

ACCELERATING THE **CX ADVANTAGE**

LEVERAGING THE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE
TO CREATE A COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE



WALKER



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In one company, the customer-centric focus started at the top, with a CEO who knew that customer experience is the key to long-term success. In another company, employees understood that their customers are the reason they have jobs and indicated a desire to learn how to give those customers the best possible experience.

No one perfect formula exists for creating a competitive advantage through the customer experience. Differing business models, complexity of relationships, company cultures and much more come into play when B-to-B companies create and execute their customer experience strategy.

While there is no one right method, Walker has gathered insights through extensive research and formed an approach that B-to-B companies are using to accelerate their customer experience initiatives. Walker's Accelerate CX™ program looks at the key elements of a company's customer experience strategy and categorizes CX practices into one of five levels of maturity:

DISJOINTED – CX efforts are non-existent or at best sporadic and disorganized

DEFINED – CX is recognized as a discipline but is not deployed in a coordinated fashion.

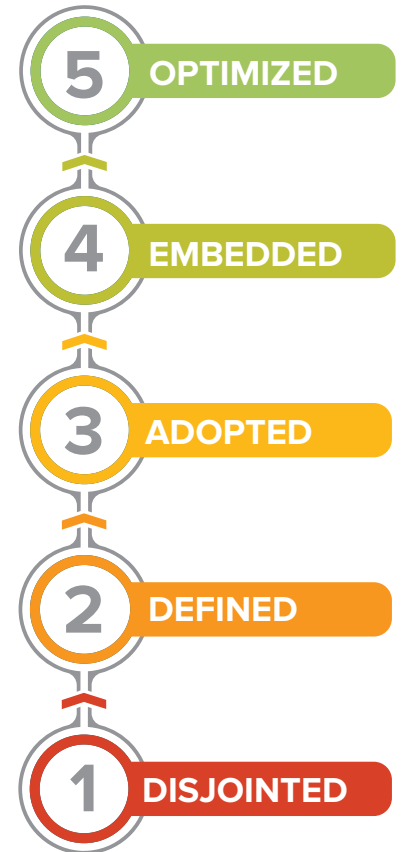
ADOPTED – CX is accepted as a worthwhile initiative but is not universally leveraged.

EMBEDDED – CX is operational and embraced but is not generating tangible results.

OPTIMIZED – CX is impactful, creating a competitive advantage for the company.

This report, *Accelerating the CX Advantage*, summarizes what Walker has learned through this research and provides valuable advice for those looking to create a sustainable advantage through the customer experience.

LEVELS OF MATURITY



WHAT ARE THE ELEMENTS OF A ROBUST, MATURE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE PROGRAM?

Based on years of experience and exhaustive research, Walker's Maturity Model is designed to drive business success. The levels of maturity are assessed on six key areas of CX competency:



STRATEGY – Customer experience is intentional, designed to establish and maintain a sustainable competitive advantage.



CULTURE – A deliberate focus on the customer influences the way employees think and act.



RESOURCES – People and financial resources are in place to ensure CX is effectively implemented and governed.



INSIGHTS – An agile system is in place to efficiently gather insights needed to make short-term decisions and guide long-term strategies.

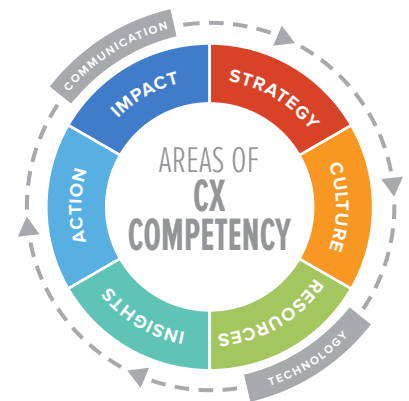


ACTION – Employee decisions are guided by customer insights and action is tracked to ensure follow-through takes place.



IMPACT – Systems are in place to monitor the impact on the experience of the customer and financial return to the company.

In addition, the Maturity Model incorporates two boosters – **communication and technology** – that support, enhance and heighten the organization's CX initiatives.



