Qualtrics XM institute™

HOW-TO GUIDE

Creating a Closed-Loop Program

By **XM Institute**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This how-to guide will help you develop a closed-loop program, which encompasses the collection of processes and practices that enable an organization to systematically absorb and respond to customer feedback. A closed-loop program is essential to the success of a customer experience (CX) program as it translates the feedback and insights you collect into customer-centric actions and decisions, carried out by groups across the organization. While this guide contains suggested steps and advice to help you navigate through this process, you can (and should!) adjust the approach as needed to match your specific environment. This may include completing steps in a non-linear fashion, adding steps or activities where necessary, skipping steps you've done previously, or bringing in outside advisors as needed to provide additional support and guidance.

STEPS

This how-to guide on building a closed-loop program contains the following steps:

1. **Define the Vision for Your Closed-Loop Program.** Lay the groundwork for success by defining the goals of your closed-loop program and then developing and socializing a strategy for reaching them.
2. **Identify Triggers for Closed-Loop Response.** Determine which specific customer segments, responses, and listening posts should initiate a closed-loop follow-up process.
3. **Build Closed-Loop Ticketing Workflows.** Design and implement closed-loop ticketing workflows that automatically route relevant customer feedback to the individuals or teams who are responsible for following up on those insights.
4. **Activate the Organization to Deliver the Closed-Loop Program.** Create the necessary internal resources and processes to equip both individual employees and the overall organization with the information, skills, and tools they need to close the loop consistently and successfully.
5. **Optimize and Expand Your Closed-Loop Program.** Based on initial feedback and performance, improve your existing closed-loop processes and judiciously expand your portfolio of workflows.

Step 1: Define the Vision for Your Closed-Loop Program

Goal: Lay the groundwork for success by defining the goals of your closed-loop program and then developing and socializing an strategy for reaching them.

A closed-loop program allows an organization to systematically follow up with individual customers who are affected by an experience, as either indicated by their feedback or uncovered through analytics. Connecting one-on-one with customers to acknowledge and improve their experiences will provide a number of benefits to both your CX program and your business overall.

It helps forge the types of strong emotional bonds that are critical for long-term customer loyalty and retention. It surfaces systemic – often unknown – issues along customer journeys as well as opportunities to expand relationships that are already going well. It enables the organization to better understand customers' true needs, expectations, and challenges, fueling the creation of standout new experiences. Plus, because a strong closed-loop program embeds customer-centric insights and actions within teams across the organization, it plays a vital role in both spreading and aligning enterprise-wide CX practices.

In fact, this practice of "closing the loop" with individual customers is such a fundamental CX activity, XM Institute has identified Immediate Response as one of the 20 XM Skills organizations must build to master the discipline of customer experience management and, more specifically, one of the four insights-driven action loops of the Respond Competency. In this initial phase of the development process, you are establishing a strong, sustainable foundation for your closed-loop efforts by first defining clear program objectives that support your broader CX and business goals and then putting a plan and team together to help you achieve those objectives.

Some activities you may want to carry out in this step include:

- **Identify explicit program objectives.** Before you can architect an effective closed-loop system, you first need to define specific program objectives. The aim here is to set North Star goals that will inform the direction of the rest of the closed-loop development process and help you track and communicate the value of this program to relevant stakeholders. These objectives may include anything from quickly surfacing and triaging issues, to building customer loyalty by differentiating yourself from competitors, increasing revenue by shifting detractors or passives to promoters, or expanding existing relationships. These objectives should be rooted in your organization's CX vision and broader business objectives and should include specific numbers where possible (e.g., "We expect teams to respond to 100% of all closed-loop triggers for a customer response.") To secure genuine buy-in and ownership – a requirement for any successful closed-loop program – include key stakeholders in the development of these objectives and ensure you have the necessary reporting and analytical capabilities to effectively track and communicate progress across these goals.
- **Inventory existing feedback sources.** Your closed-loop program will (hopefully!) eventually encompass a number of closed-loop workflows, each one triggered by a different set of criteria originating from a variety of customer feedback sources. The goal of this activity is to put together a list of those different customer feedback sources – such as surveys (including relationship, transactional, and journey), social media posts, contact center conversations, and third-party rating sites – to help you pinpoint which ones you would like to build workflows off of. While you will narrow down this list in later steps, it's valuable to build this inventory as a reference artifact early on as it will influence where you decide to start your program and which business areas you choose to partner with. In addition to existing listening posts, this inventory should also include other key elements of your VoC program, such as listening cadence and volumes of responses, which will inform your closed-loop strategy in later steps.
- **Determine your starting point.** There is undoubtedly any number of customer experience areas you could begin building a closed-loop program around. The goal of this activity is to pick a single business unit or team to partner with first, allowing you

