

Customer value matters in the time of Covid-19

 By [Mark Wilson](#)

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What should customer experience (CX) look like in the time of Covid-19? It may all come down to speed and convenience, or perhaps human touch and making a real connection is still key. Responsiveness, caring, an appreciation of the problem and ease of use is welcomed. The right solution for the right problem (no matter the size of the issue), handled professionally and ethically, is also valued.



Mark Wilson, managing director at SYSFRO Africa

The Covid-19 pandemic has caused a decrease in consumer confidence leaving companies need to find innovative ways remain afloat and adapt to changing customer expectations. In the midst of global uncertainty, customers are seeking a greater degree of reassurance, as the advent of Covid-19 has compacted and compounded issues, to the point where customers are needing more regular project feedback.

There is an underlying level of uncertainty within the current ecosystem, as changes to the business environment necessitate immediate adjustment. On the customer's journey to solution, we have noticed a shift away from long-term goals, in favour of short-term tasks. Smaller projects like automation builds, maximise benefits while increasing business flexibility.

According to recent reports, customer expectations have evolved, making it necessary for brands to adopt new strategies to engage, acquire and retain their customers. Projects initiated and executed completely remotely have seen solid success. However, it is a challenge to get the 'just' of new customer engagements from a distance and establishing a foundation of trust is difficult if one cannot get a true 'feel' for an individual.

Go the extra mile

It is important for businesses to show their customers tangible value amidst human anxiety. To alleviate customer anxiety from an organisational process point of view, customers need to know that you are available; that you are there when they wish to reach-out, dial-in, log-on or download.

More than ever before, it is imperative to action requests timeously. To this end, businesses must intervene tactically to handle the increased volumes of calls and contact. Preparedness, communication, priorities and actions will be the key differentiators for organisations during this time.

It is also vital to proactively bolster capabilities behind the scenes, avoiding customer delay, frustration, and disappointment. If we truly place value on each customer interaction, then interdepartmental fluidity, system adaption and frontline engagement must not be compromised.

Upskilling, CX custodians and loyalty journeys are key

An important driver in going the extra mile during this new normal, is education. In order to derive value out of any system, process, or technology, one must upskill. Creating a CX custodian is also a vital facilitator when it comes to putting the customer first at every level.

One point of contact owning the customer journey assists in prohibiting the frustrations that often stem from silo structures misaligning within an organisation. Total time to resolution can be unnecessarily delayed if the whole ecosystem is not aligned. A customer-first mentality must be matched by the company's vision and mission i.e. it must be a business requirement instituted by top management.

The intrinsic value of each customer over their loyalty journey cannot be overstated enough when refining CX. A single customer that is satisfied and looked after, is estimated to spend seven times their initial value over their relationship timeline with that business.

Unlocking new ways of delighting customers

It is clear that Covid-19 has brought permanent change to our business and social eco-systems. While customer experiences won't go back to normal, new and different ways of delighting our customers will be unlocked. These opportunities possess the potential to transport CX to the next level of engagement, delivering significant long-term benefits. Physical distancing will likely result in changes in office space occupational, as 'always-on' in 'anywhere-spaces' becomes the mainstream reality defining business flexibility.

While these are no one-size-fits-all solution, it makes no difference whether your business is big or small because technology is applicable across structures. It is imperative to offer your customers flexible resolutions to their individual needs. Managing customer experiences means being accessible to them as far as is possible.

If Covid-19 has taught us anything about driving customer value, it is that business is driven by people. This period of uncertainty in our collective histories has reinforced the plain truth that commercial relationships are centred around the interactions of individuals. If we are to drive deep customer value in a time of Covid-19 and beyond, then we must remember to place people at the heart of the technology that enable us to deliver optimal customer experiences.

ABOUT MARK WILSON

Mark Wilson is the Managing Director of SYSPRO Africa, who defines and oversees the go-to-market and channel strategies, identifies key growth areas and develops new partnerships across the continent. Mark believes strongly in a customer-centric approach and the importance of recognising and understanding a customer's specific business needs.
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