THE OPTIMIZED DIFFERENCE

Optimized companies have the CX advantage



50%

**ARE LEADERS IN
THEIR INDUSTRY**

**100% ARE BETTER THAN
AVERAGE IN THEIR MARKET**

5x

**MORE LIKELY TO
GENERATE POSITIVE
OUTCOMES**

76%

OPTIMIZED
COMPANIES

28%

ALL OTHER
COMPANIES

**DOUBLE DIGIT GROWTH
IN FORECASTED REVENUE**

50%



OPTIMIZED
COMPANIES

20%



ALL OTHER
COMPANIES

**DOUBLE DIGIT GROWTH
IN REVENUE**



CX IS STRATEGIC

- ✓ More likely to choose CX as the most effective method to create a competitive advantage
- ✓ CX Leaders have authority to mobilize resources
- ✓ More funding and staffing dedicated to CX strategy
- ✓ They look for external advisors to guide the strategy



EMBEDDED IN CULTURE

- ✓ Day-to-day decision-making is driven by customer insights
- ✓ More emphasis on training employees to help them deliver a better customer experience



DATA SMART

- ✓ More likely to use predictive analytics
- ✓ Use analytics to prescribe actions
- ✓ Collect data from multiple sources
- ✓ Have a dedicated analytics function
- ✓ Have a process for identifying and linking data



TRANSPARENT

- ✓ Share improvements with customers
- ✓ Customer-facing employees get a complete view of the customer

“AM I NORMAL?”

For more than a decade, Walker has had a framework for helping companies progress in customer experience maturity.

However, just progressing on their own wasn't enough – companies continued to ask for benchmarks and ways to measure their progress. With this in mind, Walker set out to study the levels of CX maturity and develop a benchmark so companies can compare their CX strategy and have a guide for their strategic roadmap.

The benchmark is comprised of customer experience professionals who lead or have significant influence on their CX strategy. While growing every day, the benchmark at the time of this report's publication included insights from:

- More than 300 companies, mostly B-to-B
- A mix of industries and company size
- Primarily individuals in middle and senior management

Read on, and find your response to the question everyone wants answered.



ACCELERATING YOUR CX



Creating a competitive advantage from the customer experience is a journey, not a destination. It's a process involving an organizational commitment to create an intimate and deep understanding of customers and to use this understanding to guide strategic decisions at all levels of the organization.

When embarking on any journey, it's important to start with a clear understanding of where things are today, the results you'd like to accomplish in the future and the route that will produce the best results, the fastest. Walker's Accelerate CX program includes a tool to help companies assess where they are today – pinpointing areas needing improvement – and access to the premier customer experience consultants who can share tools, techniques and best practices to help companies accelerate CX.

It's all about helping companies take CX to the next level. In this section, we tell you how.



MOVING FROM DISJOINTED TO DEFINED

At the disjointed maturity level, CX efforts are non-existent or, at best, sporadic and disorganized. Companies that fall into this level of maturity tend to be new to their customer experience journey. They don't have a defined strategy, with identified and measurable outcomes. The culture tends to focus on product differentiation or cost cutting, with limited influence given to the customer experience. Limited resources are dedicated to leveraging customer intelligence to prioritize business initiatives.

HOW TO ACCELERATE FROM DISJOINTED → DEFINED

Jumping from Disjointed to Defined could perhaps be one of the most challenging steps because it's about creating momentum. Here are some proven methods for accelerating your CX maturity:

- Start with securing CEO buy-in and then working jointly to develop a CX "north star" to guide the organization toward an aligning point.
- Invest time in identifying the right people internally and externally to involve in your CX strategy.
- Inventory what the company is doing today to listen to customers and customer-facing employees.
- Establish the guidelines and cadence that will be used to oversee customer intelligence and, more importantly, the actions associated with it.
- Create awareness for the initiative through branding and by planning both customer and employee communications.
- Identify technology tools that can be used to collect, share and act on customer feedback.

BENCHMARK SAYS...

Companies at the disjointed stage score high and low on the following:



HIGH SCORES FOR COMPANIES AT THE DISJOINTED STAGE

1. Customers are willing to provide feedback.
2. Employees believe it is important to use customer input when making key decisions.
3. The customer experience aligns with the brand promises.



