



Revealing customer intent

Why contextual knowledge is key to
understanding the customer journey

Customer interactions are no longer simple. Although the traditional customer buying journey still holds true, today's customers channel-hop and often leave a trail of irregular engagement patterns too difficult for most businesses to track and keep up with. As a result, customer intent is misinterpreted, and the customer experience falls short of expectations.

Imagine the following: a customer buys a phone from a particular retailer and encounters difficulties during the activation process. Moments after unsuccessfully trying to resolve the issue with customer service, they experience something that only exacerbates their frustration: they receive an ad for a new phone from that same retailer. Clearly there's a disconnect within the organization. But is it possible to prevent this type of insensitive marketing?

Most brands try to predetermine the steps customers take on their buying journey: they draw a straight line from where customers explore a desired product to where they purchase it and proceed toward fulfilment and beyond. But in reality, this journey isn't easy to predict. The customer can start the same journey in many ways and, as new channels get introduced (think metaverse, think social), they're offered more alternative routes, which adds even more complexity. Additionally, the influence of digital technologies has empowered customers with easier access to things like reviews and recommendations. This abundance of information significantly impacts their engagement with a brand as they seek validation and social proof before purchase.



Coming to grips with the “messy middle”

It's safe to say that the customer journey is now a non-linear (at times aimless) unpredictable squiggly line that crisscrosses between physical and digital worlds. Customers' reasons for engaging with a brand can change at any moment, so the journey that gets them to where they want to go is often a multi-trip multi-stop affair filled with uncertainty and evolving motivations. This space, where customers navigate through various touchpoints while considering multiple options, has been coined the “messy middle” by Google.

It's a convoluted and complex area, where one journey's premature end marks another's beginning. A path customers embark on may follow a series of twists and turns as their intent is triggered by many events and spur-of-the-moment behaviors.

For example, today a customer might set out to discover and purchase a new product but along the way might get distracted and end up investigating where a pending order is or contacting customer service about a recent negative experience. This customer cycle keeps repeating (though the engagement patterns will vary industry to industry) – they might buy groceries daily to weekly, fashion weekly to monthly, and insurance annually.

While new technology has given brands the means to identify where that meandering line of customer ambition is at any moment, brands still have trouble responding with relevant actions to always keep customers on a “happy path.” Why is that?

What is the happy path?

The happy path refers to the best route that leads a customer directly to where they want to go when engaging with a brand. Basically, it's a series of steps that helps them complete a desired goal – quickly and conveniently.

When customers set off on the journey of completing something, there are usually lots of individual moments along the way. These have a habit of knocking them off course: the originally planned happy path may get temporarily replaced with a different one. Then it may happen again and again. But that's okay. As long as the new path is cleared of all obstacles and its end is in sight, the happy path will remain happy regardless of which journey and channel the customer is on.

The “happy” part may seem misleading. According to Forrester, many companies get emotion wrong. Rather than designing experiences built on a broad spectrum of emotions, they equate emotion with delight. Moreover, contrary to conventional wisdom, making customers happy doesn't always correlate with making them loyal. Customer experience (CX) pros need to combine knowledge about the emotion of different customers and journeys with the moments that triggered them. They need to determine what sparked and shaped other emotions like confidence and disappointment to make customers feel understood and respected.^[1]

^[1] *The Emotions And Moments In The Customer Journey That Really Drive Loyalty* Forrester: *Broaden The Spectrum Of Emotions And Moments That Matter In Your Journeys*, January 19th, 2022, Joana de Quintanilha, VP, Principal Analyst: [link](#)



