



Own the customer experience | The Xpragmatic View



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Own the total customer experience is a well-known concept that was already introduced in 1998 in publications such as the bestseller *Customers.com* of Patricia Seybold. Five years later, it seems that many organisations did not really get the message.

Dear Bank,

We have waited long to send you this letter. It never seemed important enough, so we always dropped the idea. However, as they say: enough is enough.

As you know, we are a user of your PC-banking application. It allows us to prepare our financial transactions in a convenient way on our PC and then to send all of this to you over the Internet. In reply we then receive all updated account information. We must admit, this is a great tool.

Recently, you have introduced a new "feature" in this application. After receiving our updated account information, we now sometimes receive a warning telling us that some information messages are waiting for us. These messages can be read via your browser-based Internet-banking application.

Now, we must tell you that we always thought that this was a very peculiar way of communicating. We are using the PC-banking application (that we have to pay) because it is a far more convenient way of handling our financial transactions, compared to the (free of charge) browser-based solution.

Whatever the advantages of a browser-interface, reality also is that such user-interface has some serious limitations. In addition, the speed of a PC-based solution is far superior. Therefore, we always wondered why you were handling these information messages in such a way. Why not simply sending them, together with the account information, to the PC?

Anyway, last time we used the PC-banking application, we received another one of these warnings telling us that another message was waiting for us.

We must admit that our first reaction was not to read it. Indeed, we were a bit in a hurry. As you know, it takes some time to start the Internet application and to navigate to the specific page where you can read the messages. We also knew from previous experience that these messages are rarely very important. However, there always is that uneasy feeling that this time, the message might be important. So we decided to have a look.

The message was the following:

Are you between 10 and 14 years old and do you like the xyz program on TV? Would you like to see these artists live on stage? That can be arranged for! Simply rush to your local banking branch and participate in our little contest. In every branch, a number of customers will be invited for a unique live concert of the xyz band.



CUSTOMERS.COM
 How to create a profitable
 business strategy for the
 Internet
 Patricia B. Seybold with
 Ronni T. Marshak

■ *Kind regards.*

Dear Bank, we do appreciate that you are giving us this great opportunity. Unfortunately, as you should know, you are not exactly right on target about our age. Neither are there any other members of our family that fall into this category. This also you should know because all of them are your customers. And, by the way, we are neither an Apple Macintosh owner and we are neither a user of your other PC-banking solution that you were talking about in your previous messages.

Therefore, we do suggest that you no longer send us this type of warnings telling us that some useless marketing message is waiting for us. We won't read them anymore. This communication channel has been professionally blocked by yourself.

Yours truly.

Of course, our bank isn't the only one whose behaviour is a bit "strange". Every day, you can notice similar examples. Already since 2000, we are using the same virus scanning software. We bought this product directly, over the Internet, from that specific company. Since then, this same company is continuously trying to sell us this same product. The weirdest thing about it is the fact that they do know that we are a customer, since all of their messages start with *"As a valued customer of ..."*. However, this is the only product we ever bought from them, so it is hard to understand where things go wrong.

Not knowing your customer is being ignorant of the potential negative impact of your initiatives. Unfortunately, this is the reality for many organisations. Several years of e-business and countless CRM-exercises have not changed this reality.

It is strange. Whatever transaction you do these days, companies are always trying to collect a maximum of information about you, about your family, your preferences, etc. *"in order to understand your specific needs and to tailor the offering accordingly"*. Unfortunately, in most cases, this is not what is being done or what you will get. Most companies are still building data warehouses instead of customer relationships.

In addition, many companies do not seem to be able to correctly assess the impact of their initiatives. However, in many cases, it is quite easy to do. As in the example of our bank, they can simply use the feedback of their own employees to get a fair understanding of the real customer experience. Therefore, look at your initiatives from a real customer perspective.

As many will tell you, Business Process Management (BPM) is becoming an important new evolution. Already today, several organisations are analysing and documenting their business processes, looking for opportunities for improvement or innovation. While doing so, they should not limit their view to the internal or the "visible" processes. The traditional view on business processes typically does not take into account important aspects of the customer interaction.


Therefore, do put yourself outside your organisation. Look at your company and its activities as if you were a customer. Do take into account what you know about your customers and what you don't know and assess the potential impact of this "not knowing". If you do it correctly, then BPM might be a great instrument for your organisation. If you don't, then your future initiatives are likely to create the type of interaction that we are experiencing today: as a customer we get the uneasy feeling that we are increasingly being "owned" and we cannot really say that it's a great "experience".


About the author



Marc Buyens is analyst, management consultant and owner of Xpragma. Marc started Xpragma in 1999 after a 20+ years career in the IT sector. Today, he provides advice, training and mentoring services focusing on the intersection of technological evolution, organisational change and business strategy: a messy world of unfulfilled promises.



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