LOW SCORES FOR COMPANIES AT THE DISJOINTED STAGE

1. Regularly sharing updates on the customer experience initiatives.
2. Having a cross-functional team of customer advocates.
3. Measuring success for each business function.

HOW ONE COMPANY MOVED FROM DISJOINTED TO DEFINED

This real estate asset management company had a unique opportunity to merge assets and create a new offering that could disrupt the current state of customer experience in their industry. Their new leadership team committed to transform their way of doing business from being transactionally driven to creating a service-oriented, CX-driven culture connected to a core set of brand values.

Recognizing the challenges of integrating different internal business cultures and sets of practices and policies into a single, cohesive offering, senior leaders saw an opportunity to imagine the possible and bring standardization across the business, and they set about establishing a ‘from scratch’ customer experience initiative. Excitement around this new vision ran high, and they knew they had to move quickly before employees settled back in to old ways.

The company created a new role to oversee the development and execution of a broad customer experience strategy, connected to leadership of the company brand and corporate communication. As a first step, the company sought a partner who would bring a depth of CX expertise to the relationship, and approached Walker. They found value in Walker’s B-to-B focus, in the thought-provoking questions asked in the proposal stage to ensure understanding of their business priorities and challenges, and in Walker’s long experience with designing new strategic programs.

As the initiative kicked off, company leaders were excited about bringing voices from each of the merged companies together and inviting tenants to come together and share their insights. In the first five months, this company:

- Established brand values and a purpose statement
- Established executive governance to ensure connectivity to company strategies and signal commitment to new approaches
- Conducted journey mapping workshops internally and with customers to better understand current and ideal experiences. This included understanding:
 - Which parts of the experience are tolerated but not enjoyed and which were strengths to build upon
 - Where there were opportunities to bring new brand values to life and stand out in the market
 - Where there were inconsistencies in the management of different properties based on their legacy management
 - Internal gaps in communication that were creating weak spots in the customer experience
- Identified the most critical gaps and opportunities, balancing quick wins with longer-term initiatives

“We’re helping them shine a light on the customer journey: where they have opportunities to differentiate and how to accelerate success by connecting CX to culture, technology, and innovation.”



JENNIFER BATLEY
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT
CONSULTING SERVICES



MOVING FROM DEFINED TO ADOPTED

At the defined level, awareness of CX is starting to emerge. Many people can see the macro-level issues and find them familiar, but they don't know how to go about fixing them – or they don't think it's their job. Some customer input is shared, but communication is broad in nature, not tailored to the needs and interests of various stakeholder groups. Pockets of the company support CX, but it is not consistent.

HOW TO ACCELERATE FROM DEFINED → ADOPTED

With general awareness of the customer experience strategy, CX initiatives have momentum on their side and can generally move quickly to the Adopted stage by embracing some of these proven methods:

- Start modeling improvements based on successes elsewhere. For example, if account managers have had success in one part of the business, look to replicate it in other areas.
- Focus on supporting the teams who are early adopters and are demonstrating some success. Help them build and tell their story so other employees see the result of action.
- Formalize a framework and governance model to ensure actions are developed and seen through to completion.
- Establish a regular plan and cadence for sharing customer insights across the organization and with customers.
- Inventory operational metrics and objectively quantify how they connect to the customer insights.
- Prioritize activities or initiatives based on the anticipated impact.

BENCHMARK SAYS...

Companies at the defined stage score high and low on the following:



HIGH SCORES FOR COMPANIES AT THE DEFINED STAGE

1. The customer experience strategy is aligned with the corporate mission, vision and purpose.
2. Customer experience is an important component in the strategic planning process.
3. An executive owns, manages and champions the customer experience strategy.



LOW SCORES FOR COMPANIES AT THE DEFINED STAGE

1. Having a process for identifying and linking customer data.
2. Tracking the business impact of CX initiatives.
3. Creating an environment in which employees are kept informed of customer initiatives.

HOW ONE COMPANY MOVED FROM DEFINED TO ADOPTED

Realizing the competitive advantage that comes from a great customer experience, a financial services company's management team decided to focus on a customer strategy that would set it apart from its competitors.

In a top-down initiative, management communicated that customer focus was now core to the company's strategy and took steps to embed it in the culture by empowering front-line associates to act on behalf of the customer.