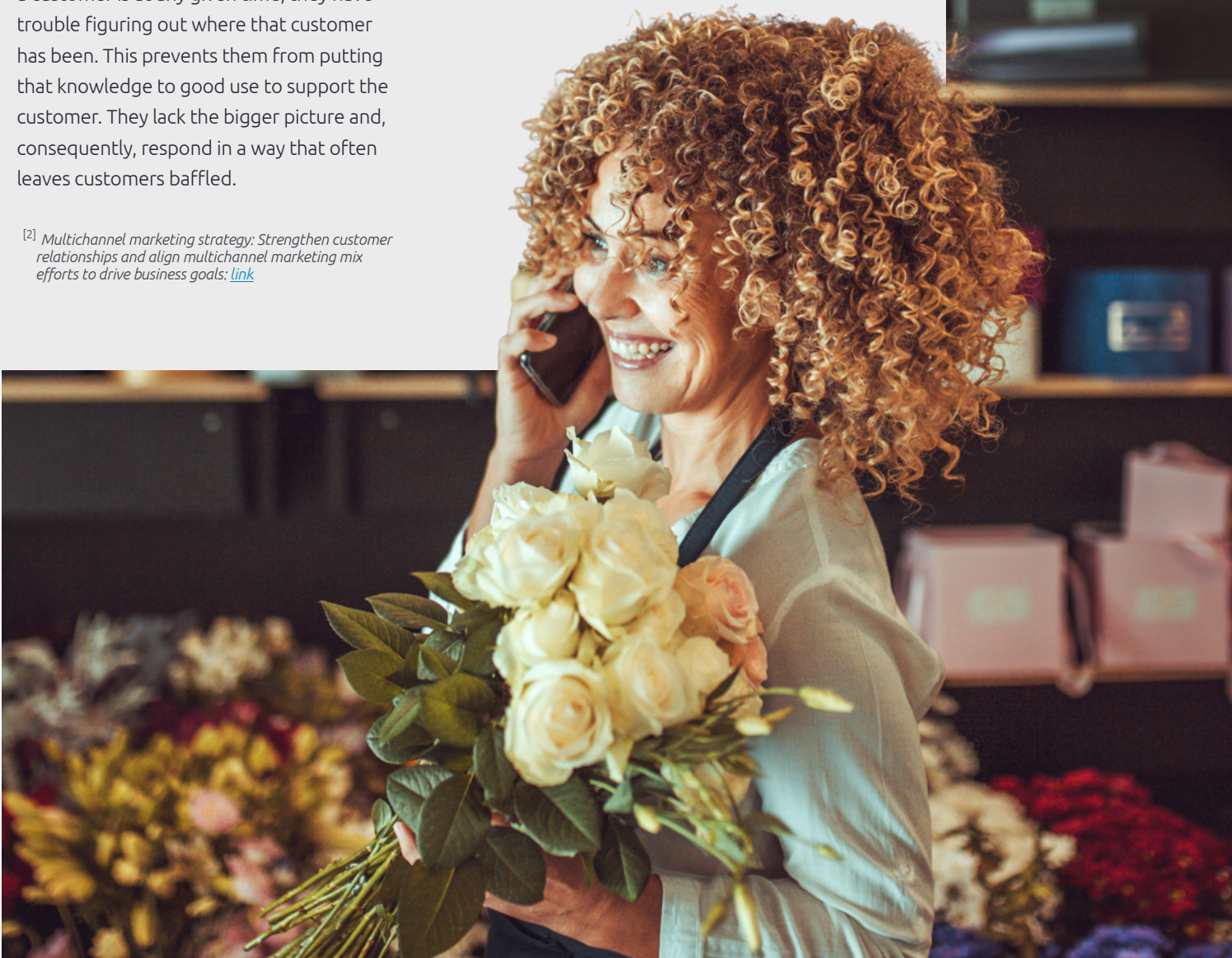
Integration instead of fragmentation

Many brands haven't yet delivered on the promise of dynamic and adaptive omnichannel experience. Gartner says that, despite high ambitions, over 90% cannot seamlessly connect more than three channels together around a buying journey.^[2] They instead resort to a siloed multichannel approach that doesn't factor in valuable cross-channel data in next-best decisions.

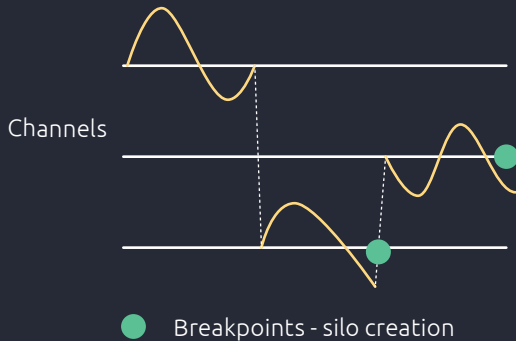
It means that, although they may know where a customer is at any given time, they have trouble figuring out where that customer has been. This prevents them from putting that knowledge to good use to support the customer. They lack the bigger picture and, consequently, respond in a way that often leaves customers baffled.

