to compete in highly competitive markets, shifting to a culture that's more customer focused can also be difficult.

Regardless of the challenge, however, activating a customer-centric culture, while not easy or intuitive, is necessary if B2B companies are to evolve to meet changing customer needs and expectations. According to findings from the XM Institute's State of Customer Experience Management study, the few B2B companies that have managed to achieve greater CX maturity have done so by initiating a culture that centers around the customer. It's about creating an environment in which employees across the organization see the value of customer focus, and then equipping them with the customer insights, tools, and support to take the actions that improve the customer experience.

This culture change enables B2B companies to view the customer experience—perhaps for the first time—from the outside in. Identifying with the customer and creating organizational empathy for the customer's experience are two characteristics of a customer-centric culture. For many B2B firms, this change, even if incremental, can be eye-opening and is one of the key steps in aligning the experience for action.

> Identifying with the customer and creating organizational empathy for the customer's experience are two characteristics of a customer-centric culture.

CX BRANDING

Giving your CX program a name and logo increases awareness and credibility.

CUSTOMER PULSE

CUSTOMERS 1ST

KNOW THE iQ CUSTOMER

CUSTOMER DIRECT

customer Voice

STARTING OUT

To "activate" is "to make (something) active or operative." In other words, it means to get something started. When it comes to activating a customer-centric culture, getting started essentially happens when the CX team is formed. Driving cultural change is easier when there's a team of allies deployed to educate, motivate, and help others understand the value of being more customer focused. Having a CX team in place is just one prerequisite for shifting culture.

Ensure there's good data and share it. Shaping a customer-focused culture means creating internal awareness of customer needs, expectations, and shortfalls in the experience. Good customer information and insights reveal pain points and experiential breakdowns, and sharing this intelligence internally is an important way to begin building awareness of the customer experience. Communicating insights to customer-facing employees is a good place to start. They will be able to act quickly to change behaviors or initiate improvements and follow-up.

> Having a CX team in place is just one prerequisite for shifting culture.

Launch the program and name it. The awareness building that accompanies culture change begins as soon as the program does. Create some excitement around the launch and enlist the company's marketing team to help brand the program and name it. Without a name, CX tends to become known as "the survey program," when in fact, well-coordinated CX programs are so much more. Make sure the name reflects the program's role in elevating the customer experience.

Engage middle management. In our experience, the barrier to culture change often lies with middle management. Even with senior leaders and customer-facing associates on board, it's the commitment of the managers in between and their effectiveness in executing behavior change that will drive success or lack of it.

Tell the story. Communicating and storytelling are key to activating a customer-focused culture. Work alongside colleagues in corporate and internal communications to get the word out about CX's quick wins, as well as the program's objectives and progress.

Be patient and stay the course. Patience is a virtue for B2B firms embarking on customer-focused culture change. Know that it may take a year or more to make enough progress and shore up enough success to initiate full-on company-wide communications and engagement. For most companies, CX team building and customer-centric culture transformation are works in progress.

CUSTOMER CONNECT

CUSTOMERS 1st FIRST

CUSTOMER iQ

CustomerFOCUS

Cx CUSTOMER Experience

+CARE
Create Amazing
Relationship Experiences

CX BRANDING

NEXT-LEVEL CX

Transforming a culture is a lot like climbing the rungs of a ladder. Culture change evolves in stages, and progress takes times. Once B2B companies become engaged in general awareness building, next-level CX moves to mobilizing others to get involved.

Facilitate internal CX training. Meaningful culture change requires changes in behavior and attitude. An important role of CX is to make sure employees understand the value of customer focus and how they can contribute to a more customer-centric culture. Internal training and educational workshops can help with communication, customer-focused skill building and enablement, and motivation. Start with customer-facing employees who are able to implement behavior change quickly, and then bring others on board.

> Meaningful culture change requires changes in behavior and attitude.

Escalate engagement and communication. Work with marketing and communications colleagues to develop a comprehensive communications and engagement plan for CX. Components may include monthly CX engagement emails and messaging, CEO huddles and town halls, and workshops and special events.

Draw a dotted line to CX...for everybody. In a fully evolved customer-focused culture, every department, functional area, and business unit—in fact, every employee—has a role to play in customer experience. Look for ways to tie departments to the cause, even those without a direct connection to customers. Human resources, for example, can help facilitate culture transformation in new employee training and onboarding by highlighting the company's customer commitment. Recruiting and hiring practices should also be designed to seek out and attract candidates who are naturally inclined to be more customer focused.

DO YOU NEED A CULTURE SHIFT?

Here are five signals that your company may need a shift in their culture.

1. **Product focus:** Many businesses are so focused on the development of their products that customer experience isn't on their radar.

2. **Ineffective CX:** Too often, CX initiatives that are weak or poorly resourced result in low awareness, a lack of understanding, and very little action from employees.

3. **Shakeups:** Reorganizations, mergers, and acquisitions can take all the attention away from customers to focus on internal issues.

4. **The CX plateau:** Sometimes CX programs hit a point where they stall because they aren't seeing the positive impact that was expected.

5. **Competitive disadvantage:** Companies can easily find themselves at a competitive disadvantage when a new player emerges touting a better experience.

CX CULTURE TIERS
Building a customer-centric culture takes place at all levels of the company.

Executive Level
Executives set the tone for a company dedicated to the success of their customers.

Middle-Management Level
Middle management addresses systemic problems and applies a customer-centric mindset to internal quality and processes.

Front-line Level
Front-line employees are the face of the company in their daily customer interactions.

