

## Customer experience transformation – Learning from the 2015 US CEE leaders to transform the customer experience

Customer experience management is a more mature business discipline in the US. As the [2015 US CEE analysis](#) shows, the strongest brands are typically managed by CEOs who have adopted the role of customer pioneers; they have an intrinsic understanding of what is right for the customer, and this focused thinking brings unity to a company's disparate departments. Employees in HR, marketing and IT are brought together with one single purpose – that of making the customer experience as great as it can possibly be. For the less successful brands in the 2015 study, this sense of 'shared vision' is the cornerstone of future customer experience transformation.

More specifically, the best customer experience brands manage their visions in four ways:

- They define their strategies, rally behind them and communicate them effectively
- Turn the systematic redesign of customer experiences into business capabilities using customer journey mapping
- They create measurement programmes that prescribe and engage employees
- They optimise the business environment and soft systems for superior customer outcomes

And for any brand hoping to see any lasting customer experience transformation, they should not underestimate the importance of the employee. The strongest companies, such as [Southwest Airlines](#) at number ten, recognise the impact business culture and behaviours can have on customers. "If the employees come first, then they're happy," notes its CEO, Herb Kelleher. "A motivated employee treats the customer well. The customer is happy so they keep coming back, which pleases the shareholders. It's not one of the enduring great mysteries of all time, it is just the way it works." In general, the best brands combine their voice of the customer and voice of the employee programmes, working to create a single model for behaviours, values and customer experience principles. Moreover, they created realistic timeframes. After all, if customer experience transformation is going to take place, then organisations need to recognise that a rise of 200 places in the CEE rankings is not going to occur overnight, and they need to communicate this to their employees. Once everybody has a clear idea of what is expected of them and over what period of time, they will be more likely to succeed.

The strongest CEM brands tend to gather the company leaders 'round a table' in the first instance; they re-examine the organisations' core beliefs and values, and don't dwell too heavily on their own capabilities, or those of their competitors. This allows them to create a strategic plan of the customer experience areas they want to home in on, and make a list of necessary changes in order of priority. It's important for them to

view nothing as sacred, but take a fresh look at every area of their business, including organisational design, governance or leadership practices, all for the betterment of the overall customer experience.

And this is arguably the most important feature of the US CEE study; the best brands always bring their decisions back to the customer. If customer experience transformation is going to occur, then companies need to remember who it is they are trying to please. They need to ensure that their customer experience measurement reports are prescriptive of actual customer need, and are not simply descriptive of feedback. This involves a creation of accountability, linking feedback to action plans, so that customers are actually able to experience the positive changes for themselves. The same principle applies to customer journey mapping. The strongest US brands manage their innovations around gaps in the customer journey, as opposed to coming up with ad hoc ideas.

Chick-fil-A, for example, is one company that has not shied away from experimentation. Ranking at number four in the United States, the restaurant chain recently pioneered the Hatch learning centre, an 80,000 square-foot creation that was set up with the sole purpose of strengthening the customer experience through the exploration of food, design and service ideas. So far, one of the centre's most successful concepts has been that of 'streamlined technology,' which has greatly increased the speed in which customers can pay for food orders. In addition, Hatch has discovered an improved method of chicken preparation, via a new custom grill that had to be specially constructed and patented.

For Tamsin Jenkins, KPMG Nunwood's Head of Customer Experience Excellence, this customer-centric 'modus operandi' is a prerequisite for experience transformation. "Time and again in the US study, we see examples of brands that are able to willing to innovate and adapt in line with customers' needs," she says. "For true customer experience transformation to take place, companies need to bring their employees together in the arc of a single vision, with a view to creating lasting and superior outcomes for the customer."