to refine your strategy and master the details required to effectively scale the program. The group you decide to partner with first should own one or more of the customer listening posts you identified in the last bullet and be willing to work with you on implementing the necessary closed-loop activities and processes. This group should also be in a position to help you deliver on the program objectives you previously identified. Starting small with willing business partners will give you the opportunity to test and improve the initial workflows, follow-up activities, and enablement efforts before rolling them out more broadly.

- **Assemble your working group.** Once you've identified your program objectives and the business unit you plan to partner with first, you then need to establish a working group to coordinate the build and execution of this initial closed-loop program. This group should consist of the stakeholders you need to support this process and may include a representative from groups like IT, the executive team, internal enablement teams, partners or technology vendors (including your Voice of the Customer (VoC) provider), and, most importantly, leaders or owners of the business area you are starting in. The goal here is to set up a governance structure early on that involves all the key decision-makers in the planning and development of your closed-loop program and keeps them engaged throughout the process. This will eliminate roadblocks or hiccups down the line.

Tips & Tricks

1. Take the time to do this right! Securing buy-in and support for your closed-loop objectives early on will give everyone a North Star goal to align around and prioritize against in later steps.
2. Listening posts may exist in many different areas of the business. Some good places to start looking for CX data include CRM reporting, Quarterly Business Reviews, and intranet pages.
3. Before bringing your whole working group together, meet with members 1:1 to introduce them to a closed-loop process, set their expectations, and answer any questions they have.
4. Secure C-suite buy-in early in your process. Their support will be critical for ensuring closed-loop activities receive the necessary resources and attention they need to be successful.
5. Closing the loop should not be a check-the-box activity. If you do not have the resources or support to follow up consistently and effectively, we recommend focusing your attention elsewhere.

Resources to support you:

MULTIMEDIA
Video: Four Insights-Driven Action Loops

BLOG
The Five Causes of Customer Churn and What to Do About Them

TOOL
Executives' Commitment to XM: Assessment

LAUNCHPAD
Launchpad: XM Operating Framework

BLOG	TOOL	BLOG
Build Four Action Loops to "Respond" to Insights	**Worksheet: Stakeholder Mapping**	**Five Guiding Principles of Customer Recovery and Closing the Loop**

Step 2: Identify Triggers for Closed-Loop Response

Goal: Determine which specific customer segments, responses, and listening posts should initiate a closed-loop follow-up process.

Once you have set the strategic direction of your closed-loop program and assembled your initial collaborators, you then need to identify which exact customers and feedback sources are going to activate this follow-up process. Rather than diluting your efforts by trying to respond to every single customer who provides feedback, you should instead start small. In this step, you are, in partnership with your collaborators, selecting just one or two customer segments and triggers to focus on initially.

Some activities you may want to carry out in this step include:

