ORGANIZATIONAL STRATEGY AND ALIGNMENT FOR CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE MANAGEMENT

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Customer experience maturity is instrumental in helping organizations deliver exceptional customer experience. But what is customer experience maturity? ➲

Think of it as a measure of an organization's capabilities, attitudes, and actions regarding customer experience.

Take the short quiz below to find out where your organization currently stands in terms of customer experience maturity.

1. *When it comes to customer problems, you:*
   a. Wait for customers to complain.
   b. Fix the problem and offer an apology.
   c. Prevent the problem from occurring.

2. *When a customer complains, you take the stance that:*
   a. The customer could be to blame.
   b. We must make this right.
   c. We must make this right and we must figure out how to prevent it from happening again.

3. *Recognizing that a problem could occur, you:*
   a. Deal with it on a case-by-case basis in order to control costs.
   b. Create a plan for taking care of the problem when it does occur, including any service recovery efforts that will be undertaken.
   c. Study the risk, develop a solution, and do everything possible to prevent the problem from happening.

4. *The best approach to creating a positive customer experience is to:*
   a. Follow the customer's lead.
   b. Go out of the way to create a positive experience by showing an understanding of the customer's needs.
   c. Collaborate with others throughout the organization to create a seamless, superior experience.
   d. Proactively work with customers, co-workers, and partners to deliver phenomenal service and foster retention, loyalty, advocacy— and excitement.

Give yourself 1 point for each "a" answer, 2 points for each "b" answer, 3 points for each "c" answer, and 4 points for each "d" answer.

Score:
4-6 points. You have a long way to go. You tend to wait for problems to occur and react as needed. You worry about the costs associated with complaints and often trivialize the problem, deny its existence, or blame the customer.

7-10 points. You're doing a good job of taking care of your customers. You are genuinely interested in helping customers, taking care of any issues that arise, and making sure that customers are satisfied with how problems are addressed.

11-13 points. You're at the top of your game. Not only do you do everything in your power to create a truly positive experience and prevent problems from occurring, your efforts are contagious. You work with others within the organization to cultivate a culture of service and build excitement. Customers notice and are thrilled with your operation—and are more than willing to serve as brand advocates.

No matter how you scored, customer experience maturity is a process of development. This development can be facilitated by adopting a customer experience management (CEM) approach within the organization.

Avaya defines CEM as "the discipline of managing and treating customer relationships as assets with the goal of transforming satisfied customers into loyal customers, and loyal customers into advocates of your brand."

As you adopt CEM, your company's attitudes, capabilities, and actions will mature.

The Challenges of Becoming a Customer-Centric Organization
Becoming a customer-centric organization has several challenges that must be overcome, including leadership, resources and skills,
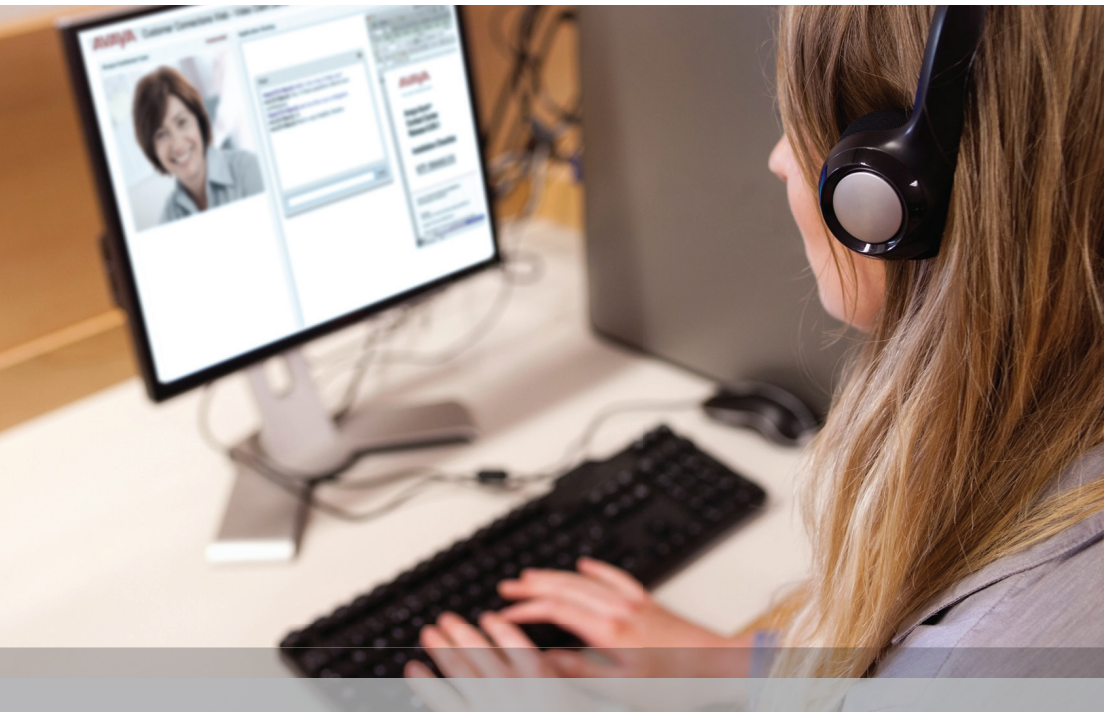
As part of an ongoing improvement effort, it is important to collect customer satisfaction feedback. Every piece of feedback represents an opportunity for improvement.

customer perceptions, consistency, and pacing.

- **Leadership.** Customer service has not received the proper level of attention within many organizations. Fortunately, that's changing; many leaders now recognize the value of their brand and how this expands beyond the contact center into the whole organization.