USE X- AND O-DATA INTEGRATION TO CREATE THE MOST VALUE FROM CX

The X and the O. We knew them first as letters of the alphabet and then as the symbols used in a simple three-in-a-row game. In today's business world, X- and O-data represents the DNA of companies, but integrating them is nothing like an easy round of tic-tac-toe.

In fact, integration of X-data—customer experience metrics—and O-data—operational metrics that signal how well a company performs—is something B2B firms struggle with, and many have yet to attempt for numerous reasons. First, B2B organizations with little to no experience in CX may have very little X-data to add to the equation. And while B2B firms usually have a copious inventory of O-data, it's typically scattered across siloed B2B organizations, making it difficult to harness and meaningfully integrate with customer insights. In some cases, companies have spent so long relying on their front-line to deliver the experience, they are unaware of the value integrating operational and experience data can really offer.

Regardless of where B2B companies fall on the spectrum of X and O integration, tackling it in some form is essential. Nearly all B2B companies are missing out on the critical continuous improvement and strategic decision-making benefits that result from a well-executed marriage of X and O. Not only is it an effective way to ensure that a company's internal metrics actually meet customer expectations, X- and O-data integration and analysis also guide effective service delivery. As one of our three recommendations for aligning customer experience within an organization, it enables companies to deliver a more fine-tuned experience consistently across all customer accounts and touchpoints. Integration of X- and O-data truly allows companies to get the most value out of their CX programs.

STARTING OUT

Results from the XM Institute's State of Customer Experience Management study show that B2B firms rate the lowest on skills related to combining X- and O-data to generate more actionable insights. Companies that have attempted this data integration or do it regularly are those at the higher levels of CX maturity. However, there are some relatively easy strategies for getting started, and most of them involve thinking about the challenge in a new way.

Begin with what you already have. With very few exceptions, the best place for companies to start is with what they already have—O-data. Although many CX professionals gather experience data and then search for operational metrics to add to the equation, it's far more beneficial to start with the O-data and then determine the type of X-data that will add value to the mix. Integrating O-data with the right X-data enables companies to make better business decisions and improve operations. To identify ways that X-data can complement existing O-data, begin by looking at:

> Companies that have attempted this data integration or do it regularly are those at the higher levels of CX maturity.

- Operational metrics that the company struggles to improve

- O-data metrics that directly impact the customer, but for which internal goals are set without customer input. Examples may include:

  1. Time from order to delivery

  2. Length of support call

  3. Time to resolution of support case

Engage with operational managers. While B2B managers can talk about their operational metrics, trends, and goals, it's rare to find one who knows what customers think and can answer key questions such as:

- Is our performance good enough for customers?

- Do our customers expect more or less?

- Are we measuring the right parts of the experience?

- Are other companies serving customers better?

A key to getting started with data integration is to find out what functional managers are measuring and why. Then work collaboratively to gather the X-data necessary to improve processes that are weak and make the experience better.

THE INTEGRATION OF X- AND O-DATA

X-data and O-data have become critical to managing a business. Combining them can provide a valuable advantage.

O-DATA INVENTORY
X-data is used to validate the correct use of O-data.

O-DATA PREP & ACQUISITION
O-data is brought in as X-data is collected.

OPERATIONAL DRIVERS
Current O-data informs what we collect from customers.

O-Data

X-Data

CX DESIGN
Companies start by taking inventory of their commonly used operational data and use that to inform the design of their CX program.

X-DATA COLLECTION
Operational data is then prepared, acquired, and integrated as experience data is collected.

EXPERIENCE DRIVERS
Companies then validate the O-data measurements they are using are consistent with X-data feedback that indicates what customers really want.

If O-data measures need adjustment, X-data guides the establishment of the right measures at the right levels.

NEXT-LEVEL CX

B2B companies with experience in using X- and O-data in tandem will benefit from moving toward higher levels of integration that involve alerts, personalization, and, finally, establishing ROI.

X and O alerts. Operational and experience data integration allows companies to design customized alert systems to help improve service delivery and proactively manage key customer relationships. By aligning customer feedback with key operational metrics, companies can predict the operational triggers that result in a poor customer experience. This prompts an alert to account representatives or others in the organization to intervene with specific customers.