However...

Executives knew they had gaps in their ability to create a truly differentiated customer experience. Empowering employees wasn't going to be enough. A key area of concern was that the company had no formal way of measuring customer sentiment; the only feedback was through anecdotes and gut feelings. The company had no idea how many customers were loyal – and how many were at risk and might soon walk away.

After the company reached out to Walker for help, a comprehensive assessment of existing customer experience strategies was completed. In addition to confirming the gap in understanding customer sentiment, Walker identified other areas of focus for the company that would optimize its customer experience strategy. Together, they prioritized evolution activities into a roadmap: what to do, how much it should cost and how long it should take.

Key areas of focus included:

- Capturing customer feedback from a representative group of customers to ensure that planned customer experience improvements were the ones that mattered most to customers.
- Creating a cross-functional CX team to execute the customer experience strategy and serve as customer advocates across the organization.
- Choosing the right technology platform to integrate customer insight and create balanced scorecards that could be used to keep executives apprised of CX progress.

As the company continues its focus on customers as a key differentiation strategy, the roadmap created by Walker is being used to guide those efforts.

“It's about prioritizing all those things you can potentially do. Right now in the CX space, there are a lot of shiny objects. There are a lot of exciting things that can be done, but you have to prioritize and focus on the areas that will have the most impact for your customers.”



MELISSA MEIER, CCXP
VICE PRESIDENT
CONSULTING SERVICES



MOVING FROM ADOPTED TO EMBEDDED

Executives have a clear understanding of the bottom-line business benefit of focusing on CX. Pockets of the organization are seeing some return – perhaps customer support processes have been streamlined, yielding costs savings and higher customer satisfaction with support. With positive momentum, the company is looking to embed customer insights into the day-to-day business operations and management systems.

HOW TO ACCELERATE FROM ADOPTED → EMBEDDED

Moving to the embedded stage is perhaps one of the most critical milestones for CX professionals. At this level of maturity, companies must be able to demonstrate an organizational commitment to customer experience strategies and have proven the business value. Some best practices for accelerating to the embedded stage include:

- Connect planned actions to existing activities, such as account planning, product roadmap cycles and strategic planning practices.
- Tailor employee communication to provide enough guidance for employees to understand their role and take the appropriate actions.
- Establish customer-focused design principles, such as “help customers succeed” or “keep it easy,” that can be used to guide enterprise-wide improvement initiatives.
- Establish a “brand” for the customer experience strategy to elevate the program’s status with both employees and customers.
- Expand the nature of the resources who are engaged to include human resources, financial and technology elements. These resources can help embed customer intelligence into the internal and external operating systems and help strengthen the financial analysis that is necessary to demonstrate a strong ROI.
- Develop formal KPIs that are consistent across the organization and routinely quantify the impact gained at an overall level from CX efforts.

BENCHMARK SAYS...

Companies at the adopted stage score high and low on the following:



HIGH SCORES FOR COMPANIES AT THE ADOPTED STAGE

1. Employees who demonstrate customer-focused behaviors are recognized and rewarded.
2. Multiple sources of information are used to gain customer insight.
3. Customer insights inform continuous improvement efforts.



LOW SCORES FOR COMPANIES AT THE ADOPTED STAGE

1. Customer insights are not embedded into the existing systems and processes.
2. They do not forecast the business impact of customer experience improvements.
3. There is no dedicated analytics function involved in coordinating the investigation of customer insights.

HOW ONE COMPANY MOVED FROM ADOPTED TO EMBEDDED

A highly decentralized distributor sought to identify and save high-risk accounts. The company has thousands of small accounts, which makes keeping track of the health of each relationship difficult. Walker helped the company determine when accounts are in danger. Alerts are then sent to district managers, who follow up with unhappy customers, resolve issues and document the process. They also quantify the scope of business saved or opportunities uncovered.

CX leaders aggregated the results from these interventions and leveraged this information to show the business value of the CX program. As further proof of alignment with real business outcomes, customer loyalty results have been tracking with actual sales performance at the corporate level.