- **Assign closed-loop ownership.** Now that you've defined your closed-loop triggers, it's time to determine which internal teams and individuals are responsible for following up with the customers who meet those criteria. The goal of this activity is to determine who should be primarily responsible for responding to the closed-loop ticket and who else should be notified of the feedback. For example, if a B2B company's closed-loop process is triggered when a respondent gives a low score on the NPS question on its annual relationship survey, it may identify an Account Management team leader as the primary ticket owner, but it may also notify the actual Account Manager, Renewals Manager, and the Solutions Consultant on the account as well. One important consideration here is whether you want to centralize or decentralize closed-loop follow-up. While a centralized approach does have a few benefits – such as efficiency, consistency, and a trained team – in general, we recommend opting for a decentralized approach as a single, central closed-loop team often lacks important insights into the process and context around the experience. Centralized teams also often struggle to consistently communicate relevant insights back to the business owners who ultimately need to be driving these experience improvements.
- **Choose where to send ticket notifications.** If closing the loop requires employees to leverage a completely different set of tools, applications, or systems than the ones they normally use, they are much less likely to do it. The goal of this activity is, for each of the teams who are responsible for following up on customer feedback, to identify where you want closed-loop notifications to appear. If you are early on in your CX journey with limited integrations across business systems, you might start by only triggering a notification via email; whereas if you are more advanced, you might start sending alerts to a wider variety of systems. For example, for salespeople, you might want to trigger closed-loop alerts within email, Salesforce, and Tableau, while for product owners, you might want to route alerts through Jira or Slack. For employees who spend most of their time on the floor of the business – such as wait staff, in-store employees, or housekeeping – consider how digital tools like handhelds or mobile

phone apps could help them track and respond to customer feedback while away from a computer.

- **Identify customer response channels.** There are a number of different channels you could use to follow up with customers, including email (most common), phone calls, SMS, in-app messaging, social media, etc. The goal of this activity is to determine which of these channels to use to close the loop with customers. It's important to keep a few things in mind here. First, what are the resources at your disposal? If you are under severe resource constraints, you may need to start with mass communications, but more personalized approaches, like emails, phone calls, and in-person conversations will be more valuable in the long run. Second, does the customer have a stated preference? This might be their response to a survey question on "What is the best way to contact you? (phone number/email address)" or part of an onboarding questionnaire. Third, which channel did they send the feedback through? We recommend closing the loop using the same channel they submitted feedback through whenever possible. Fourth, what is the goal of this follow-up? For example, email is better for tracking activities through VoC or CRM tools, allowing you to track response times and feed information into a customer's profile for future reference and insights, whereas phone calls are more effective for escalated situations. And lastly, are there any compliance or privacy factors – like GDPR requirements – you will have to account for? Just remember, this follow-up is part of the customers' experience, so it should be positive and on-brand.
- **Establish closed-loop metrics and targets.** When customers provide feedback, they expect the organization to listen and take action based on what they shared. Closing the loop with customers will validate those expectations, demonstrating that you genuinely care about their perspective and are willing to at least consider the issues they raise. However, you will only enjoy these closed-loop benefits if you respond to their feedback in a timely fashion. The goal of this activity is to identify – in partnership with relevant business leaders – which metrics you want to track as part of your closed loop program (e.g., response time, percentage of closed tickets, percentage of tickets escalated, etc.) and what targets you want to initially put in place around those metrics. For example, organizations often aim to initially follow up on feedback within 24-72 hours, starting as soon as the customer submits a survey, and close a ticket completely within 30 days. Regardless of the exact response time you commit to, it is critical that the stakeholders who are closing the ticket can take the required action within the designated timeframe; otherwise, you will be demoralizing internal employees and undermining customer trust in your brand. Document these metrics in Service Level Agreements (SLAs) that you socialize both internally and externally and recognize that they may vary by customer segment.
- **Define escalation criteria and owners.** Inevitably, some closed-loop follow-ups will require additional time or resources to adequately address the customer's feedback. For example, resolution may be outside the scope of the closed-loop owner, the issue may require additional research to diagnose and fix, or the problem might present PR risks if not handled delicately. Sometimes the closed-loop process itself may break down or get delayed, like if the closed-loop owner ignores the ticket. The goal of this activity is to identify which issues may need to be escalated and then design workflow pathways that escalate the ticket to more senior team members, such as executives, senior business owners, or a CX Center of Excellence leader. Ensure these escalation owners understand when and how they will be pulled in, and set their expectations

around the amount of time it should take them to resolve the escalation and what resources are available to support them.