Personalization. X- and O-data integration enables B2B firms to design personalized customer experiences that enhance the relationship. It starts with a better understanding of who customers are and how they interact with the organization (O-data), combined with their needs and perceptions (X-data). By integrating the two, companies can deliver a personalized experience that is more likely to meet expectations without a customer having to ask for it. In essence, it becomes about making it easier for customers to get what they need from their interactions with the business.
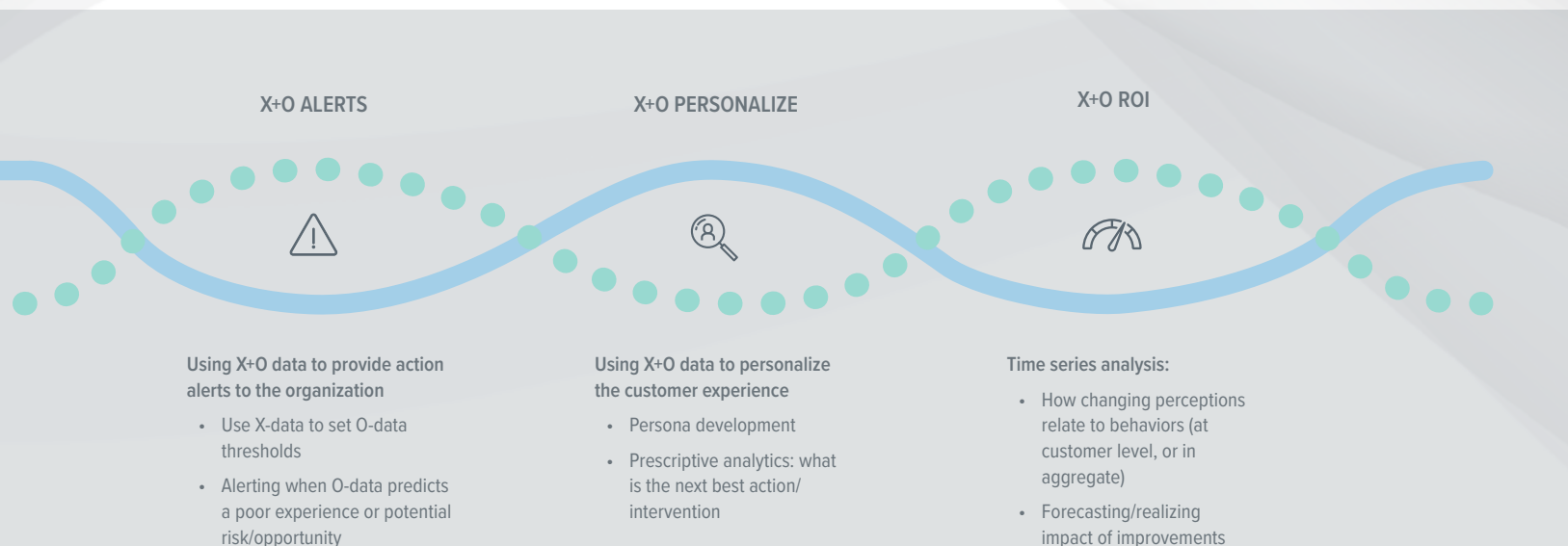
Here's an example: Some customers value the speed and ease of digital ordering and only need an account manager for complex orders. Other customers want an account manager to handle all their orders. With X- and O-data integration, companies can provide the right level of account management support when it matters most to provide a better customer experience.

ROI. X- and O-data integration is one of the best ways to prove the return on investment of CX initiatives. In many cases, CX professionals restrict ROI efforts to determining the total revenue impact of increasing customer loyalty by one percentage point. This is a valid goal, but there are many easier– and more impactful—ways to measure the business impact of CX activities.

Consider these examples:

- Using experience data to flag account-level vulnerabilities, B2B companies can act on customer insights and intervene to salvage or grow business.

- Companies can show increases in both orders and new customer retention by revamping a customer onboarding process based on customer feedback.

- B2B firms that optimize account management assignments to match customers' needs may see higher average order sizes and account profitability.

X+O ALERTS

⚠

Using X+O data to provide action alerts to the organization

- Use X-data to set O-data thresholds
- Alerting when O-data predicts a poor experience or potential risk/opportunity

X+O PERSONALIZE

🔍

Using X+O data to personalize the customer experience

- Persona development
- Prescriptive analytics: what is the next best action/ intervention

X+O ROI

⏲

Time series analysis:

- How changing perceptions relate to behaviors (at customer level, or in aggregate)
- Forecasting/realizing impact of improvements

X- AND O-DATA ACROSS THE JOURNEY

Here are examples of common X-data and O-data that companies collect through the various stages of the customer journey.

X DATA | O DATA

PRE-SALE

X-DATA
- Online experience
- Web intercepts
- Lost-deal feedback
- Cart abandonment

O-DATA
- Awareness data
- Brand recognition
- SEO rankings
- Lead tracking

START

X-DATA
- New customer feedback
- Installation feedback
- Delivery, activation complaints

O-DATA
- Close rate data
- Installation quality
- Time to install

USE

X-DATA
- Relationship feedback
- Focus groups
- Advisory boards
- Product feedback
- Interviews

O-DATA
- Usage data
- Financial metrics
- Competitive insights
- Attach rates
- Warranty claims

SUPPORT

X-DATA
- Transaction feedback
- Call recordings
- Complaint systems
- Customer Effort Score

O-DATA
- Contact center metrics
- Quality metrics
- Process efficiency
- 1st call resolution
- Transfers/handoffs

REPURCHASE

X-DATA
- Closed-loop feedback
- VoCE
- Loyalty metrics
- Churn rates

O-DATA
- Churn rates
- Purchase patterns
- Usage data
- Service patterns

IDENTIFY BROKEN EXPERIENCES THROUGH INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL LISTENING

It's hard to know what to fix when you don't know what's broken. Identifying customer interactions and touchpoints that are chipped, cracked, or broken leads companies to develop an effective CX strategy that strengthens relationships with customers and boosts the bottom line. In our discussion of how to design ideal customer experiences, it's the critical first step.

B2B firms must use both internal and external listening to illuminate the experiences that are ripe for improvement. And while this seems like a fairly straightforward recommendation, B2B firms fall short by limiting the use of listening methods and defaulting to standard surveys. Most surveys are too general, not focused in the right areas, or not analyzed thoroughly enough to pick up on existing issues and pinpoint the customer interactions that are less than ideal. B2B companies will want to investigate the wide variety of customer listening methods to find the right tools and combinations to target the pain points and suboptimal interactions that matter most to customers.

VoCE MAKES SENSE

VOICE OF THE CUSTOMER THROUGH EMPLOYEES

Companies frustrated by low response rates and complexity of gathering customer feedback often ignore gathering input from their own employees. However, front-line employees understand customer issues and are generally happy to share their input. What's more, VoCE can be implemented quickly, and comparing it to feedback receive from customers can reveal important gaps in perceptions.

STARTING OUT

With today's technology, sources of customer insight and information are plentiful. In fact, in our work with B2B companies worldwide, we've identified more than 20 ways that organizations listen to their customers. Instead of relying only on surveys, companies can use a variety of listening methods—from website feedback and social media to focus groups and online communities—to learn more about where and how the experience can be streamlined and improved.

