



Solving the CX Puzzle

Talent, Technology, and Operational Expertise

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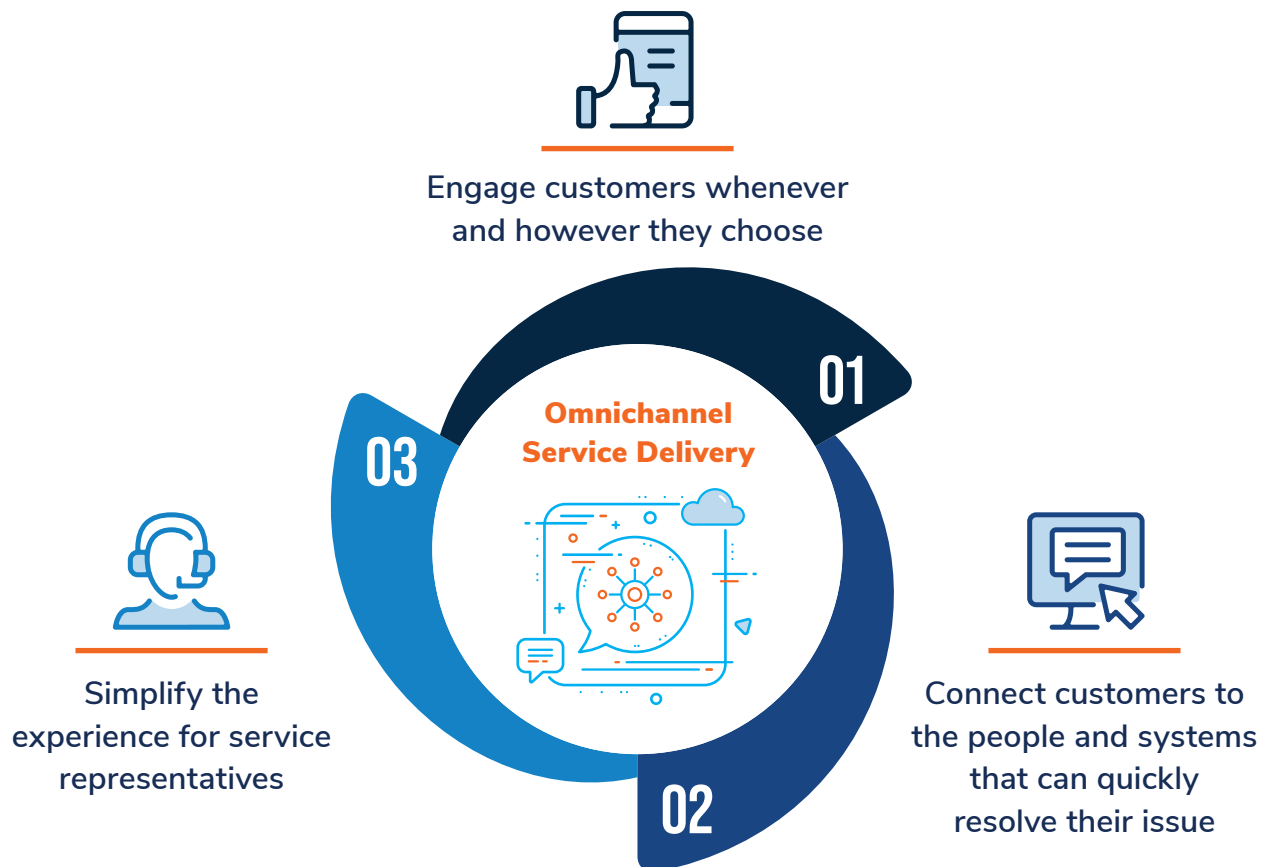
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Consumer behavior and preferences are in a constant state of change. One of the primary themes of Frost & Sullivan’s current customer experience (CX) research is the relationship between consumers and technology in an environment experiencing tremendous flux. Our research indicates that technological advancements offer new capabilities for refreshing how we improve CX, drive agent productivity, and provide our workforce with the right tools at the right time.

We’re witnessing sweeping developments as we interview executives and conduct research, like the mainstream adoption and investment in digital technologies such as artificial intelligence, machine learning, natural language processing, chatbots, virtual advisors, and cross-device online shopping. Figure 1.0 illustrates the complexity of omnichannel service delivery. It’s not uncommon for consumers to use three or more channels for a service/sales request, so companies need to be able to switch channels without restarting the conversation at each touchpoint. These interactions deserve a customer-centric experience, not a channel-centric one. If brands empower their frontline agents with the correct information, guidance, technology mix, and authority, those agents will be able to connect the dots and address pain points instead of forcing the customer to do it.

