

Your Guide to Enhancing the Customer Experience

A four-step process for ensuring you are providing positive, consistent and enduring experiences for your customers.



Why is customer experience important?

The experience you provide your customers encapsulates all aspects of interaction with your firm, from the sales process to the physical environment you operate in, even to the post-sales aftercare offered. How your customers are made to feel at each point in their customer journey shapes their feelings towards your firm and influences their repeat-buying behaviour and the likelihood of them recommending your firm to others.

The key for competitive differentiation lies in the name *financial services*. Where products are similar or confusing, or the customer base relatively unengaged, providing a superior service or customer experience is where you can set your business apart.



Are the experiences you provide to your customers superior to your competitors?



Getting the customer experience wrong can have a significant impact on reputation, customer retention and, ultimately, the bottom line, which is why you need to consider whether the customer experience you are providing is superior to the competition and if not, take steps to reduce any friction or negative aspects of your service.

This guide provides a four-step process you can take to ensure the experiences your customers have with your firm are positive, consistent and enduring.



Sparked your interest?

Find out how Recordsure can help you.
Call **+44 (0)203 772 7272** or email **info@recordsure.com**

What is the customer experience?

‘Customer experience’ has many definitions but at its heart is how customers interact with your company and how they find that experience (positive or otherwise). Aside from the interactions between you and your customers, the customer experience also takes into account the systems and technologies you use to interact with your customer base and design the customer journey.

Customer experience incorporates all touchpoints your customers have with your firm and the practical experience of using your firm’s products. It can also involve external influences, such as word of mouth and media representations of your company and so designing or making improvements to the customer experience is likely to involve input from multiple departments across your firm.

The experience is different for each customer and is influenced by a variety of factors, not all of which can be controlled internally. Much depends on how much importance each customer places on each interaction or activity, such as getting up and running quickly, purchasing the right product, prompt issue resolution etc.



Step 1: Laying the groundwork for a positive customer experience

Before delving into the customer journey or individual touch-points that make up the overall customer experience, you need to ensure the foundations upon which the experience is built are solid and robust enough to support the ‘above-ground’ work. We suggest taking the following steps in the first instance:

1. Create a clear mission statement

At the heart of this process is your firm’s mission statement, a single vision of your operation that drives the overall strategy and desired outcomes you are ultimately working towards. This will shape the type of customer experience being delivered and set the tone for all customer interactions. It is important that your mission statement is clearly articulated and well-known to all members of staff, not only those at senior level, because it’s the responsibility of all employees to work toward the delivery of this mission.

2. Accurately segment your customer base

Being able to accurately segment your customer base by demographics or other common characteristics enables you to identify the differing needs of your customer base and lays the groundwork for measuring how effectively you are meeting their needs. It also forms the basis for identifying which touchpoints are considered most important to specific segments of your customer base.

3. Conduct a Gap Analysis

Every firm is different and so the most effective method of enhancing the customer experience within each organisation will also be different. In order to begin to make improvements, a gap analysis is necessary at this stage to establish your current position. It also provides a benchmark against which improvements can be measured.

A gap analysis shouldn’t just take into account the current position of your firm compared to its objectives and strategy, it also needs to utilise primary research to understand what the customer needs from the business and their customer experience to-date.

Overall, the aim of the gap analysis is to identify those areas of the customer experience that can be improved and the necessary steps required to align the current customer experience with the desired brand image.



Step 2: Designing a Positive Customer Experience

Designing the customer experience is a strategic process that incorporates all the underlying systems and processes that contribute to each of the consumer touch-points, as well as relevant metrics and key performance indicators (KPIs) to allow the customer experience to be measured over time.

It's important to define the experience you want your customers to have and the desired emotions or feelings you want to evoke for each of your firm's key customer touchpoints as this will define the back-end processes needed to support staff responsible for delivering the experience. For example, for a firm that wants the customer's experience of raising a query via telephone to be efficient and seamless, the focus should be on ensuring staffing levels are adequate to meet anticipated demand, with calls answered promptly by team members who have access to a range of resources (such as FAQs or product descriptions) to enable them to respond to a range of enquiries.

It's unrealistic to expect every touchpoint to be positive, so consideration should also be given to how best to minimise the emotions around low points of experience so customers are more willing to focus on the positives. This shouldn't just revolve around major touchpoints such as point of sale, complaints handling or claims management, but also less significant touchpoints which may generate negative emotions, such as filling in lengthy forms.

Behavioural scientists Chase and Dasu outline five ways you can engineer your customer experience to ensure customers focus primarily on the positive aspects of the experience rather than the negatives:

1. End on a high

Focus on creating a memorable impression at the end of the customer journey, whether that is the point of purchase or at the resolution of a complaint or claim. The positive emotions created at the end of the journey are more likely to carry over to future interactions.

2. Get the bad stuff out of the way early

Whether it's filling in lengthy forms or onerous authorisation processes, placing the least positive aspects towards the beginning of the customer journey enables firms to leave consumers with more positive, lasting emotions at the end of their journey.

3. Strategically map the pleasure/pain points

The more positive experiences should be equally distributed throughout the journey, whilst the less pleasant aspects should appear together to minimise the impact they have.