Take a listening post inventory. Think broadly about listening and complete an inventory of the various sources of customer information and listening posts that exist in the business. The next step is to determine how all the information can be centralized to help identify customer pain points and initiate improvements throughout the customer journey.

Use internal intelligence and VoCE. Even without any formal customer listening in place, there's a good chance employees, particularly those who are customer facing, know the interactions that are broken and the issues that need to be addressed.

Companies can point their quantitative and qualitative listening methods at their employees to learn what they're hearing from customers. This method of gathering the voice of the customer through employees (VoCE) can be a quick and effective way to identify ineffective or frustrating customer experiences.

Develop processes to close the loop. Not only should B2B companies listen to customers, they must be prepared to respond to account-level problems and issues brought to light through negative customer feedback or complaints. Solid follow-up methods also allow companies to gain additional intelligence about potential problem areas. Many survey software tools have follow-up components built in.

> Solid follow-up methods also allow companies to gain additional intelligence about potential problem areas.

HOW DO YOU LISTEN?

Today, there is no shortage of methods for gathering insights from your customers.

- Advisory boards
- Customer complaint systems
- Ethnographic research
- Focus groups
- In-app feedback
- Interactive voice response (IVR)
- Journey mapping

- Kiosks
- Chatbots
- Online communities
- Online panels
- Paper surveys
- Phone surveys
- Qualitative interviews

- Social media monitoring
- SMS/text-based feedback
- Video feedback
- Voice of the customer through employees (VoCE)
- Web-based surveys
- Website feedback

NEXT-LEVEL CX

Specificity and organization in customer listening become increasingly important as B2B firms mature in CX. Integrating X- and O-data, analyzing data and results at a more granular level, and broadening the scope of organized customer listening are all ways in which B2B companies can elevate listening to identify experiential breakdowns and gaps in customer experience.

Generate account health dashboards. One of the problems account managers face is the inability to obtain all the key data about their accounts. Data is usually spread across multiple systems throughout the organization, if it's available at all. Even if account managers are able to locate data, it can be a challenge knowing what to do with it. Creating an account health dashboard can solve both problems. A good place to start is to combine all sources of feedback for each account into a single dashboard. The next step is to integrate key operational data to further increase the value for account teams.
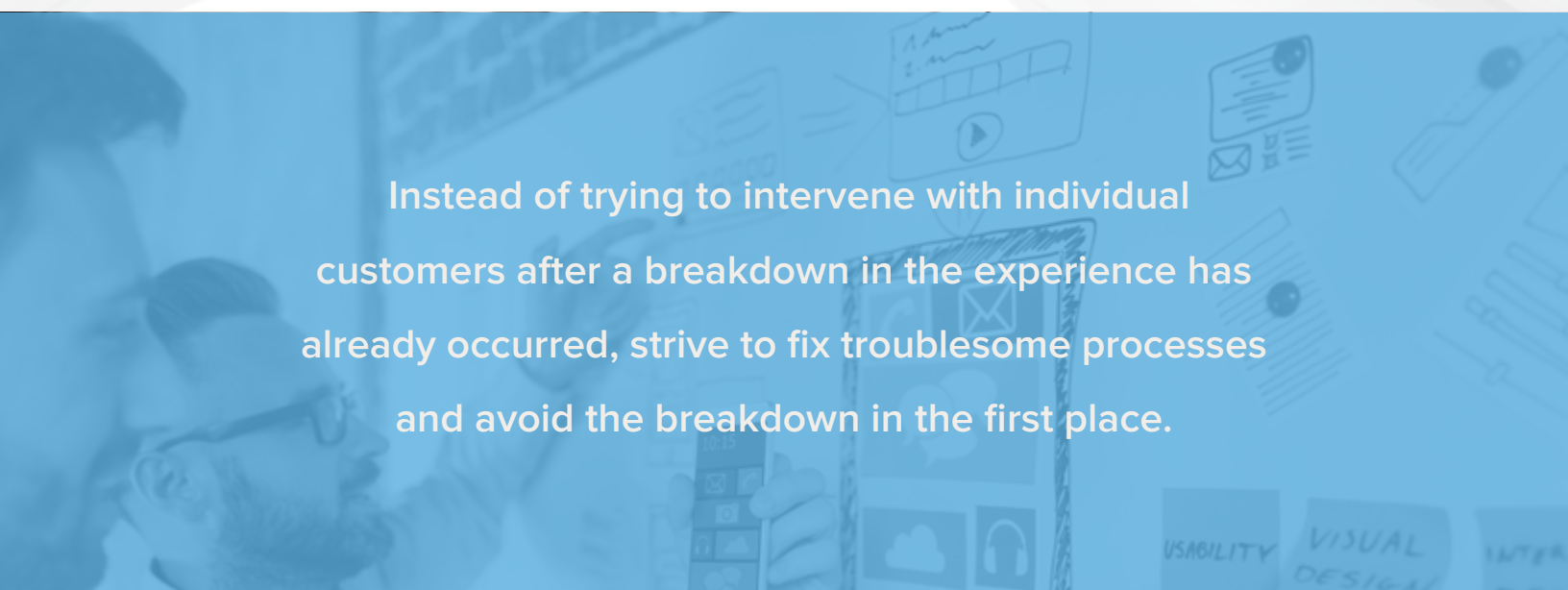
Develop a listening architecture. B2B companies advancing in CX should consider developing a comprehensive approach to align disparate customer listening activities into an intelligent, effective system that promotes action and drives change.