- **Design a draft workflow map.** Now that you know what is triggering each closed-loop follow-up workflow, who the ticket is going to, and in what system, it's time to document all this information and then validate it with business and technical partners. The goal of this activity is to have a simple document capturing the set of workflows you expect to stand up. This type of asset is a valuable tool for communicating and socializing important information about your closed-loop program with all your different collaborators, from business and technical partners to your working group members and other relevant stakeholders. We recommend including information such as criteria triggering your closed-loop response, the expectation for response time, primary ticket owners, escalation criteria and owners, and the expected impact if this process fails. It is also important to ensure you build in the ability to capture the root cause of the initial trigger, which will help drive the later actions.
- **Collaborate with technical partners to build out workflow integrations.** Once you arrive at the point of actually creating workflows that trigger tickets based on certain customer responses, you will likely need to partner with technical groups such as IT and/or your VoC provider. The goal here is to work with these teams to implement the technical aspects of your closed-loop program, such as ticketing, alerts, workflows, and integrations. While these partners should have been involved throughout the development process, it's important here that they clearly understand your closed-loop program's vision, roadmap, and workflow map to ensure you are all aligned. We recommend coming prepared with all detailed information such as the email addresses of those who will receive the alerts, preferred channel of response, and expectations on response time, all of which will help this process proceed more smoothly.

Tips & Tricks

1. Add an open-ended "why" question after your survey trigger to help you identify the root cause and prepare ticket owners for follow-up conversations. Session replays are also valuable here.
2. To demonstrate quick wins and build momentum, ground initial triggers in high-volume, high-impact challenge areas.
3. Journey maps are an excellent tool for identifying and prioritizing potential triggers that sit at key "moments of truth" along customer journeys.
4. Use customer personas to prioritize which segments to initially follow up with. If you don't yet have personas, see if marketing has ones you can borrow and update.
5. Be conservative when estimating your initial response volume goals to ensure you don't bite off more than you can chew and have the time to establish the right behaviors early on.

6. If your response volume is too high, ticket owners are likely to only respond to the lowest effort customers. Make sure your closed-loop strategy disincentivizes cherry-picking.

Resources to support you:

BLOG
Advice for Propelling Your Net Promoter Score Program

BLOG
Using Journey Maps to Define Listening Posts

RESEARCH
Five Phases for Creating Powerful Personas

Step 3: Build Closed-Loop Ticketing Workflows

Goal: Design and implement closed-loop ticketing workflows that automatically route relevant customer feedback to the individuals or teams who are responsible for following up on those insights.

Now that you know what's initiating your closed-loop process, you need to create the underlying ticketing and workflow system to route the relevant customer feedback to the individuals and teams responsible for acting on that information. Tickets are created when the specific criteria you defined in the previous step are triggered, and workflows are the path those tickets take to get to the appropriate stakeholders in the appropriate systems and formats. The goal here should be to work towards an entirely automated closed-loop system that sends out tickets, alerts, reminders, and escalations directly to the people responsible for following up without any manual intervention.

Mapping this process correctly is critical to ensuring feedback is acted on swiftly and effectively, and it often requires close collaboration with groups like IT and VoC providers, as well as the leaders who own the business area(s) that house your initial triggers.

Some activities you may want to carry out in this step include:

- **Identify explicit program objectives.** Before you can architect an effective closed-loop system, you first need to define specific program objectives. The aim here is to set North Star goals that will inform the direction of the rest of the closed-loop development process and help you track and communicate the value of this program to relevant stakeholders. These objectives may include anything from quickly surfacing and triaging issues, to building customer loyalty by differentiating yourself from competitors, increasing revenue by shifting detractors or passives to promoters, or expanding existing relationships. These objectives should be rooted in your organization's CX vision and broader business objectives and should include specific numbers where possible (e.g., "We expect teams to respond to 100% of all closed-loop triggers for a customer response.") To secure genuine buy-in and ownership – a requirement for any successful closed-loop program – include key stakeholders in the development of these objectives and ensure you have the necessary reporting and analytical capabilities to effectively track and communicate progress across these goals.