The employees closest to the customers are seeing the positive impact this kind of feedback can have. They understand their customers better and feel more confident that they can meet their needs. In a company-wide chat room, employees started posting stories of saving customer relationships by acting on feedback. Customers who experience this kind of personal follow-up have been found to be even more loyal.

The executive team now speaks about customer experience as a top priority during earnings and analyst calls and have set corporate loyalty goals.

Sonya and the Walker team helped the company create a three-year roadmap tied to business outcomes. Together, they set a theme for each year's accomplishments. They review the roadmap quarterly, checking where progress is and where it's headed. Sonya recommended refreshing the core of the customer listening process to center on the customer journey rather than business functions.

The feedback and alert system worked so well – and the company liked the program's focus on individual accounts so much – that it was expanded to encompass growth opportunities. In the end, Walker helped the company not only save high-risk accounts but also grow the value of existing accounts.

“We built the business case for the value of the effort through saving at risk customers. Broader experience enhancements then provide incremental value and a competitive advantage.”



SONYA MCALLISTER, CCXP
*PRINCIPAL,
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT
CONSULTING SERVICES*

MOVING FROM EMBEDDED TO OPTIMIZED

The company is starting to develop a reputation for customer focus. Due to demonstrated success, investment is starting to be made in bigger, cross-functional CX improvements, though these take longer to implement and for customers to recognize the change. A process for making changes based on customer feedback has been adopted, and CX efforts are being linked to operational and financial metrics.

HOW TO ACCELERATE FROM EMBEDDED → OPTIMIZED

The pinnacle of the CX maturity is awarded to those with belief, persistence and a customer-committed culture. Putting the customer first in all that you do doesn't come naturally for many; it's a skill that is acquired through developing a strong organizational culture that believes success is achieved from the outside in. Here are some proven methods for achieving the optimized level of maturity:

- Be agile with your customer experience program plan – design it to be able to flex and adjust to changing needs.
- Start customer orientation on day one as new employees are onboarded.
- Include CX-related activities in individuals' goals/KPIs for the year.
- Leverage the credibility of your Finance team to win over skeptics, and leverage your CX executive sponsor to assist in communicating the business benefits.
- Emphasize with all employees how customer feedback can positively impact business results.
- Develop a formal discipline for prioritizing and measuring the impact of any customer initiative.
- Continue to embrace technology to make the integration of data sources and delivery easier.

BENCHMARK SAYS...

Companies at the embedded stage score high and low on the following:



HIGH SCORES FOR COMPANIES AT THE EMBEDDED STAGE

1. Employees, suppliers and partners who are involved in delivering value to customers have a clear understanding of why the customer experience is important.
2. Company culture includes regular practices and routines that remind employees of the importance of the customer experience.
3. Training is provided to help employees deliver the intended experience.



LOW SCORES FOR COMPANIES AT THE EMBEDDED STAGE

1. External advisors to develop and execute the CX strategy are not leveraged.
2. Customer-facing employees are not equipped with a complete view of CX.
3. They do not seek industry recognition for the experience they deliver.

HOW ONE COMPANY MOVED FROM EMBEDDED TO OPTIMIZED

A large technology company undertook great effort to make customer focus part of the way it does business.

The company is decentralized. To ensure company-wide customer focus, a CX Steering Committee with VP-level and higher members was created and tasked with working cross-functionally to improve customer experience. The individuals' levels within the company gave their ideas weight and allowed them to secure the resources necessary to move the CX needle.

Early CX leaders within the company created momentum by being persistent about bringing forward customer insights and making sure they were part of important decisions. Their efforts were rewarded: data was democratized. With the philosophy that access to data will help employees make more informed, customer-focused decisions, the company made CX data available to everyone.

Customer experience was discussed everywhere: part of an external presentation, a talking point at a town hall presentation, emphasized during onboarding, a reminder on key badges. The company listed its customer satisfaction score on its intranet page right below its stock price. Customer verbatims ran across the intranet landing page in a ticker. Insights were also tailored for smaller audiences – engineers wanted data, while salespeople wanted stories.

At one point, feedback showed that though the customers liked the company's products and services, complexity within the organization was having a negative impact on their experience. The CX team shifted to focus effort on improving the customer's ease of doing business. One way they fixed this was by simplifying tech support and making self-serve options more available, efficient and simple. Customer response was positive.