With companies collecting high volumes of customer information, it becomes necessary to evaluate the current inputs and outputs of those efforts for alignment to best practices, discovery of efficiencies that can be gained, and identification of any gaps.

Use customer feedback to inform continuous improvement. While it's important—and even necessary—to close the loop with individual customers who provide critical feedback or complaints, CX jumps to the next level when customer feedback is used to identify and fix systemic problems and broken processes. Instead of trying to intervene with individual customers after a breakdown in the experience has already occurred, strive to fix troublesome processes and avoid the breakdown in the first place.

B2B companies should consistently strive to close the loop on customer issues at the individual or "micro" level, as well as the systemic or "macro" level.

Instead of trying to intervene with individual customers after a breakdown in the experience has already occurred, strive to fix troublesome processes and avoid the breakdown in the first place.

JOURNEY MAPPING

A journey map is a powerful CX tool that visually plots the path customers take in interacting with a company. It points to gaps or breakdowns in service, allowing companies to make improvements that benefit the customer experience.

For those new to CX, use journey mapping to help the organization understand all the ways customers interact with you and to identify key moments of truth - the "make or break" touchpoints that define customer perceptions.
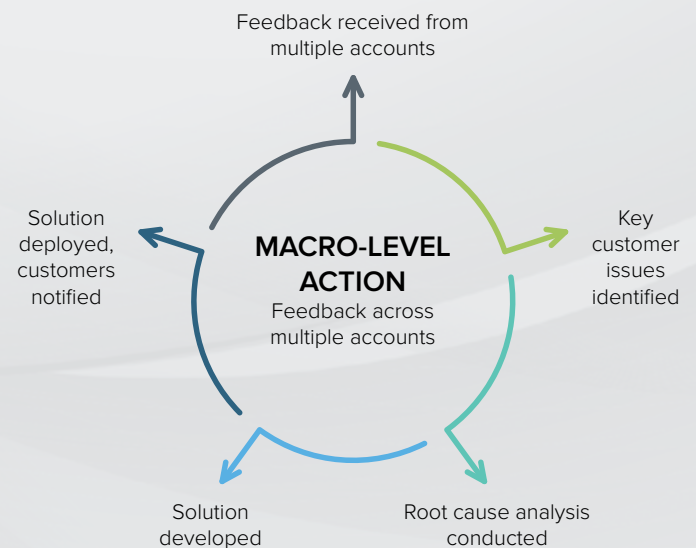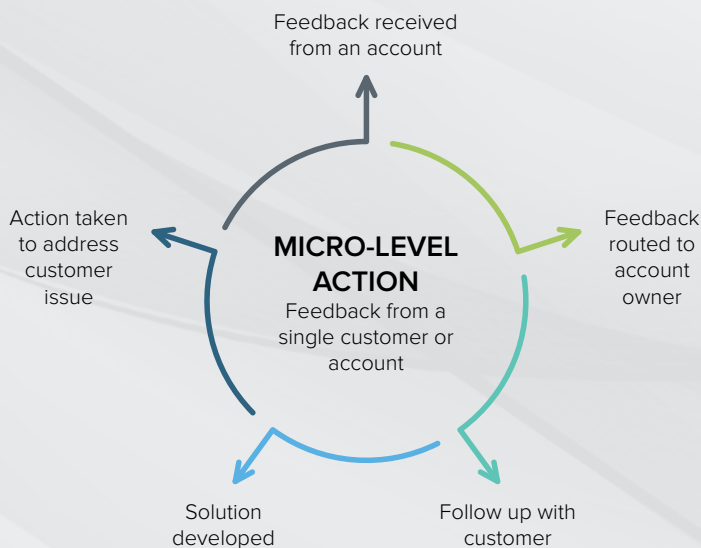
For more advanced CX teams, use journey mapping to refresh your CX approach or to analyze specific phases of the customer journey, digging deep to address the most intricate and important customer interactions. At any level, journey mapping is one of the best methods for creating internal collaboration all focused on identifying and fixing broken experiences.

MICRO AND MACRO − CLOSING THE LOOP AT MULTIPLE LEVELS

Just starting out with CX? Think of it as an exercise in fixing micro experiences. A customer complains, and you find an effective way to resolve it.

Ready for Next-Level CX? Turn your focus to addressing ineffective processes at a macro level.

Feedback received from an account

Action taken to address customer issue

MICRO-LEVEL ACTION
Feedback from a single customer or account

Feedback routed to account owner

Solution developed

Follow up with customer

Feedback received from multiple accounts

Solution deployed, customers notified

MACRO-LEVEL ACTION
Feedback across multiple accounts

Key customer issues identified

Solution developed

Root cause analysis conducted

USE CUSTOMER-CENTERED DESIGN METHODS TO DIFFERENTIATE THE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

The highest level of CX maturity is reserved for those companies that have achieved success in identifying and creating customer experiences that truly differentiate. Differentiation, the ultimate goal of CX, is a tall order, especially for B2B firms that struggle with just getting people to focus on the voice of the customer. Not surprisingly, B2B companies score the lowest, according to the XM Institute's State of Customer Experience Management study, in competencies related to differentiation. However, every business should strive for crafting experiences that set them apart if they want to compete in an environment where customer experience is highly scrutinized and increasingly important.

Achieving differentiation nearly always depends on applying human-centered, in this case customer-centered, design methods to design or redesign the customer experience. Human-centered design or "design thinking":

"Keeps people at the center of every process. A human-centered designer knows that as long as you stay focused on the people you're designing for— and listen to them directly—you can arrive at optimal solutions that meet their needs."

It's important to note that design thinking is much more common in product development and innovation. In fact, as traditionally practiced in organizations today, human-centered design workshops and product innovation processes are not generally the responsibility of CX teams. However, the philosophy of design thinking is applicable to CX: put customers at the center of the experience and then design around them to improve the journey.

