

What is an omnichannel customer engagement hub and why do I need it?



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By now, most organisations know how important it is to engage with their customers on the right channel at the right time with the right information. But, when communication channels are owned and managed by different areas of the business, it's hard to create a seamless, individualised experience across all channels. Fortunately, this doesn't have to be the case.



Source: www.pexels.com

By prioritising and constructing an omnichannel customer engagement hub (CEH), organisations can bring together the data, intelligence, and activation technologies capable of creating world-class customer experiences.

An omnichannel engagement hub is a technology stack made up of platforms that are able to orchestrate with each other to provide relevant, personalised, consistent, digital experiences across all channels.

Typically, a CEH framework can consist of 12 to 18 categories of functionality and can be enabled by as many different technologies. These platforms have to be aligned to collectively populate, decide and activate the most appropriate output for each individual customer, and provide the insight and analytics to enable continuous improvement and optimisation. Though the goal substantiates the investment, I can't stress how difficult and lengthy this process can be without the right technologies and partners.

Optimising engagement

In order to achieve this level of hyper-personalised engagement, it's important to understand what an optimal customer engagement model might look like. In my experience, the ability to build an effective engagement hub requires 6 major categories to be considered: centralise, analyse, orchestrate, compose and present. Each of these categories represents one or many technologies in the stack which collectively work in unison to create the optimal engagement.



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From a data perspective, for instance, the aim is to centralise data from across the organisation in order to mesh together a single, accurate, queryable view of the customer. According to Brandwatch, “a single customer view is an aggregation of all data an organisation has on a particular customer, presented to give a clear overview of them and their specific data.”

The optimal engagement model also identifies the requirement for data intelligence technologies to analyse data and dynamically orchestrate the ideal customer journey through sub-second decisioning. The resulting events and data payload are then leveraged in the activation layer to compose the right experience and to deliver and present that experience to its customers on the most relevant channel.

In short, the goal is to collect data and events to create a loop of intelligence in personalising the ideal customer experience across the available channels.

Mistakes and a disjointed digital experience

Unfortunately, many organisations are either still grappling with the complexities of building an omni-channel engagement hub or are still procrastinating in the analysis phases of how best to structure the right approach. In the meantime, their customers are left trying to navigate a sub-standard and/or disjointed digital experience.

There are a number of factors that contribute to a sub-standard experience, including:

- There is either no, or very little, relevant information in the engagement, meaning that the customer sees no value.
- There is inconsistency between channels and messages (tone, design), often driven by silos in the organisation. This kind of fractured experience makes it hard to connect emotionally because you don't understand the brand personality.
- The customer journeys are disjointed and not well-designed to give customers a seamless experience. This creates frustrating and disconnected experiences and the risk of losing the customer should they abort the journey.
- The customer may find the experience inconvenient because the organisation has made decisions based on operational requirements, rather than customer requirements. It may, for instance, have taken a single-channel strategy by pushing all customers to their app, rather than allowing them to engage with the organisation on the channel they're most comfortable with.

- The process may also be unintelligent and not designed to respond to what the customer is trying to do. Predefined journeys can be frustrating.

All these symptoms are typically a result of:

- Siloed strategies, where each department has its individual goals to meet, without big picture alignment.
- Legacy technology and thinking, where both the legacy technology and dinosaur mentality in the business limit the ability to provide the ideal customer experience.
- Redundant solutions, where different departments solve the same problem in a different way on different technologies.
- Disjointed data as a result of it residing in various platforms, making it hard to get a view of what the customer is experiencing.
- No client-centricity because of the difficulties in shifting the culture from product-focused to customer-focused.
- No journey-centricity because of a misunderstanding of who owns the journey and limited information on what the customer is actually trying to achieve (customer intent).

The end result is customer attrition, which is the opposite of the loyal, engaged customer base all organisations aim for because they spend more. The organisation will, in the end, also face an increased cost to serve its customers.

The power of the omnichannel engagement hub

That's why the investment in understanding and building an omnichannel engagement hub is so important. Because it's made up of technologies that work in unison with each other to provide relevant, personalised, consistent, digital experiences across all channels and customer journeys, it can go a long way to solving the majority of customer engagement issues faced by organisations.



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Though it is no small feat, it is critical that organisations understand what an engagement hub might look like for them, build a strategy on how it can be achieved and start working towards achieving the experience that their customers have come to expect.

Failing to make this their number one strategic and technical priority in a post-Covid world is all but guaranteed to result in the loss of customers, a reduction in customer spend and an increase in the cost to serve. In contrast, iteratively improving their technology and capabilities in this space has been shown to reward early-adopting organisations with longer term retention of customers, an increase in customer life-time value and a growing customer base.

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