- **Resources and skills.** Moving to a customer-centric model may require a different use of human resources. Existing employees may not be suited for the shift. If this is the case, how will this be addressed? Training? Recruitment? It is imperative

to get the right people in the right role.

- **Perception.** Customer experience is fundamentally based on a customer's perception. It's how you want your organization to be represented and perceived. Customer experience is a crucial part of branding, and the experience must be consistent on all levels, including first impressions, the company's image, support, transactional ease, competence, and so on.

- **Consistency.** Customer experience has to be delivered consistently across the whole organization, not just within the customer service department. ➲

- **Pacing.** Companies should have a vision—with a road map. Taking on too much could easily derail even the best intentions and most meticulous of plans. Don't try to do it all at once.

Gaining Alignment on CEM Strategy Throughout the Organization

Implementing a CEM approach throughout an organization requires change. Addressing all customer touchpoints with CEM is a must, whether the customer interaction is at a branch office or retail outlet, on a mobile application, over the phone, or on the Web. CEM must be ingrained in every process, policy, department, and other touchpoints that customers encounter during their journeys with the organization. Focusing on the customer experience means that an organization's strategy and objectives are no longer about sales and marketing alone, but also the full life cycle that customers have with the organization—from first impression through all interactions including fulfillment, billing, technical support, and so on.

It begins at the top, where the chief executive identifies customer focus as a priority and acknowledges that customer experience is a key factor in the organization's vision. Leadership must believe in the mission before it can trickle down the organization. This requires finding executive sponsors to serve as champions for the cause and setting a company-wide mandate to improve service at all touchpoints and through all stages of the customer journey.

Once leadership is onboard, it's time to define the organization's ideal end-state customer experience. This could involve, for example, analyzing best practices in the industry, analyzing competitors' strategies, and surveying customers on their requirements and expectations in order to define the required end-state customer experience.

Next, it's essential to conduct a current-state assessment to identify the organization's current capabilities and customer experience maturity. To assess the organization's capabilities, focus on the following four categories (See Figure 3.5) and rate each based on its maturity levels as:

- **Below industry standards** for core capabilities.
- **Meeting industry standards** for "select" core capabilities.
- **Meeting industry standards** for core capabilities.
- **Exceeding industry standards** for core capabilities.

Here are the four categories:

- **Business process alignment.** This category includes business intelligence, customer-driven strategy, customer-driven processes, customer-driven products and services, and knowledge management capabilities. How well does the organization do in leveraging customer interactions to drive business strategy and processes?

Figure 3.5: **Organizational Capabilities**

Business Process Alignment	Talent Management	Customer Interaction	Care Infrastructure
Business Intelligence	Talent Acquisition	Channel Management	Technology Road Mapping
Customer-Driven Strategy	Talent Alignment	Integrated Sales Management	Applications
Customer-Driven Processes	Talent Training	Billing Delivery	Technology Architecture
Customer-Driven Products/ Services	Talent Rewards/ Retention	Service Delivery	Communications Infrastructure
Knowledge Management	Workforce Management	Automated Channel Delivery	Security
		Customer Experience Intelligence	Data Management
		Quality Management	Physical Environment
			Systems Integration

Source: Avaya internal research.

- **Talent management.** This category includes talent acquisition, talent alignment, talent training, talent rewards and retention, and workforce management capabilities. How capable is the organization in identifying, hiring, developing, and retaining the right people and placing them in the right roles?

- **Customer interaction.** This category includes channel management, integrated sales management, billing delivery, service delivery, automated channel delivery, customer experience intelligence, and quality management capabilities. Is the organization interacting with customers using the most effective and cost-efficient paths?

- **Care infrastructure.** This category includes technology road mapping, applications, technology architecture, communications infrastructure, security, data management, physical environment, and systems integration. How well does the organization employ and manage the technologies necessary to deliver consistent world-class support?

Next, compare the ideal end state with the current state. This allows you to identify existing gaps that may prevent you from reaching the ideal state. Identify what is required in order ➲

to close the gaps. Define in detail the specific customer experience initiatives needed to address these. For example, you may need to hire more people or put new solutions in place. Using the results of this assessment, define, staff, and roll out the initiatives required to close these gaps.

Finally, make sure to include regular status checks, as these initiatives and projects will need to be revisited in six months to reassess whether or not they are still valid given business priorities and customer preference changes. Companies should define a balanced scorecard with both business and operational metrics to help measure what they're putting in place on a regular basis. Business metrics, which are specific to the industry or business and defined at the executive level, include measurements such as revenue per contact, cost per service call, and orders taken during a given time period. Operational metrics include customer satisfaction ratings, quality, first call resolution, and so on.

Every six months, blueprints should be reassessed. For example, has the business environment changed? Will this require the company to change anything?

As part of an ongoing improvement effort, it is important to collect customer satisfaction feedback. Every piece of feedback represents an opportunity for improvement. The information provided can indicate where improvements are needed as well as opportunities to shine. Organizations need to respond to customer feedback whether it's positive or negative. For example, while negative feedback often indicates areas that could benefit from corrective measures, positive feedback could indicate an action that needs to be repeated and implemented on a larger scale. Use the information and socialize it internally. Think about how you can improve and, most importantly, take action. It doesn't do any good to collect feedback, analyze it, and come up with a plan if you don't follow through. [A]

Richard English *leads a team of strategic consultants in North America to advise clients on how to leverage advanced communications technology to enhance the customer experience. He has over 25 years of management consulting and strategy experience assisting clients in communications and collaboration technology to improve business operational efficiency.*