^[2] Multichannel marketing strategy: Strengthen customer relationships and align multichannel marketing mix efforts to drive business goals: [link](#)

According to Salesforce, 56% of customers say companies they interact with don't consider their personal preferences and prior interactions. This is risky as sometimes one ill-timed message or action may be enough to flip a customer's perception of a brand, causing long-term dissatisfaction and disengagement towards them.



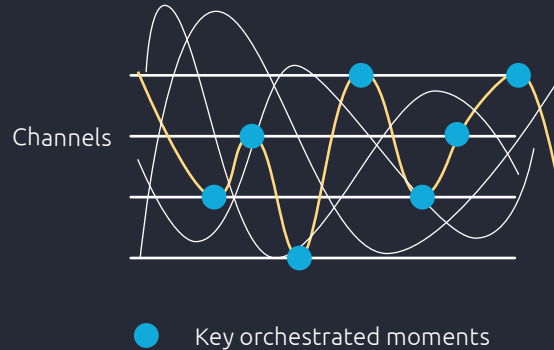
TODAY'S REALITY



Customer
profiling

Customer
activation

WHAT'S NEEDED



Customer
profiling

Customer
activation

Customer
orchestration

Customers are demanding and increasingly expecting brands to understand their needs, preferences, and behaviors at all times. But this is difficult to do if data is siloed across different systems and divisions.

Most brands operate as multiple separate departments (marketing, e-commerce, customer service, etc.), each with different responsibilities and agendas. There's no data sharing between them, and they don't work in unison. One department doesn't know what kind of customer interactions took place in another.

And each department's view of a customer is limited to only what their domain's technology platforms have encountered. This is partly due to their departmental structure, which is more concerned with completing tasks than anticipating the outcomes arising from them. As a result, there's fragmented data and an incomplete overall view of how the customer is feeling, what they intend to do next, and how they perceive the brand as a whole. RevOps (revenue operations) is one way to make these barriers come down. It forces organizations to rethink their technologies by considering every task's outcome. After all, if the customer sees the organization as one brand, shouldn't the brand strive to ensure there's a unified cross-departmental approach behind its every move?

Customer journey management: Why the messy middle doesn't have to be messy

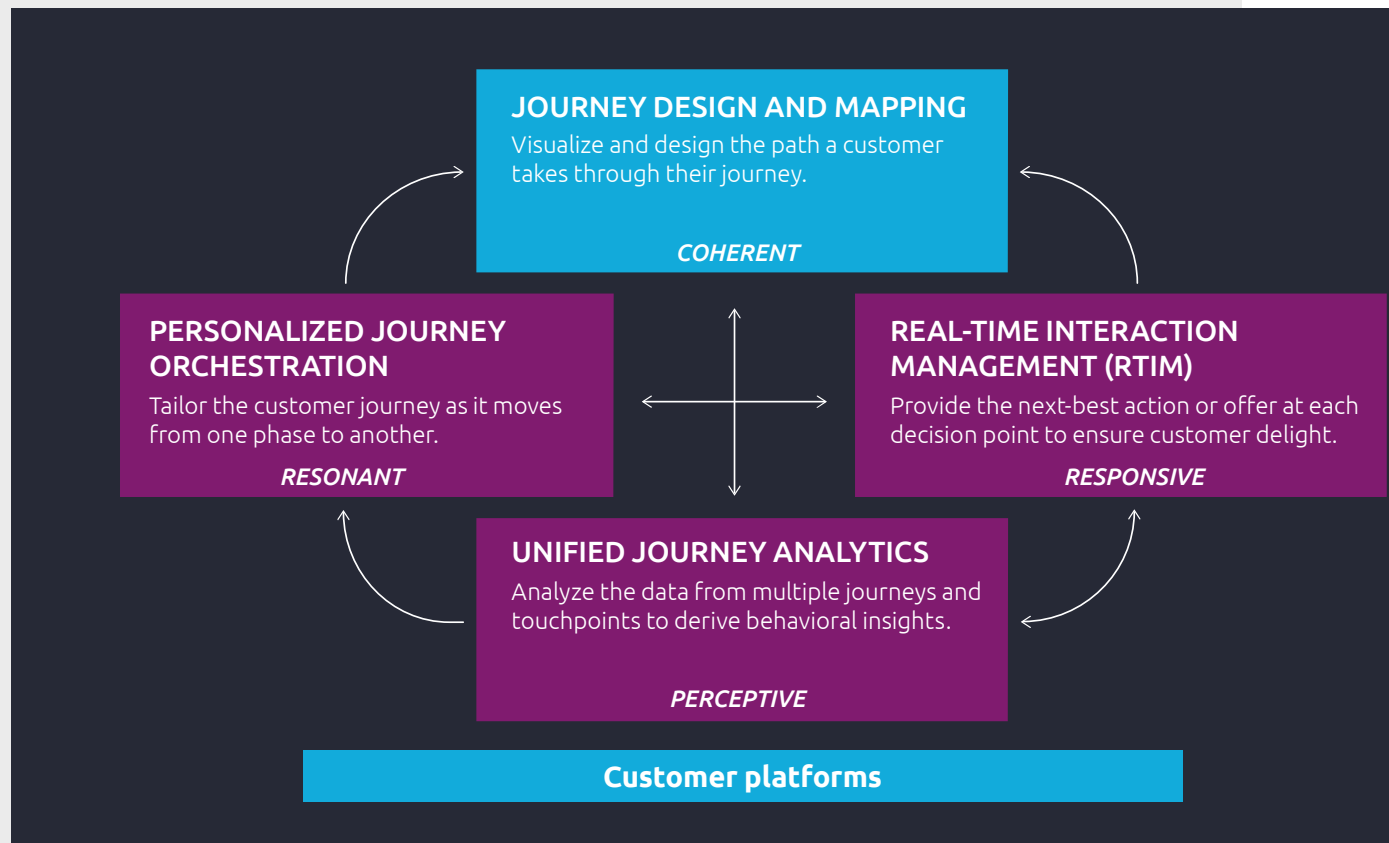
Customer journey management (CJM) is about automating, orchestrating, and continually optimizing how brands and customers interact across all channels, in a dynamic, real-time exchange. At each touchpoint the goal is to assess where a customer has been and try to understand their motivation and sentiment about where they now intend to go.