- **Inventory existing feedback sources.** Your closed-loop program will (hopefully!) eventually encompass a number of closed-loop workflows, each one triggered by a different set of criteria originating from a variety of customer feedback sources. The goal of this activity is to put together a list of those different customer feedback sources – such as surveys (including relationship, transactional, and journey), social media posts, contact center conversations, and third-party rating sites – to help you pinpoint which ones you would like to build workflows off of. While you will narrow down this list in later steps, it's valuable to build this inventory as a reference artifact early on as it will influence where you decide to start your program and which business areas you choose to partner with. In addition to existing listening posts, this inventory should also include other key elements of your VoC program, such as listening cadence and volumes of responses, which will inform your closed-loop strategy in later steps.
- **Determine your starting point.** There is undoubtedly any number of customer experience areas you could begin building a closed-loop program around. The goal of this activity is to pick a single business unit or team to partner with first, allowing you to refine your strategy and master the details required to effectively scale the program. The group you decide to partner with first should own one or more of the customer listening posts you identified in the last bullet and be willing to work with you on implementing the necessary closed-loop activities and processes. This group should also be in a position to help you deliver on the program objectives you previously identified. Starting small with willing business partners will give you the opportunity to test and improve the initial workflows, follow-up activities, and enablement efforts before rolling them out more broadly.
- **Assemble your working group.** Once you've identified your program objectives and the business unit you plan to partner with first, you then need to establish a working group to coordinate the build and execution of this initial closed-loop program. This group should consist of the stakeholders you need to support this process and may include a representative from groups like IT, the executive team, internal enablement teams, partners or technology vendors (including your Voice of the Customer (VoC) provider), and, most importantly, leaders or owners of the business area you are starting in. The goal here is to set up a governance structure early on that involves all the key decision-makers in the planning and development of your closed-loop program and keeps them engaged throughout the process. This will eliminate roadblocks or hiccups down the line.

Tips & Tricks

1. To help create an accurate initial workflow, shadow people in the business area(s) you are focused on to understand their relevant processes and motions.
2. Your IT and digital counterparts will be essential for supporting and implementing your closed-loop program. Regularly connect with them 1:1 to get on their roadmap and build strong relationships.
3. In addition to volume metrics, measure the quality of closed-loop responses by auditing action documentation to ensure compliance requirements and best practices were followed.

4. Because of the intense emotions involved, escalations are an especially critical aspect of your program. Take the time to ensure these paths are mapped in a way that ensures swift action.
5. Consider requiring action documentation, where the ticket owner captures the root cause of the issue, actions taken, and any potential expansion opportunities that arise from the follow-up.
6. Follow-up communications should be on-brand and consistent in tone, visual design, etc. with other company communications. Adhere to any CX experience design principles you've defined.

Resources to support you:

TOOL
Template: Closed-Loop Workflow Map

BLOG
Seven Mistakes to Avoid When Closing the Loop with Customers

RESEARCH
Global Study: IT Executives and XM

RESEARCH
Five Steps for Building a Strong CX Metrics Program

BLOG
Looking to Improve Your Response Rates? Use these Four Levers

DEEP DIVE
ServiceNow Uses Action Workflows to Build an "Insights to Action" Culture

Step 4: Activate the Organization to Deliver the Closed-Loop Program

Goal: Create the necessary internal resources and processes to equip both individual employees and the overall organization with the information, skills and tools they need to close the loop consistently and successfully.

A successful closed-loop program requires a strong change management philosophy. Everyone involved in the process must first understand their individual roles and responsibilities and then needs to have the tools, resources, skills, and motivation to carry out those closed-loop activities consistently and effectively. In this step, you are documenting and communicating procedures, developing strong training plans and content, and creating specific resources and job aides to support that learning. These activities should all be supported by a dedicated group of internal experts that people can turn to with questions or requests throughout this process, such as your CX Center of Excellence.

In addition to building an individual's knowledge and skills, this step also encompasses activities to build the broader organization's knowledge and skills. Here you should also design consistent processes to capture feedback from both customers and employees, surface underlying trends, and share those findings with the right people across the organization. This ongoing motion will not only align cross-functional decisions and initiatives, it will also help foster a more customer-centric, empathetic company culture.

