

6 Best Practices in CX for Forward- Thinking Brands

Strong CX doesn't happen by accident. Great brands make conscious choices that take their CX to the next level.

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Customer experience is the top competitive advantage for brands today.

When consumers are willing to [pay more for a good customer experience](#) and [more likely to jump ship after a bad one](#), CX leaders need to hyper-focus on delivering quality customer experiences at every level of their organization—from the C-suite to the contact center.

But we won't sugarcoat it: Creating positive CX change is much easier said than done. Enterprise companies have more customer data than they know what to do with, departments feel increasingly siloed, and customer preferences rapidly change in today's hyper-connected, always-on marketplace.

If your brand wants to stay viable for the long-haul, then you need to develop a [modern customer experience strategy](#) that provides a slick, seamless experience at every customer touchpoint.

And we've rounded up the six best practices to help you do it.

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Give customers a choice at every step of their journey.

You can't begin to build a [great customer experience](#) until you identify and analyze your customers' needs and touchpoints with your business. And the best tool for the job is a [customer experience map](#). These maps help you understand the relationship between your customers and your brand across all of your channels.

If you're working at an enterprise brand, a journey map is nothing new for you. But forward-thinking brands use their customer experience map to not only lay out touchpoints, but to ensure customers have choice in every moment.

Start with a customer experience map rather than a map of the customer journey.

Both customer experience and customer journey maps are necessary tools for understanding the customer relationship. That said, they both serve different functions.

Customer journey maps are linear. They create a prescribed path through a specific channel. And this is a major problem for forward-thinking brands, because, as AT&T's Director of IVR Transformation Kristen Kurelo put it in her [CCW presentation](#): "Our customers want to choose how they are served."

Customer experience maps explore the customer experience across every channel—highlighting their thoughts, emotions, and desires as they interact with a brand. These maps give direct insight into the how and why behind customer interactions, enabling brands to better understand who their customers are and what they need.

And it's only by knowing what they need that you can provide them with the right choices.

To accurately map the customer experience, teams need to collaborate with other teams. [Forrester's 2020 CX report](#) shows that CX teams are still suffering from siloed data—and failure to organize cooperation across departments has increased by 9%.

So make it accessible. Designers: Don't lock your maps away into designer files. Call center ops: Call routing isn't the same as a map. You need to look across disciplines and incorporate needs from multiple perspectives of the total experience. Have regular meetings to go over what these maps say, where hurdles are present, and create a task force to tackle each one quickly and efficiently.

Use customer sentiment to update customer experience maps and discover pain points.

First-party data is key to building accurate customer experience maps. Using real-time voice of customer survey tools (like [Mindful Feedback](#)) lets you quickly collect customer sentiment that you can feed directly into your customer experience map for a better understanding of your customers' experiences and pain points with your brand.

Another benefit of real-time feedback tools is they allow you to quickly address those pain points before they snowball into negative reviews and lost revenue. Once you've identified areas of friction in your customers' experience, prioritize them based on severity and ease of resolution. If a problem is severe but easy to resolve, handle that one first. Effective prioritization produces the best results in the shortest amount of time.



For more

Bridge team silos and close the loop with [real-time feedback](#).

Deliver a consistent omnichannel experience.

Modern brands are already omnichannel—customers can interact with a brand from a variety of channels at any time. But when it comes to switching channels, well, that’s where forward-thinking brands are focused.

With more comms channels available to consumers than ever before—chatbots, email, SMS, social, voice—forward-thinking brands must deploy [omnichannel CX strategies](#) to connect the customer experience across all channels, show up consistently for their customers, and allow customers to seamlessly transition between those channels throughout their journey.

So, if a customer engages with a chatbot on your website, then decides to escalate to voice, their chatbot interaction should follow them into their interaction with an agent—giving the agent context into the customer’s situation and teeing them up for a quicker, more efficient conversation.

But for most brands today, the customer has to start over. Any perceived “choice” given to the customer isn’t really a good choice because of this. And with 33% of customers saying repeating themselves is their number one frustration, forward-thinking brands can’t afford these errors.