If a brand knows what next-best move will keep the customer on track toward their goal, they will gain confidence in their ability to provide value and always meet customer expectations.

CJM comprises four core building blocks, with the focus lying on the systems necessary to address the messy middle effectively. These systems help stitch individual bits of cross-channel data together to provide a high-level journey view of customers' historical data so that patterns and trends are easily identifiable. With these insights, brands can considerably increase their chances of delivering experiences that surpass customers' already high expectations. Brands can finally be coherent, resonant, responsive, and perceptive in all their interactions.



The four building blocks of CJM



Journey design and mapping

Goal: Identify key opportunities to deliver seamless experiences across every customer interaction and remove channel boundaries:

- Map current interactions across the brand's touchpoints, as well as the unique journeys for each persona, to understand how customers are experiencing the brand.
- Know the users and identify where and how they are struggling; uncover roadblocks by analyzing CX touchpoints.
- Determine which application is handling which interaction.
- Understand customer actions/inactions and their brand expectations to preempt and deliver superlative experiences.

Personalized journey orchestration

Goal: Tailor customer experiences for higher customer engagement, retention, and overall satisfaction:

- Use technology to gather and orchestrate cross-channel data related to all customer experiences and journeys.
- Listen, understand, and respond based on events or changes in customer intent.
- Use AI/ML for personalization to successively improve every experience.
- Respond to the changing need and intent of customers by providing highly targeted personalized experiences at the right time and on the right channel.

Unified journey analytics

Goal: Identify critical points in the journey where intervention is required and learn how to get customers back onto the happy path.

- Integrate data and create journey dashboards; test journey hypotheses and track and optimize experiences in real time.
- Measure channel effectiveness at various journey stages.
- Analyze customer behavior – at a collective and individual level – across channels and touchpoints using Sankey diagrams.
- Learn the what, how, and when of customer behavior to understand its impact on a particular journey.

Real-time interaction management (RTIM)

Goal: Place the most relevant content in front of customers.

- React and adapt to explicit and implicit changes in customer sentiment, behavior, and intent in real time.
- Use technology to link what the brand presents to the customer with the in-the-moment understanding of their needs.
- Provide customers with relevant content and experiences that support their given journey.