As its CX matured from embedded to optimized, the company gained a reputation in the marketplace of being great at listening to customers and responding with products and services that people value. This helped the company acquire new customers and keep existing accounts – they knew the company would be focused on (and meet) their needs.

“Optimization is less about individual activities and more about developing a process to keep your CX strategy in line with evolutions in customer experience and your company's strategy.”



NOAH GRAYSON, CCXP

*PRINCIPAL,
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT
CONSULTING SERVICES*

OPTIMIZED – MAINTAIN THE MOMENTUM

With customer experience fully embedded, the CX team continues to ensure that customer education is shared with everyone, including new hires, to increase empathy for what it is like to be a customer. Customer success stories are routinely collected, shared and celebrated. New company initiatives are evaluated relative to their customer experience impact and alignment with the CX strategy. Employees are empowered to make daily decisions that benefit customers. The CX team also coordinates fresh, fun and creative promotions for the company, including special events such as CX Day celebrations.

HOW TO MAINTAIN THE MOMENTUM

Keeping the momentum going can be just as hard as building momentum. Constant competing priorities, evolving customer and marketplace needs, and battling boredom are just some of the challenges optimized companies face. However, it can be done! Here are some proven techniques for keeping the momentum going:

- Continue to monitor, measure effectiveness and refresh the CX program and strategy.
- Avoid being complacent – stay alert to and keep monitoring changes in the environment that would trigger modifications:
 - Market
 - Competitive set
 - Customer needs
 - Your organization's interests and goals
- Always be tuning the customer experience strategy, systems and initiatives to be identifying or responding to the changes.
- Stay in tune with what your customers are thinking and where they want you to go next.
- Celebrate!

BENCHMARK SAYS...

Companies at the optimized stage score high and low on the following:



HIGH SCORES FOR COMPANIES AT THE OPTIMIZED STAGE

1. Employee communications are used to regularly reinforce the importance of being customer committed.
2. Employees from all areas of the business seek insights about the customer.
3. The company consistently executes on the customer experience priorities.



LOW SCORES FOR COMPANIES AT THE OPTIMIZED STAGE

1. They are not fully leveraging predictive analytics.
2. It's difficult to give employees easy access to customer insights.
3. They have a hard time aligning customer information across the organization.

MAINTAINING OPTIMIZED

The CEO of a large technology company considers customer experience to be so foundational to the company's success that it has a seat at the table – he established a Chief Customer Officer who reports directly to him.

The organization of CX at the company also speaks to the importance and insight surrounding customer focus. Realizing that different segments of the company's customers have different needs, wants and profitability, the department established three pillars, one for each major customer segment. Each pillar independently creates strategy for its customers, based on in-depth interviews, journey mapping and other listening methods.

One central group governs data, collecting customer feedback and ensuring that no overlap or redundancy exists and that the database contains high-quality contacts.

Customer insights are pushed to the company's internal system, leveraging data visualization tools that sit on the company's tools rather than the CX platform. This means that employees have the data where and when they need it – sales employees see satisfaction scores and account-level profitability data along with their sales tools; service employees see feedback and customer wait times in their tool.

Insights are also shared with customers regularly, through email, analyst calls, quarterly business reviews and reports. The company proactively tells customers, "This is what we heard from you" and shows what steps are being taken based on that feedback.

Customers are more likely to share feedback because they aren't being asked for it as often. Checks are in place to make sure that individual customers aren't surveyed too often. Predictive analytics are also used to extrapolate customers' experiences based on data.

Customer experience is embedded in the company's culture. The CX program is branded and has a logo. A culture code spells out behaviors that are customer focused. Workshops help train employees in customer focus. Members of the CX team are encouraged to become certified customer experience professionals.

Customer experience and financial health are linked for the company. The return on investment for CX is clearly understood, and a customer metric is one of just a few numbers the CEO checks to see how the business is doing.

This forward-looking, customer-focused company is known to be a leader in CX. It has won awards for its program and its customer experience leaders now share their knowledge with others by speaking about CX at conferences.

"Break the cycle of just doing surveys. Use creative ways to tap into what consumers are thinking and where they want you to go next."