Some activities you may want to carry out in this step include:

- **Build a suite of closed-loop enablement materials.** Ultimately, your closed-loop program will only be as effective as the employees who are carrying out these activities. The goal of this activity is to develop a comprehensive set of training and resources that prepare and empower employees to successfully follow up with customers. This should include both closed-loop training courses – delivered through new hire onboarding and regular refresher sessions – as well as tools and artifacts they can use to respond effectively in the moment. These resources – which may include step-by-step instructions, templates, talking points around common problems, next-best-action recommendations, role-clarity documents, resolution and escalation guidelines, FAQs, etc. – should be embedded directly into the ticket so the closed-loop owner has them on hand when they're following up. We recommend partnering with groups like internal enablement teams as well as your VoC or CRM provider to help build out these tools and design these trainings. Just remember, these enablement materials are not static documents; they should be revisited and updated regularly as your closed-loop program expands and you learn more from customers.
- **Empower closed-loop owners to resolve issues themselves.** Organizations will often design and implement a successful closed-loop process and then forget to empower their employees to actually fix the issues customers are complaining about, resulting in frustrated customers who receive nothing more than a generic "We are sorry that happened" message in response to their feedback. The goal of this activity, therefore, is to ensure that the closed-loop owners who follow up with customers have the training and tools necessary to provide real-time service recovery while they engage with customers. When employees know they have an array of tools at their disposal – such as the ability to replace products, offer future discounts, or provide refunds – they will be able to respond to customer feedback more quickly and confidently.
- **Create role-specific dashboards for closed-loop reporting.** To help everyone involved in the closed-loop process – from the frontline ticket owners to functional leaders and executives – track these follow-up activities, create role-specific ticket reporting dashboards. The goal of this activity is to drive action and accountability by providing stakeholders with the information and motivation they need to effectively close the loop, thereby achieving the business goals you identified in Step 1. For example, each ticket owner should see a dashboard that displays information relevant to their specific tickets – such as the number of open tickets, the percentage of tickets closed within 48 hours, and a table with recent tickets – while their team leader's ticketing dashboard should show team-level metrics. The owner of the closed-loop program should have a dashboard tracking cross-functional performance at a high level, yet with enough detail that they can meaningfully act on the data (e.g., trends, volumes by department and root cause, and a snapshot of the current situation). The business leaders on your working group, meanwhile, should see high-level insights over their functional area as well as the results of root cause analyses.
- **Celebrate successes.** One effective way to both motivate employees and keep closed-loop activities top-of-mind for the organization is to reward and recognize the individuals and teams who particularly excel at following up with customers. This could include highlighting successful ticket owners in public shoutouts, customer testimonials, or more formal awards and incentive programs. The goal of this activity is to showcase what good closed-loop practices look like and inspire others to replicate their behaviors. Not every success you celebrate needs to be a heroic effort.

Smaller wins and consistent performance that have led to tangible value for the business (e.g., higher satisfaction, retention, revenue, referrals) are also worthy of amplifying.

- **Use closed-loop findings to drive enterprise-wide experience improvements.** One of the major benefits of a closed-loop program is that it helps organizations systematically uncover and remediate underlying issues that are resulting in poor customer experiences. So while simply responding and following up one-on-one with customers is a strong first step, true systemic change happens when you use the information gleaned from both customers and employees during this closed-loop process to drive the other three insights-driven action loops: Continuous Improvement, Process Integration, and Strategic Decision-Making. The goal of this activity is to identify the root causes of pervasive issues, uncover opportunities to improve customer experiences, and help stakeholders across the business understand and care about CX.
- **Teach ticket owners the S.P.A.C.E. Model.** While your exact closed-loop process will be completely custom to your organization's and program's unique needs, as you design this process we recommend following the five principles of XM Institute's S.P.A.C.E model to ensure that ticket owners are empowered to not just reduce customer churn, but actively improve customer loyalty and build your brand. First, make sure your closed-loop process is speedy by finding and managing cases quickly. Then, personalize the process by allowing customers to choose their own resolution path and preferred contact methods, and ensure you are authentic by responding in a way that demonstrates empathy and reflects your organization's brand. This process should also be consistent within and across case types. And finally, make sure your design your closed-loop program in a way that is emotionally aware – managing the emotional peaks and ends of the recovery journey and using deep listening to calibrate your CX metrics.