[Think With Google](#) research shows that omnichannel strategies drive 80% higher rates of store visits. Customers might research products online, look at them in the store, and [seek answers on the phone](#)—all before making a purchase.



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[Connecting experiences across channels](#) is critical for every step of the customer journey.

Consolidate CX goals and data across all channels.

To create a true, omnichannel experience for your customers, you need to develop [organizational goals and metrics](#) that focus on boosting channel and department harmony rather than fortifying siloed, independent channels.

Important cross-channel metrics could include:

- **Containment rates:** How frequently do customers need to move from one channel to another to resolve their problems? Where do they start, and where do they go?
- **Handle time:** How long do customers wait to have their issues resolved? How much of this time is active?
- **Cost-to-resolution:** How much does it cost to resolve customer issues? Which channels cost the most, and which channels are faster?

Tracking these metrics requires a [fully connected, integrated CX platform](#) that lets customers seamlessly move between channels while providing consistent experiences and minimizing customer drop-offs.



For more

- Containment rates can paint a picture of where [customers experience drop-off](#).
- A [high cost-to-resolution](#) might be due to data silos.

Connect channel-specific tech.

We've talked about consolidating and connecting your data across channels, but you also need to connect your tech to ensure that data flows smoothly between channels.

Your digital channels (live chats, chatbots, in-app) need to seamlessly connect with your voice channels (ACD, CCaaS), which, in turn, need to connect with your CRM.

True omnichannel persists throughout all customer interactions, and without reliable cross-channel connections, your agents will be siloed without the info they need and customers will be forced to restart their journey when switching channels.

Personalize your CX with first-party data.

Build a well of first-party customer data to support personalization and authenticity. [Customer surveys](#), [real-time feedback](#), and customer touchpoint metrics will help you develop a better understanding of customer behavior and demographics.

McKinsey's 2021 report reveals that [71% of customers](#) expect a personalized experience. Still, privacy concerns have forever altered the relationship between company and customer. Companies must approach data collection, personalization, and customization with a **customer-centric**, relationship-first approach.

Collect relevant customer information through surveys and feedback

In an always-on, always-connected world, companies are swimming in data. But data that isn't relevant isn't helpful. **Forward-thinking brands concentrate on quality and automation to find the key insights.**

Use [surveys and direct customer feedback](#) to own your customer data end to end. Sending out surveys (especially post-IVR surveys!) and following up with customers during their experience will yield the information your organization needs to build relationships and trust that fosters customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Real-time feedback provides companies with relevant, actionable information. Customer-generated data includes information the customer wants to provide and issues the customer needs to be addressed. By collecting highly relevant data faster, companies can better prioritize issue resolution.



For more

See how Mindful Feedback gets [real-time insights](#) for in-the-moment actions.

Develop channel-agnostic, personalized touchpoints.

Personalize customer experiences and build relationships through [channel-agnostic context](#). Whether a customer calls, emails, or chats, all CX representatives should have access to the same customer database.

Tech like [Mindful Handoff](#) prevents customers from starting over with each conversation. Say a customer starts a chat and finds they can't solve their problem. When they escalate to voice, Mindful Handoff captures the context of the chat and delivers it to the agent before the call. **Regardless of channel, the customer gets a personalized experience that delivers results.**

Consistency and context are necessary to build customer relationships. It's difficult (if not impossible) to build a long-lasting and humanized relationship if the relationship resets with each conversation.

Build trust with better security and data governance procedures.

Data privacy and protection are growing concerns—and today's customers are more knowledgeable and cautious about their data than ever. Only 33% of customers today believe companies [use their data responsibly](#). Though customers want personalization, they also want privacy.

Build your CX experience on a [platform that prioritizes security](#) to alleviate customer concerns and reduce your organization's risk. A customer-centric approach requires that you both collect customer data and protect it.

Accelerate your customer feedback cycle.

Customer feedback loops formalize the relationship between collecting customer data and acting upon the data collected. **Forward-thinking brands are creating tighter customer feedback loops and prioritizing fast and efficient changes based on customer input.**

[Fifty-nine percent of customers](#) will walk away from a brand they love after several negative experiences. And 17% will walk away after a single negative experience. Customers often leave silently—and the company is left in the dark.