FIGURE 1.0: CX = Meeting Customers Where They Are



Source: Frost & Sullivan



Thought Leader Commentary

As part of our research on specific industry trends, Frost & Sullivan solicited commentary from numerous CX executives and thought leaders from various verticals.

We wanted to get their thoughts about how organizations are hitting the right balance of talent, technology, and operation expertise to deliver outstanding customer care around the globe.

Here are some of their comments and perspectives:

If there is cost pressure in the US, how do organizations determine the right mix of self-service and live agents?



The question is: Are you looking at a journey or a series of touchpoints? When you move from touchpoints to a journey, opportunities arise. At each touchpoint, there's potential for self-service or agent assistance. Weigh the customer needs at these touchpoints, map out a journey, and gather the Voice of the Customer (VoC) feedback."



—Ryan Holt, Director, Customer Care Product Resolution, Floor & Decor



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Building the right experience requires understanding your customers and the journey, then segregating it across self-service, transactional, and agent-led interactions. Integrating AI-HI workflows is essential, allowing agents to leverage AI while customers benefit from human inputs for complex interactions. Seizing these opportunities helps make positive contributions to the customer experience and their effort (Customer Effort Score).”



—Jeetu Narayan, VP, Products & Customer Operations, [24]7.ai

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If there is cost pressure, what becomes most important in the retail space for Wayfair is to have perfect orders and smooth operations where there isn't even a need for customers to engage with customer service—because nothing goes wrong. That's always our north star. Once we are focused on operational efficiency and excellence, we've actually seen that customers are happiest when they're able to resolve issues through self-service because it's quick, on-demand, and takes very little effort. It's important to know what can be handled through self-service or automation and what really needs a high-touch approach.”



—Neville Clemens, Associate Director of Customer Happiness, Wayfair



How can CX organizations unlock the secret to consistent, branded experiences—no matter the communication channel?

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First, define what you want your standards to look like and identify where this consistency exists across all customer segments. Then, it's a matter of executing this consistency across all channels. Technology should come into play at this moment. You can tech-enable and empower agents so that they have less of a cognitive load and can focus on the relationship with the customer.”

—Neville Clemens, Associate Director of Customer Happiness, Wayfair

What are some innovative ways to deploy and integrate the right digital technologies to manage the CX journey?

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Designing the ideal customer journey requires integrating CX systems (bot and human agent tools) with structured and unstructured data, knowledge bases, CRMs, best-in-class experience examples, etc. Providing industry-specific templates, along with self-service capabilities and multi-channel expertise, allows brands to have the desired control and flexibility in crafting tailored end-to-end experiences.”

—Jeetu Narayan, VP, Products & Customer Operations, [24]7.ai

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Partner with experts who understand your model, the customer journey, and how to ensure continuity across touchpoints so they truly become a journey. Then, leverage technology to augment it. This approach is the winning recipe for integrating the right technologies and managing the CX journey.”

—Ryan Holt, Director, Customer Care Product Resolution, Floor & Decor



With multiple CX vendors in the market, what factors make for a successful partnership?

“When evaluating a potential partner, here are the key criteria I focus on: Does the partner understand the problem extremely well? Can they really connect with companies? With a good collaborative partnership, they can customize a solution and an approach that works well. They must be flexible and agile and quickly put together proof-of-concepts.”

—Neville Clemens, Associate Director of Customer Happiness, Wayfair

“We prioritize partners with deep capabilities. We seek innovation and key insights when it comes to the customer journey. As we share data with them, a good partner should be able to provide trends, predictable outcomes, and opportunities for us.”

—Ryan Holt, Director, Customer Care Product Resolution, Floor & Decor

“Dealing with a diverse ecosystem of CX automation and contact operations vendors is often described as “frustratingly complex” by our clients and partners. The challenge arises from the inability to craft ideal end-to-end CX experiences in the consumers’ best interest due to the vendors operating in silos, with their incentives failing to align with the client’s objectives. Brands achieve success when collaborating with providers offering CX solutions that seamlessly blend AI/Automation with HI (Human Intelligence), enabling them to craft enduring, cost-effective customer experiences.”

—Jeetu Narayan, VP, Products & Customer Operations, [24]7.ai



Analyst POV

Today's consumers expect excellent customer experiences. They rightfully demand mobile-first, targeted, value-rich, quick interactions across multiple channels. These interactions should flow seamlessly, whether handled by automated systems or well-trained contact center agents. It's about facilitating collaboration between technology and humans in service of the customer. Companies must get as close to providing seamless and effortless experiences across interaction channels and devices as possible.

Frost & Sullivan appreciates and values these informed discussions with thought leaders like those quoted above. It elevates the external CX dialogue as they share mutual challenges and achievements in creating customer-focused digital strategies. We recommend continued C-suite education to improve the organizational alignment needed to create and deliver consistent sales and service across all customer engagement channels.



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