Tips & Tricks

1. Rather than dictating new processes, behaviors, or targets, proactively involve business leaders and the frontline in resource and training development so they feel ownership over the outcomes.
2. Bring real end users into the role-specific dashboard design process to ensure you are communicating closed-loop information in a way that's easy for them to understand and act on.
3. Early on, you are likely to generate many new CX and process improvement ideas. Ruthlessly prioritize which to tack first and build on your quick initial wins to expand your efforts.
4. Build an internal microsite to house all your enablement materials and, where relevant, include these resources on other team's microsites (Sales or Contact Center success centers).
5. Consider an executive call-back program, where executives perform the follow-up with certain customers. This will build their empathy and demonstrate a commitment to experience improvement.

6. Authenticity is key! Make sure ticket owners are removing placeholders from templates and tailoring communications to match the concerns of each individual customer.

Resources to support you:

BLOG **Five Guiding Principles of Customer Recovery and Closing the Loop**	RESEARCH **Best Practices Across the Activate Competency**	TOOL **Worksheet: 5 I's of Employee Engagement: Strengths and Gaps**	BLOG **How do you Engage Employees? Adopt the Five I's**
TOOL **Prioritizing Improvements Across CX Skills and Actions**	BLOG **Four Principles for Action-Centric Dashboard Design**	BLOG **7 Mistakes to Avoid when Closing the Loop with Customers**	DEEP DIVE **ServiceNow Uses Action Workflows to Build an "Insights to Action" Culture**

Step 5: Optimize and Expand Your Closed-Loop Program

Goal: Based on initial feedback and performance, improve your existing closed-loop processes and judiciously expand your portfolio of workflows.

Building a closed-loop program is not a one-and-done activity. While your program should start small – with just one or two initial workflows – to realize all the benefits outlined in Step 1, you will eventually need to expand your efforts to encompass a wider range of customers, triggers, and business areas. In addition to increasing the volume, you should also continue to refine and tailor your closed-loop activities to drive deeper connections with and insights from the individuals you follow up with. Here you are also establishing and monitoring a suite of metrics to ensure the closed-loop processes you put in place are performing according to expectations and delivering on the objectives you identified in the first step.

Some activities you may want to carry out in this step include:

- **Monitor response rates and success metrics.** Rather than defining targets for your closed-loop metrics early on and then never revisiting them again, you need to constantly monitor and recalibrate the goals for your program. This activity aims to ensure that, as organizational priorities shift and the organization forms new habits around closing the loop, the targets you set for your closed-loop metrics – such as response rates and time – remain optimized. These targets, which should be set in collaboration with business partners, should be high enough to be aspirational, yet realistically achievable so they do not demoralize closed-loop owners. Proactively monitoring these metrics will also help you uncover potential opportunities or challenges in the process that you need to address. For example, if a team of closed-loop owners has a 0% response rate, there may be an issue with the workflow that isn't routing those alerts to the team correctly. On the other hand, if a team has suspiciously quick closure times, it may be an indication that they are gaming the system and not following the prescribed process. Proactively monitoring these metrics will help you identify issues in both the technical elements of your program, such as workflows and ticketing, as well as the change management and enablement aspects of your efforts, such as where you may need more coaching or enablement materials.