Accelerating your customer feedback loops gives you the information you need in time to act.

[Customer feedback](#) is most useful during a narrow time window—after a customer has experienced an issue but before they’ve become frustrated and moved on. The faster you can resolve issues, the happier customers will be.

Automate the CX feedback process to get faster customer insights.

Use automation to improve the consistency and timeliness of your [customer feedback collection](#)—without increasing the workload of your CX team.

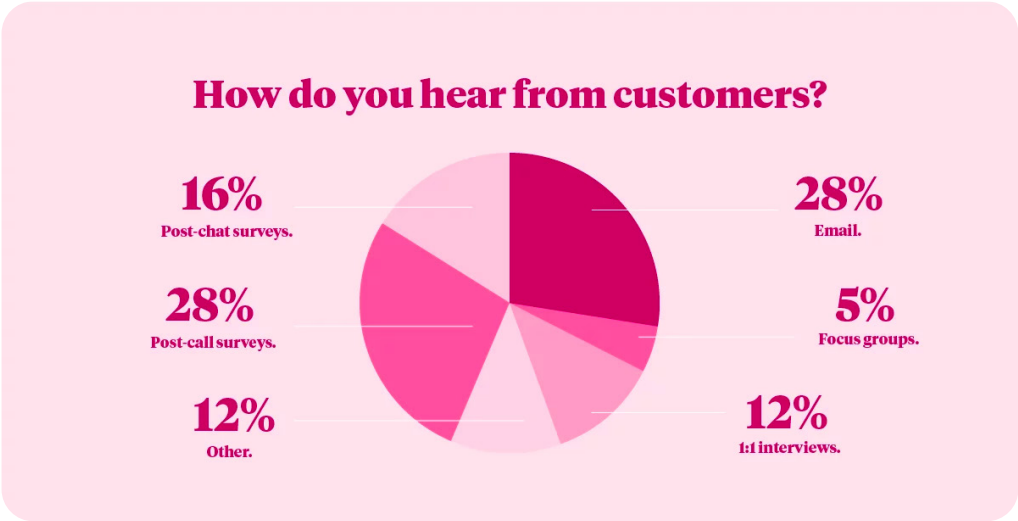
Best-in-class feedback and survey tools will flag negative feedback from customers and immediately prompt a follow-up call from the CX team. This way, CX teams can quickly address the customer’s issue before it snowballs and results in a lost customer (or customers).

But remember: Automation should never replace one-on-one interactions. Rather, it should be used to improve the consistency of follow-ups and personalized care. Automating the CX feedback process means you’ll never miss a customer query—and you can track every potential issue until resolution.

Collect customer feedback when and where it's relevant.

The channels in which you request customer feedback can drastically change the volume and quantity of responses.

In our workshop at 2022's CCW Las Vegas event, we polled attendees and asked about how they collect customer feedback. The vast majority said they used post-call surveys or email, while smaller amounts used post-chat surveys, 1:1 interviews, or focus groups.



As a provider of a [voice of customer solution](#), we can vouch for the effectiveness of post-call surveys. And, when dialed in with notifications to be sent directly to agents and managers, enterprise brands can move with the speed of a startup to put out fires and close loops.

So don't rely on an email address to get feedback. Request feedback where it makes the most sense for your customer, and where you can get the freshest responses.



Check it out

Watch our sessions from 2021's CCW: one with [AT&T](#) and one with [U-Haul](#).

Improve your employee experience.

Forward-thinking brands understand that customer service agents drive the customer experience—both positively and negatively. If your employees are happy, [chances are high that your customers will be](#), too. Provide employees with additional training, support tools, and flexible benefits to preserve company culture and boost employee performance.

Set agents up for positive interactions with technology and support.

The tech you use in your contact center makes or breaks your customer's experience.

As a customer, it's frustrating being stuck in an unhelpful chatbot loop or [left on hold for more than 5 minutes](#). And when customers finally do connect, they take their frustration with their experience out on the agent—clogging up the hold queue and demoralizing your employees.