The role of sustainability in customer journey management

Sustainability has become an important factor that's influencing customers' product and service choices. Since customers are now conscious of the impact their purchasing habits have on the environment, they expect brands to offer more eco-friendly options throughout the customer life cycle.

This gradual shift in consumer thinking has forced organizations to learn how to recognize emotions related to sustainable practices and how to make it more convenient for customers to act on their individual sustainability commitments.

Organizations can adopt several strategies here:

1. Collect and analyze customer data related to sustainability preferences and identify moments in the journey where they matter most.
2. Product information, product comparisons, and packaging and shipping options are usually good topics to start thinking about as they're needed to drive the sustainability-related customer experiences in the point above.
3. Design for a broad spectrum of emotions that drive sustainable choices. By recognizing which choices trigger which emotional reactions, brands can appeal to individuals' sense of pride, identity, or joy to encourage more eco-friendly behaviors.
4. Deliver on sustainability across multiple journeys and interactions – some in parallel and some in sequence. Macro and micro journeys offer an opportunity to make sustainability real for customers at each stage of the customer life cycle. Whether it's brand message, product discovery, placing an order or unboxing/returning a product, keeping sustainability top of mind and tangible consistently will help build trust.
5. Collaborate with suppliers and partners who share the brand's sustainability commitment. By ensuring the entire value chain is aligned with sustainable practices, from sourcing raw materials to manufacturing and distribution, organizations can attract more environmentally conscious customers.

To track the actual impact of these activities, organizations must work with their sustainability counterparts to find out how much they have reduced carbon emissions, minimized water and waste in their operations, and improved biodiversity and product durability. By reporting these measures to consumers and sharing the data transparently, brands can generate positive emotion, trust, and loyalty throughout the customer life cycle.

Reimagining the customer journey for picture-perfect mobile and web experiences

A global innovator and provider of digital imaging products to businesses and consumers wanted to closely examine the various customer decision points along the buying journey. The objective was to better understand customer personas and actions across both e-commerce and mobile channels. At the same time, the brand also wanted to create consistent, scalable user interfaces that would give customers multiple pathways into the shopping journey, depending on individual goals.

Using our DCX Foundry, which includes a set of unique methodologies and enablers geared toward meeting modern CX challenges, Capgemini conducted a discovery and experience mapping workshop. Our experienced designers, CX architects, and business analysts helped the brand lay the foundation for a customer-centric approach that focused on delivering the intended user experience to every touchpoint. Design audits then led to heuristic evaluations for A/B testing.



Based on insights captured during the workshop, the brand was able to consider many possible customer journey scenarios and find the right angle to refine next-best actions – across the awareness, consideration, buy, and use phases.

With a sharper customer experience, our client has already seen a 9% sales increase, an 11% rise in new users, and a 10% revenue boost. As part of ongoing support, user research/usability studies on desktop and mobile click-through rates help influence the roadmap for future enhancements.

The benefits of understanding context at the moment of engagement

By activating and orchestrating the four CJM building blocks as one integrated proposition, brands can deliver impactful customer experiences.

Improve customer delight. By engaging with customers at the right moments and providing them with relevant content, businesses can guide them to the right product or service that satisfies their needs.

Reinforce experience. By identifying pain points and areas of friction, as well as opportunities to create positive experiences, businesses can optimize the customer journey for higher levels of enjoyment and possibly loyalty.

Drive business growth. Loyal customers are more likely to make repeat purchases and recommend the brand to others, thereby expanding the customer base.

Keep more customers happy. Spotting moments when customers are at risk of churn is crucial for retaining them. By taking timely and targeted actions, businesses can address customer concerns and provide appropriate solutions, which will help build long-term relationships.

Deliver channel-less experiences. Putting the customer at the heart of operations can change how brands think and organize to solve friction points customers encounter on their journeys.

Align business objectives. By ensuring consistency across different teams and touchpoints within the organization, a business can operate as one cohesive brand, strengthening its reputation with every interaction.

