

Opinion: The metamorphosis of CX in THE YEAR

The author revisits the changes in CX techniques that were brought on by a year that witnessed more than its share of upheaval globally...

By [Jones Mathew](#)

As we draw near the close of THE YEAR (in caps because such a year has not been witnessed in the living memories of most consumers and clients), a quick look-back on the changes brought about in Customer Experience techniques and strategies may be useful.

Let's begin with the education industry, which is one of the toughest to evaluate by customers owing to its high credence factor (relatively difficult to evaluate before buying the service) and its deeply intangible nature. The educational delivery mechanism has evolved dramatically and rapidly over THE YEAR. This has affected Customer Experience in some positive and some negative ways. Positively speaking, teachers have had to develop a lot more 'skin in the game' because now service delivery is recordable. Accountability has gone up dramatically for the service provider.

For the student, the [CX](#) transformation has resulted in some really great benefits – watching again only that part of the lecture which made sense, going back to another part which was not very clear when it was delivered, and of course skipping over the parts where the teacher was mind numbing. All of this at a time convenient to the student (1AM-4AM perhaps) which was an unthinkable time for a lecture before THE YEAR happened. On the flip side, lack of social interactions in a physical setting has been missing, which to many, is the essence of a truly valuable part of any educational experience in the 'Old Normal'. Benchmarked against Gartner's CX pyramid, there has been a quantum movement from 'communication' (furnishing information the consumer can use) to 'commitment' (solving problems when requested). The goal for educational institutions will be to move up the pyramid to being 'proactive' (providing experiences before customers ask for them) and 'evolving' to a stage where customers feel empowered, strengthened, and devoted to a brand. And let's face it, gimmickry won't work.

Let's shift the focus to the consumer goods industry which is high on search factor (goods which are relatively easier to evaluate before purchase) and having a high tangible nature. Consumer goods companies have truly taken the 'commitment' and 'proactive' levels of the CX pyramid

seriously. [Brands](#) are thinking ahead much more than before, anticipating and predicting where the customer will be in the future. Feedback loops have been more deeply built in to the entire [marketing](#) process. More contactless ways of how consumers experience the brand have been created. Real time customer data acquisition and processing for customization purposes have gone up.

At retail, Artificial Intelligence and [Machine Learning](#) have been harnessed to do better customer profiling and offer more customized solutions with minimal human interface. More companies have focused THIS YEAR on creating empathy based relationships rather than sales realization alone. Brand communications have evolved to be more emotionally uplifting whether it is baby products or sanitary fittings. Consumer goods companies in the housing domain have started focusing on the way people interact with their homes in altogether new ways -the purpose of the home has changed during THE YEAR -work and relaxation have merged into a single hotspot of activity. Food and grocery services like Zomato, Swiggy, Big Basket, Grofers, Milk Basket, Dominos and McDonald's have taken huge steps in making contactless delivery possible. Vehicle marketers have created and deployed high quality AR/VR or plain vanilla phone and video sales processes. At least in the next one year, it is expected that footfalls at retail will be tinged with cautiousness and at a reduced percentage compared to pre-Covid 19. Positive word of mouth will spread the w.o.m for a brand's CX quality. Hence, not losing a single lead, even for a dominant brand will be absolutely essential.

In the B2B domain, THE YEAR has seen a greater appreciation that CX matters in B2B just as much as it matters in B2C. B2B marketers have figured out that the speed and ease of transacting in the B2C domain has now migrated as expectations to the B2B sphere as well. Logistics startups for instance are giving real time container tracking apps just like food delivery tracking. It has been validated that B2B marketers who are able to deliver better CX have on average a higher profit margin than those who don't (10-20% cost reduction, 10-15% revenue growth, and greater employee satisfaction). THE YEAR that has gone by has strengthened the need for better B2B CX engineering and management especially as a value differentiator when lower-cost challengers are threatening to disrupt leadership positions and the pandemic has crippled many large players. Customer decision journeys have been relooked at in THE YEAR like never before in the automotive industry, hospitality industry, heavy equipment industry and others so that CX touchpoints - processes, customer tools, performance management, and employee mind-sets - can be more sharply defined and more sensitively crafted.

Engineering and delivering high quality, empathetic CX should, therefore, be the overriding theme for almost any company wanting to survive THE YEAR and making it to the next. Get back to the basics – drop the casual approach; dashboard CX metrics; improve accountability of CX engineers and executives; incentivize the high CX scored touchpoints; and ensure EVERYONE is in the CX business.

The author is a professor at Great Lakes Institute of Management, Gurgaon. Views expressed are personal.

The article can be read online [here](#).