Tech like [virtual queues and smart callback software](#) eliminates hold times and lets customers go about their day without the phone crammed to their ear. Virtual queueing and callback tech also smooths out peak call times, making it easier for your workforce manager to efficiently staff your contact center while taking the burden of an infinite hold queue off your agent's shoulders.



For more

It's surprisingly easy to beat [long hold times](#).

Improve customer satisfaction and employee empathy with training and support.

Regardless of how automated your CX platform is, the customer experience frequently hinges on one-on-one employee interactions. This is why customer empathy is such a critical component in CX.

According to [Salesforce](#), 68% of customers expect brands to demonstrate empathy—but only 37% of customers believe that they do.

Use workshops and training scenarios to teach representatives how to project understanding and build their empathy skills. Empathy-focused training will help employees better understand and react to customer needs, often leading to faster (and more amicable) resolutions.

Another key to building empathy is actual knowledge of the customer's journey.

If an agent knows that the customer has researched online and chatted about their issue already, they'll be way more understanding of the frustration they might have. Use a solution like [Mindful Handoff](#) to bridge digital and voice experiences so that agents are fully prepared with everything they need to know about the customer.



For more

[Experience drop-off](#) can be just as hard on agents as it is on customers.

Use AI to deflect and escalate support tickets.

AI and machine learning systems must be used thoughtfully and in support of the customer's needs. Today's companies may add AI technology (like chatbots) to their websites in hopes of streamlining the customer experience—only to increase customer frustration due to poor programming.

A well-integrated AI (read: connected across channels) will deflect customers from calling support by providing helpful resources—and recognize when a customer requires escalation to a human.

Analyze intent to direct customers to the best support avenue.

AI has been around for a while. Modern enterprise brands are certain to have it utilized in at least some portion of the customer journey. The problem we hear from many clients, however, is that the AI can't handle all the things they expected it to—leaving customers frustrated in their robotic interactions.

Forward-thinking brands aren't putting all their chips on AI. Instead, they're using tools like chatbots to effectively direct customers to [self-service or agent support](#) based on the option that best suits their needs. If a customer is just typing "agent, agent, agent," it's not only likely that their problem is urgent—they're also frustrated.

AI systems excel at analyzing a multitude of factors quickly, from behavioral information to customer demographics. AI systems can even collect important customer information while still escalating calls, automatically generating data from customer interactions.

Once calls (or other interactions) have been escalated, AI-collected data must provide additional context about the customer's needs to human support staff. Agents can then view the customer's previous interactions and responses to general survey questions—quickly identifying the customer's needs.



Pro Tip

AI still has a long way to go. But if it can determine that a question is too complex or valuable for it to solve, then escalating to an agent quickly will enhance key interactions and build trust.

Provide support to employees with agent assist tech.

As employees provide support, they can use AI-driven databases to provide fast answers to customer questions. AI is increasingly being used to augment employees' skills and knowledge, letting them answer questions faster and resolve tickets.

Context-driven AI algorithms consider customer needs, products, and behavior to deliver the most sensible results to the CX team. Meanwhile, a human representative still provides personalized attention to the customer.

As an example, a customer may need to better understand how to use a product—but may require a thoughtful and patient explanation. While the customer is on the line, AI-empowered agent assist can work in the background to surface customer information and relevant support information for the agent to use while on the call.

When AI functions as a support system or a tool rather than a replacement, CX interactions remain humanized and personal.

Summing Up

Brands looking to stand out from the competition, attract more customers, and build long-term loyalty among their current base need to implement CX practices that prioritize seamless, customer-centric interactions across every channel.

And brands that do it well will see an increase in growth and revenue. One study by Harvard Business Review found that companies that excel in CX and customer loyalty grow their revenue [2.5 times faster](#) than competitors—proving that CX can't just be an afterthought or nicety for businesses looking to stick around.

While markets and industries will inevitably shift, the need for strong customer experiences will always remain the same. Mindful offers a suite of capabilities that can flex and grow with your business, all while enhancing customer experience and contact center efficiency. From callback and real-time feedback solutions to click-to-call and omnichannel transition tech, we help forward-thinking brands create experiences that wow customers and keep them coming back for more.

Want to learn how? [Schedule a demo](#) with our business team to see how we can help streamline and boost your CX.