- **Check in with closed-loop owners regularly.** As with the rollout of any initiative or project, it's important that you continue to improve upon the closed-loop follow-up process once it has been deployed. The goal of this activity is to stay closely aligned with the teams and individuals who are responsible for implementing your closed-loop strategy in order to understand the successes and challenges they've experienced. These check-ins could take a variety of different forms, including a recurring check-in meeting with some of these stakeholders, focus groups composed of closed-loop owners, or quarterly reviews with business partners. Regardless of the exact form, these meetings are vital, not only for identifying ongoing process improvements, but also for building support and buy-in from stakeholders by demonstrating that you care about this process and their experiences.
- **Demonstrate the ROI of your closed-loop program.** Once your program has had some time to run its course, begin exploring how to tell a compelling ROI story around the effect this closed-loop process has had on relevant business metrics or goals. A good place to start is by looking through available experience and operational data sources to identify opportunities to show that closing the loop has helped drive outcomes such as increased revenue, repeat business, or positive feedback. For example, you could show that customers who received a closed-loop follow-up are 8x more likely to be promoters compared to those who didn't, and promoters are 70% less likely to churn and have a 75% higher average upsell deal size compared to detractors. The goal of this activity is to ensure continued cross-functional buy-in and support for closing the loop by making a clear and compelling business case for these activities. This becomes important especially as you begin thinking about expanding your program to new areas or additional workflows across your organization.
- **Identify additional workflows to add to your program.** Once you have rolled out all the elements of your initial closed-loop processes and they are all working as expected, reconnect with your working group to identify which workflows (if any) you would like to implement next. For example, if you grounded your initial closed-loop trigger in a relationship survey, you may next want to set up a workflow around a post-event survey in a high-impact area, such as following an onboarding journey or after a contact center interaction. The goal here is to thoughtfully expand your program to begin improving customer experiences at scale and systematically reap the benefits highlighted in Step 1. As you increase your portfolio of workflows, keep in mind that consistency across follow-up activities is essential.

Tips & Tricks

1. Establish a regular 1:1 meeting cadence with key business stakeholders to share relevant closed-loop findings, trends, best practices, etc., and solicit their feedback on the program.
2. Don't rush to add additional workflows! Confirm your initial processes are working successfully and you are accomplishing your goals before adding additional processes.

3. To demonstrate the ROI of your program, get creative and connect with business owners who may have additional insights and metrics you can tie together to construct your ROI story.
4. As your program expands, look for opportunities to become proactive (rather than reactive) and trigger workflows based on predicted experience rather than just explicit.
5. Track the experience and operational metrics of customers you've followed up with to assess whether they score you more favorably in the future or expand their relationship with you.

Resources to support you:

BLOG	RESEARCH	MULTIMEDIA	RESEARCH
Metrics: Recipes for Proving ROI and Elevating XM	**Best Practices Across the Disrupt Competency**	**Realizing Value From Your XM Efforts**	**Driving Insights with X- and O-Data**

WHAT COMES NEXT

The next steps are to socialize and implement your newly created closed-loop program. How you execute this will be unique to your organization and should always support your organization's broader business objectives. Some steps to consider include:

- **Accelerate learning and improvement cycles.** Once you have one or more successful closed-loop workflows in place, focus on accelerating your organization's ability to learn from and respond to the insights generated from these processes. Often this will take the form of surfacing, sharing, and then addressing the root causes of issues at an increasingly rapid pace. Root causes can be identified by customers themselves (either as part of a survey question or unstructured feedback), documented by ticket owners as part of their follow-up process, or automatically detected through operational data or analytics. These root causes should be distributed – ideally immediately and automatically – to the team responsible for fixing those issues. The CX team should maintain a cross-functional view of these root causes and work with functional owners to prioritize and address those problems or opportunities. Ultimately, the aim here is to develop as many real-time continuous improvement processes as possible to maximize the positive impact of your closed-loop findings.
- **Uncover opportunities to apply automation.** As you build out your closed-loop program, you should be working towards automating as many processes and workflows as you can. Look across your workflow map and identify where there are opportunities to create more efficiencies in your program, such as by setting up more advanced ticketing integrations. While this should be the goal you are aspiring to, be cautious about implementing too many automations too quickly. Not only do you run the risk of the process breaking down, but you don't want customers to feel as though they are receiving impersonal, robotic responses to issues they are passionate about.

- **Target triggers around increasingly specific segments, topics, and feedback.** Rather than following up with every customer equally, as your closed-loop program matures, refine your triggers and follow-up activities to become increasingly specific and personalized. The more targeted you can make these efforts, the more customers will feel as though you truly understand and care about them as individuals, helping you forge deeper emotional connections and build the type of long-term loyalty that will provide significant financial and strategic benefits to your organization. Valuable tools you can use here include things like customer personas, conversational analytics, and rich customer profiles.