STARTING OUT

Employing design thinking in customer experiences may seem like a pretty lofty goal, especially for B2B companies new to CX. However, it can be an effective way to jumpstart a CX program's value creation. Instead of just being the people who point out the problems, CX professionals and teams can be part of the solution too. Taking steps to truly identify with the customer and keeping the voice of the customer top of mind create an environment in which customer-centered design methods are more likely to emerge.

Partner with front-line employees. Customer-facing employees are one of the best sources of truth about customer needs and expectations. Invite them to participate in CX teams and initiatives and use their insights to help design better customer experiences.

Don't stop at process improvement. While process improvement is an important goal, companies should also look at ways to design better experiences for customers. It's not uncommon for companies to look at internal efficiencies and cost savings without considering the customer's experience. That means that sometimes process improvements that help the company can actually make the experience worse for customers. Customer-centric companies will find ways to do both.

Understand the customer journey. It's hard to put customers at the center of a design process without knowing what they're experiencing. Take time to understand the various touchpoints and how applying customer insights at key stages of the journey can inform improvement and design efforts.

Apply methodology to customer listening posts. Customer listening is a customer experience. The way B2B companies ask for feedback through various customer listening methods can have a big impact on how customers view the organization. Use design thinking methodology to develop or refine surveys and other customer listening strategies. As CX teams become more comfortable using the approach in their own work, they can serve as role models and provide best practices for the organization.

> Use design thinking methodology to develop or refine surveys and other customer listening strategies.

CASE STUDY

RIDING ALONG MAKES A BIG DIFFERENCE

Data for a distribution and delivery company showed that new customers weren't sticking around. To understand what was going on, CX professionals decided to ride along with drivers as they delivered goods to their customers. They quickly discovered that drivers were not only a wealth of information, but that they could be the key to a better customer experience. One problem: drivers were unaware which customers were new. As a result, new customers received no orientation or special treatment.

Taking note of this, the CX team arranged to have the boxes for new customers marked so drivers would be notified to spend a little more time with this customer, learn a bit about their business, and provide special attention. This adjustment -- coupled with training, additional quality checks, and some other touches -- made a big impact. In fact, retention rates for new customers doubled and the size of their orders increased by 25%.

A simple method – riding along – delivers big results!

NEXT-LEVEL CX

Imagining ways to use design thinking in CX programs becomes easier and more intuitive as a company's understanding of the customer grows. Strategies for companies with deeper roots in CX center around organization-wide education and evaluating the impact of design changes on the customer experience.

Host design thinking training or events. As CX becomes more of a company-wide priority, the principles of design thinking should be shared widely with functional teams and employees. Training and workshops on design thinking can help employees become more familiar with the concepts and how the customer perspective can be used to design better experiences.

Explore immersion experiences. A lot can be learned by walking in the customer's shoes. Immersion experiences, such as shadowing and ride-alongs, provide a firsthand view of the customer experience and can reveal areas for improvement or redesign. Some technology firms use digital monitoring to observe how customers use software and other tools.

Get involved in continuous improvement initiatives. CX professionals and teams can lend expertise and

> Ensure customer feedback is gathered before and after process improvements to confirm the change is effective and well received by customers.

serve as advocates for bringing customer insights into the company's continuous improvement activities. Even the most enlightened teams aiming to design new products and processes around the customer sometimes struggle to understand what customers really want. CX professionals can, and should, step in to help these teams get the right insights to drive their improvements.

Monitor implementation feedback. It's important to monitor and measure the impact of significant changes. Ensure customer feedback is gathered before and after process improvements to confirm the change is effective and well received by customers. CX teams should also advocate for well-measured pilots that roll out changes to a small group of customers ahead of full implementation.

CASE STUDY

EMERGENCY ROOM IMMERSION

Nobody likes to be rushed to the emergency room of a hospital. And, fortunately, many of us have not had to learn what that is like. However, for those who have, it can be a chaotic, anxiety-filled experience – a real challenge for a customer experience professional trying to design a better experience for patients.

That was the challenge when a CX team for a midwestern hospital wanted their board of directors to better understand what it was like to be a patient. After conducting conversations with actual patients to understand the emotional rollercoaster they had endured, the team deployed a full-day immersive experience where board members were guided through the process of arriving in the emergency

room and moving through all of the procedures as a patient would, including sharing a room with another patient. One of the participants even arrived on a gurney via an ambulance!

Hearing the stories and going through the immersive experience had a profound and lasting effect on the hospital leadership. What's more, it served as the foundation and catalyst for meaningful discussions about all the ways the hospital can deliver the best experience for their patients.

Listen to the entire story at
https://cxleaderpodcast.com/wear-comfortable-shoes/

ANOTHER WAY TO THINK ABOUT DESIGN THINKING

Design thinking is an iterative process in which we seek to understand the user, challenge assumptions, and redefine problems in an attempt to identify alternative strategies and solutions that might not be instantly apparent with our initial level of understanding.

At the same time, design thinking provides a solution-based approach to solving problems. It is a way of thinking and working, as well as a collection of hands-on methods. Design thinking revolves around a deep interest in developing an understanding, or deep empathy, for the people for whom we're designing the products or service.