4. Emphasise choice

Provide customers with full information about your charging structure and any available additions up-front to avoid surprising them at a later stage, as this can result in dissatisfaction.

5. Create (and stick to) brand rituals

Brand rituals are often small gestures or tokens that, over time, customers begin to associate with that particular firm, for example a health insurance firm including a healthy-living guidebook as part of their welcome pack.

When designing the customer experience it's important not to be overly prescriptive, but provide your front-line staff with the right knowledge and tools to enable them to facilitate the desired experiences for your customers.



Step 3: Implementing the Customer Experience Strategy

Ultimately, a strategy is only as good as its implementation and this requires coordination and co-operation across the whole business, from the top down, to ensure its success.

Once buy-in has been achieved, implementation should initially focus on addressing the internal changes needed to achieve the desired outcomes, from changes to systems and processes, to addressing any additional staff training needs.

When implementing a customer experience strategy for the first time, or making significant changes to an existing or obsolete one, cultural change will also be required to align it with the internal culture and strategy of the business in order to deliver an authentic experience.

For success, both at the design and implementation stage, firms need to have an in-depth knowledge of their customer base, including the key demographics, the needs your firm fulfils for them, their expectations at each touchpoint and their overall impressions of your brand and service. This knowledge will shape the process and provides the earliest benchmarks to ensure your customer experience is truly hitting the mark.

Once the implementation stage has been completed firms should be left with an internal culture and customer experience that reflects their overarching strategy and mission. The customer journey should be seamless and free of unnecessary touchpoints, with any friction or negativity minimised along the way to leave the customer focussed on the positives.



Step 4: Ensuring Consistency in the Delivery of the Customer Experience

Consistency in the customer experience is the key to its success, not only across the customer base, but also for individual customers who expect a consistent high standard of service each time they interact with your firm.

Robust governance is vital to ensuring that, once implemented, the customer experience is continually meeting customer expectations. A common issue firm's face is that their governance arrangements are likely to be well-articulated within the customer experience strategy, but they lack the evidence and management information to demonstrate that the governance structure is working sufficiently well in practice.

A good customer experience governance structure, supported by technology helps firms monitor the customer experience, highlights areas for improvements and horizon-scans for emerging issues to tackle before they cause customer detriment.

Monitoring is essential

Although the ways in which firms interact with their customers varies, many touchpoints involve verbal conversations. It is during these conversations that both actual experiences and customer views on their experiences can often be uncovered. It is therefore necessary for any firm that is serious about ensuring a consistent positive customer experience to monitor these interactions.

Despite technology enabling more interaction via digital channels, there continues to be a significant requirement for verbal interactions. Many customers are more comfortable speaking with someone directly as they feel it is more transparent and trustworthy. This is especially apparent in the financial advice sector where customers prefer to have a relationship with someone before discussing their intimate financial affairs.

Recordsure has the capability to record and review 100% of telephony, face-to-face and even video interactions. With most call centres reviewing, at most, 2% of calls and face-to-face interactions largely not recorded at all, the benefits of Recordsure begin to come clear.

Use data for insight

Harnessing customer feedback helps shape the ongoing customer experience and can identify gaps or areas of improvement so that, as your customers' needs and behaviours develop over time, their experience remains positive and responsive to their needs.

As well as being essential to the continual improvement of the customer experience, the insights gained through management information (MI) and direct feedback also serve to strengthen a firm's overall market insight, which can help inform future business decisions and drive loyalty amongst customers.

That's why it's important, when designing the customer experience, to incorporate feedback loops and data collection points into the process. Utilising technology, such as Recordsure, to collect and analyse the wealth of data from your customer interactions can provide essential insights into the customer experience and reduce the labour intensity of analysing data.

By gaining insight into your customers and the way the customer experience is shaped at each touchpoint enables you to make improvements and truly gain an understanding of the drivers of your customers' behaviour. Core areas of insight that can be derived from use of Recordsure are:

- **Identify poor practice** – enabling you to address it at the root cause and monitor the impacts of remedial actions
- **Highlight best practice** – for use in development of processes & procedures and steering training programmes
- **Identify trends leading to sales/non-sales** – enabling you to streamline sales practices and processes to result in more positive actions for both you and your customers
- **Understand adviser behaviour and customer responses** - enabling you to improve sales practices, enhance customer service and better align products design and marketing to customer needs.

It is estimated that, on average, around 4% of non-compliant records are uncovered using conventional call recording software and quality monitoring methods. Utilising Recordsure however exponentially increases the quantity of non-compliant records detected before they cause customer detriment to at least 60%!

Reduce costs

One would presume that increased customer insight and increased detection of non-compliant records comes with a significant price tag, but in reality Recordsure immediately provides a return on investment. Clients benefit from a saving of 70% in costs derived through a reduction in mystery shopping, customer satisfaction calls and in business travel for monitoring of face-to-face meetings. As Recordsure essentially strengthens governance and risk management, clients also save costs from a reduction in regulatory fines and remediation activities.



The only way to appreciate the true value of Recordsure is to see it in action. Get in touch today to find out more and arrange a demonstration.

0203 772 7272 or **info@recordsure.com**

Recordsure Ltd

6th Floor
10 Lower Thames Street
London EC3R 6EN

T +44 (0)203 772 7272
E info@recordsure.com
W www.recordsure.com