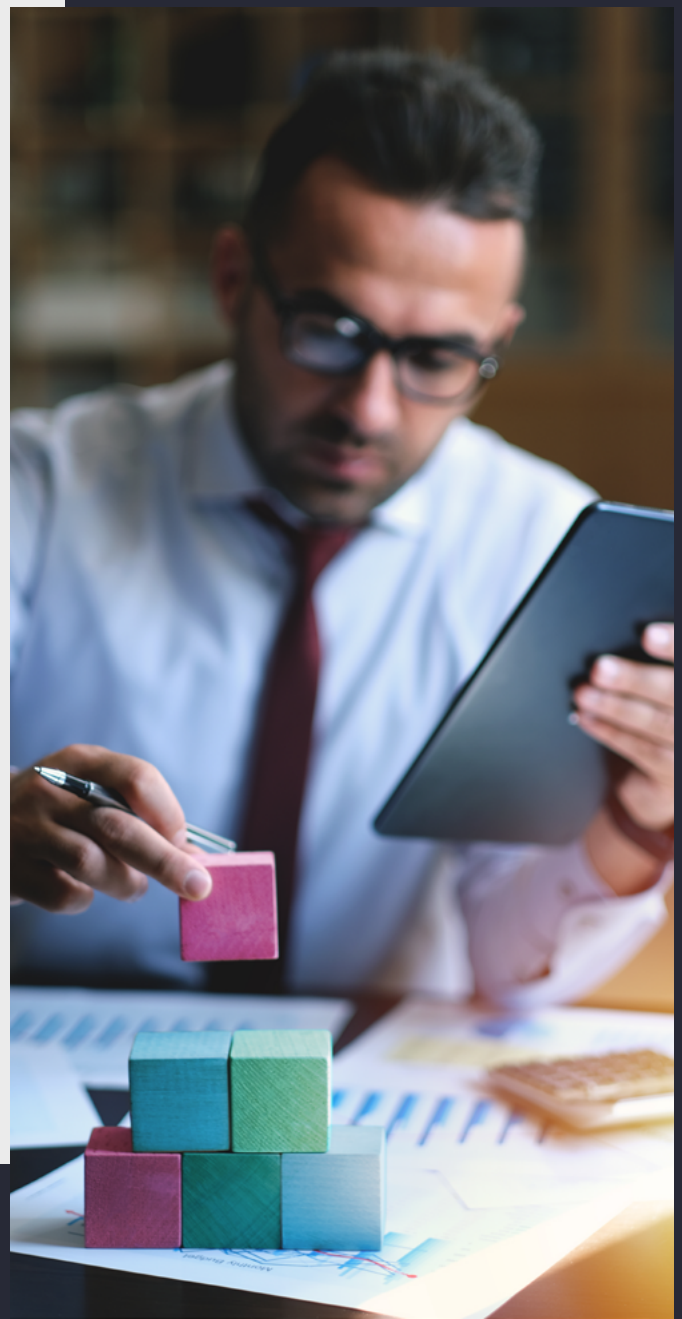
Embracing the journey of continuous refinement

Becoming a brand that's laser-focused on improving customer experience to build loyalty, revenue, and trust can't be achieved overnight. It's an ongoing journey that puts continuous product and experience improvement at its core. That journey begins with data, merging what's available (online, offline, and across zero- to third-party data) and identifying gaps that might need to be closed. The tried-and-tested way forward is to start small and on specific pain points rather than trying to resolve everything at once.

After this foundation is established to drive the scenario, real-time analytics helps optimize interactions on a per channel basis until the brand is ready to expand and apply the concept to other channels.

However, it doesn't stop there. To build up visibility and gain insights into customers' shifting motivations, brands must keep monitoring and analyzing customer feedback and behavior – today's customer segment patterns will not be the same tomorrow.

There must be a commitment to constant engagement and improvement. By recognizing that customer journey management is not a one-time fix but an ongoing process of adaptation and growth, businesses can keep perfecting the art of great customer interactions and the science of data-driven decision making to ensure better customer engagement and satisfaction.





About Capgemini

Capgemini is a global business and technology transformation partner, helping organizations to accelerate their dual transition to a digital and sustainable world, while creating tangible impact for enterprises and society. It is a responsible and diverse group of 340,000 team members in more than 50 countries. With its strong over 55-year heritage, Capgemini is trusted by its clients to unlock the value of technology to address the entire breadth of their business needs. It delivers end-to-end services and solutions leveraging strengths from strategy and design to engineering, all fueled by its market leading capabilities in AI, cloud and data, combined with its deep industry expertise and partner ecosystem. The Group reported 2023 global revenues of €22.5 billion.

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