DESIGN SPRINT METHODOLOGY

01	02	03	04	05	06
Understand	Define	Sketch	Decide	Prototype	Validate
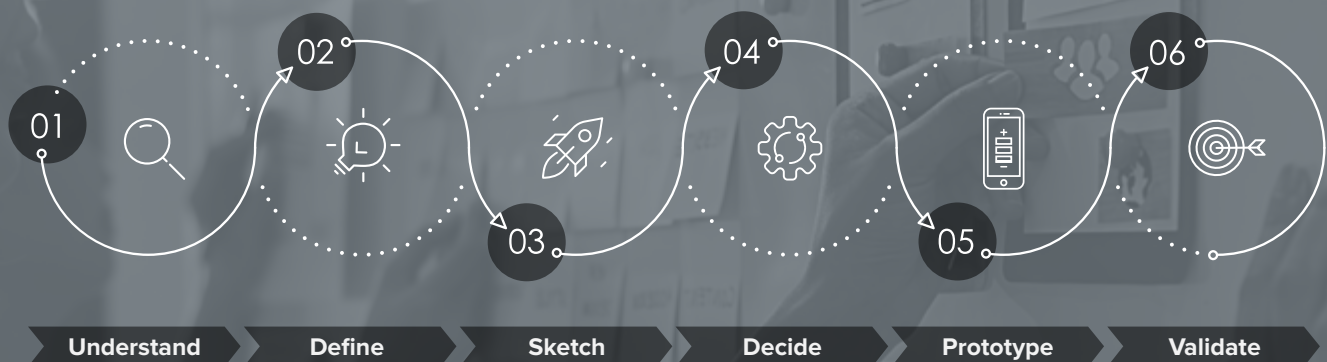
SOURCE: Design Sprint Methodology developed by Google

FIND THE HUMAN-DIGITAL BALANCE THAT B2B CUSTOMERS EXPECT

There's no denying the presence and power of the digital experience. As we mentioned in the opening chapter, consumers have come to expect the simplified experience of the "one click" digital transaction. And while B2B customers rely on humans to manage the complexities of the business-to-business relationship, they also expect the ease and speed of the digital experiences they get elsewhere to be integrated into their B2B interactions.

It's at this intersection where the challenge for B2B lies. It's about finding the right balance between human and digital interaction, which can be different for every customer. The difficulty for B2B companies is determining how to create an experience that's flexible—one that provides customers with the speed and ease of digital when they want it and the expertise and personalization of a human when they need it.

It's a tough balancing act and not one most B2B companies are comfortable with. On the whole, B2B has neglected digital transformation because it seems easier to continue relying on humans to overcome the shortcomings of digital systems. Any attempts at digital integration are often clumsy and complex and fail to align with the customer's experience or expectations. Further, when digital integration is considered, it's typically viewed as a cost-saving or self-serving measure instead of an asset to enhance the customer experience.

Armed with customer information and insights, CX can work alongside digital and user experience teams to find the human-digital balance that leads to better, easier, and more seamless customer experiences.

STARTING OUT

Now more than ever, customer loyalty depends on a company's ability to design emotionally engaging digital interactions. For companies to start improving their digital experiences, they must develop Digital CX capabilities. Digital CX helps companies better understand the "why" behind customer behavior at the moments that matter to customers and the business. This enables companies to respond quickly to drive improvements. As a Digital CX listening program is developed, CX professionals and teams play an important role by monitoring and validating digital implementation with customer listening.

Compare digital and human touchpoints. Deploy CX listening around key digital touchpoints and their in-person counterpart touchpoints to compare and contrast the experiences. For example, measure the experiences customers are having with all support channels, not just the call center experience. This allows companies to understand the circumstances in which each channel provides the best experience for customers.

Keep listening and monitoring. Work with the digital team to continue listening and measuring after implementation of a new or updated digital interaction to ensure it's having a positive impact and meeting customer expectations. At a minimum, companies should have an always-on, passive feedback mechanism on their website so customers can provide comments. The ideal scenario, however, is to actively seek targeted input from customers on new features or changes to the digital touchpoint.

STRIKING THE RIGHT BALANCE

HUMAN

B2B customers want a personalized experience where they can call on informed contacts to listen, recommend, serve, troubleshoot, and address their complex needs and objectives.

DIGITAL

B2B customers want digital options that are self-serve and always on, allowing them the control to quickly and easily search, shop, inquire, share, purchase, and research to meet their objectives.

Driven by the ease and convenience of B2C digital experiences, B2B customers have come to expect the same levels of speed and accuracy. And yet, the human relationship in B2B industries is as important as ever. B2B CX leaders need to guide their organizations to find and deliver the right balance.

NEXT-LEVEL CX

At higher levels of maturity, CX professionals become key influencers in digital transformation. Using relevant customer insights, CX can help companies evaluate where digital experiences should be integrated in the customer journey to improve the experience and help meet company goals.

Assess and assign experiences. In consultation with the company's digital team, evaluate and determine the experiences that can be digitized and made easier and the ones that are more complex and require human interaction and expertise. Relationship and baseline surveys can help with this. Journey mapping can uncover pain points; then determine whether they can be effectively digitized to benefit the customer. To assess and assign the experiences that can be effectively moved to digital and those that should remain governed by human interaction, companies will need:

- A map of the customer journey with an explicit digital path.

- Insight from customers on the interactions and touchpoints they find difficult or time consuming.

- Deep-dive insights and thorough understanding of the circumstances under which troublesome interactions can and should be moved to a digital channel. For example, complex or high-value support cases should go directly to escalation teams, while basic cases like billing requests could be handled digitally.

Foster ongoing collaboration with digital teams. Designate a CX team member to work with the company's digital transformation team and ensure a representative from the digital team sits on the CX team. Often directed by a user experience group, most digital transformation teams are already engaged in some form of design thinking and user research. The value the CX team brings is the voice of the customer—integrating customer feedback and insights into the digital transformation in a broad, systematic, and ongoing fashion. When CX and digital transformation teams collaborate, there's a better chance the customer perspective will influence digital design and drive ongoing iterations to make the company's digital experience the best it can be.
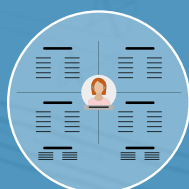
DIGITAL MAPPING METHODS
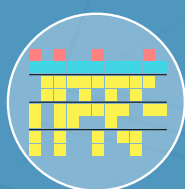CX leaders need to embrace user experience (UX) methods to design and improve digital experiences.

Persona Creation

Develop profiles of customer types to better understand their needs and deliver the experience they want.

Empathy Mapping

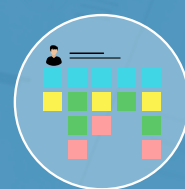Map the emotional ups and downs that your customers experience.

Scenario Mapping

Chart common scenarios (aka, stories) that show how your customers interact with your digital tools to achieve an objective.

Digital Journey Mapping

Chart the digital path your customers take as they work with you.

Service Blueprinting

Map the interaction of people, systems, and processes for specific touchpoints in the customer journey.

DX vs. DCX - WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

New terms have surfaced as digital transformations occur and it is helpful for customer experience leaders to know the difference.

Digital Experience (DX) refers to a wide range of individual digital touchpoints or interactions. DX is commonly the domain of user experience (UX) professionals who strive to optimize every digital interaction with customers.

Digital Customer Experience (DCX) refers to the overall experience customers have interacting with all digital channels to access data, request help, purchase items, check status, and much more. While DX is concentrated on individual interactions, DCX is focused on the collective experience of all digital touchpoints.

What it means for CX leaders – Now more important than ever, customer experience leaders must monitor and assess the overall digital customer experience to ensure it meets the demands of their customers. What's more, they must work side-by-side with UX professionals to ensure consistent quality of each digital interaction.

COMPANIES ARE INVESTING, BUT THE GAP STILL REMAINS

95%
are adequately investing in digital experience

82%
have undergone a digital transformation

71%
still have a customer-centricity gap

A recent study by Episerver found that 95% of B2B companies believe their company is adequately investing in improving the digital experience it delivers online and 82% of them claim they have undergone a digital transformation project. Of those that have taken on such a project, nearly all of them (97%) considered it to be successful. And yet, 71% of overall respondents claimed their company has a customer-centricity gap, meaning the digital experience they offer does not meet the needs and expectations of their customers.

SOURCE: B2B Digital Experience Report: A Customer-Centric Pivot in Pivotal Times, published in 2020 by Episerver

NEXT-LEVEL CX
FOR B2B COMPANIES

ABOUT THE STUDY

This report, Next-Level CX for B2B Companies, began with a hypothesis: B2B companies are lagging behind in CX. We wanted to assess the status of B2B CX, see if our hypothesis was accurate, and, if so, use the research to provide advice for those who lead CX programs in B2B companies.

Working with the Qualtrics XM Institute, Walker analyzed data from the institute's published report, The State of Customer Experience, 2019. We dedicated sharp focus to comparing the maturity of business-to-business companies in comparison to companies that are business-to-consumer.

To no one's surprise, our hypothesis was correct.

To better understand the data and the shortcomings of B2B CX initiatives, we conducted multiple interviews with experienced CX leaders, both those who serve large corporations as well as experts at Walker, most of whom have more than 20 years of experience working with large B2B enterprises.

Walker maintains sole responsibility for the research and the recommendations. Walker executed the information-gathering activities, conducted the analysis, and wrote the report. The findings and views expressed in the report are Walker's and do not necessarily reflect the views of the contributors.

WALKER

Walker is an experience management (XM) services firm. We specialize in helping today's companies build and maintain a competitive advantage by delivering exceptional experiences. Ultimately, our purpose is to help companies succeed by putting customers and employees at the heart of every decision. For more information, visit walkerinfo.com.

Qualtrics XM institute™

The Qualtrics XM Institute helps Experience Management (XM) Professionals drive value from their XM programs and inspires them with new ways to embed XM across their organization. The Institute's faculty conducts ongoing research to uncover leading-edge best practices and trends, which they share through thought leadership content, community, training, and certification programs. For more information, visit xminstitute.com.

ABOUT WALKER

WALKER

WALKER'S SERVICES

Walker provides a wide range of flexible services to maximize your technology investment and accelerate the success of XM initiatives.

- **Technology services**. Implementation and engineering services for all programs, from fast starts to highly customized deployments.
- **Managed services**. Flexible professional services model for end-to-end program management and optimization.
- **Advisory services**. Tailored advisory solutions to build a world-class experience management practice.

As important as *what* we provide is *how* we deliver it. At Walker, we provide a highly personalized experience regardless of if you are new to XM or you have a well-established program that you want to take to the next level.

WALKER'S PARTNERSHIPS

Walker's strategic partnerships ensure that we provide best-in-class XM tools to complement our broad range of services. Walker is a charter member of the Qualtrics Partner Network (QPN) and is proud

to be a top Delivery and Consulting partner in North America – recognized as CX Partner of the Year in 2019. Walker is also an SAP Silver Partner, specializing in helping companies make the most of their data.

Qualtrics Partner Network

SAP Silver Partner

To learn more about Walker, please visit walkerinfo.com

THE CX LEADER PODCAST

The CX Leader Podcast with host Steve Walker provides weekly insights for business leaders to improve results by unlocking the potential of their customer experience. More than a discussion of CX topics, the podcast focuses on ways CX professionals can develop the right skills and ideas to be effective leaders in their organizations.

The
CX LEADER PODCAST

To learn more and view more than 100 episodes, visit cxleaderpodcast.com.