SEAN CLAYTON, CCXP
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT
CONSULTING SERVICES

A blurred high-speed train in motion, with a blue and orange color gradient overlay. The train is moving from left to right, and the background is a bright, hazy sky. The text "THE FORMULA FOR SUCCESS" is overlaid in the bottom left corner.

THE FORMULA FOR SUCCESS

What are the elements of a robust, mature customer experience program?

Based on years of experience and exhaustive research, Walker's Maturity Model is designed to drive business success. The levels of maturity are assessed on six key areas of CX competency:



Strategy – Customer experience is intentional, designed to establish and maintain a sustainable competitive advantage.



Culture – A deliberate focus on the customer influences the way employees think and act.



Resources – People and financial resources are in place to ensure CX is effectively implemented and governed.



Insights – An agile system is in place to efficiently gather insights needed to make short-term decisions and guide long-term strategies.



Action – Employee decisions are guided by customer insights and action is tracked to ensure follow through takes place.



Impact – Systems are in place to monitor the impact on the experience of the customer and financial return to the company.

In addition, The Maturity Model incorporates two boosters – **communication and technology** – that support, enhance and heighten the organization's CX initiatives.



STRATEGY

CX initiatives begin with a clear understanding of what the customer experience ultimately should be. **Customer experience strategy is about developing an intentional customer experience with the goal of establishing and maintaining a sustainable competitive advantage.**

The right CX strategy doesn't stand alone. Instead, it is tightly aligned with the company's overall strategy and is a key component of the company's brand. Executives include CX in the strategic planning process and recognize that products can be duplicated and prices can be matched, but an exceptional customer experience is highly difficult for competitors to copy.

An optimized CX strategy is laser focused on what customers want and need. Skilled CX teams take the time to map end-to-end interactions, designing the ideal customer experience while constantly evaluating necessary improvements. Various corporate functions understand their role and success measures are in place.

CASE: OPTIMIZED STRATEGY AT WORK

A company was intent on driving a culture of focusing more on the customer by creating the ideal customer experience. Using various approaches that enabled customers to reimagine their experiences, the company and Walker created a vision of what customers view as "ideal." Then, they created a strategy that involved working with customers through three phases:

- **Identify** the optimum future experience that the company should deliver to customers across all relevant touchpoints.
- **Implement** the desired customer experience practices consistently across business units, functions and regions responsible for delivery.
- **Institutionalize** the new customer experience competency by using communication and education to build employee awareness and engagement.

The strategy of combining internal and external input worked well for this company. The input from customers was refined into a set of "ideal customer experience guiding principles" that are now used to test any action or initiative being put into place. The company knows that ideas that fit with the principles will be aligned with what customers believe to be the best possible experience.

OPTIMIZED CHARACTERISTICS

- Integrated with the overall corporate mission/vision/purpose.
- Aligned with the company's brand promises.
- Viewed as an important component in the strategic planning process.
- Have defined CX metrics/goals for each business function.
- Focused on the ideal end-to-end customer experience.

"The impact from our customer experience program informs many of our business decisions and helps in transforming many of our programs that are in place today. We use the feedback to make business decisions on where to invest."

— **Customer Experience**
Professional, Computer Storage



CULTURE

Without the right customer-committed culture, even the best strategy will fall flat. **The right CX culture means that from top to bottom, employees care about the way customers do business with their company.**

CX culture starts at the top with the tone set by C-level executives and it ripples through the organization to all areas regardless of whether they interact with customers regularly or are in functions where they rarely relate with customers. It starts with hiring practices that invite people into the organization who have a genuine interest in seeing customers succeed. This is then constantly reinforced through onboarding, orientation and ongoing training.

A customer-committed culture also extends beyond the organization to influence work with suppliers, partners, distributors and others in the supply chain. Regardless of whether customer relationships are direct or indirect, programs are in place to ensure a consistent, positive experience for customers.

CASE: OPTIMIZED CULTURE AT WORK

A company wanted its customer experience to be as efficient, reliable and adaptable as its products, so it strategically shifted the company's culture to be customer focused from the inside out. Updating the mission statement to emphasize the new customer experience focus was the first step.

The company partnered with Walker to help with experience management. To begin, the two needed to gather both external and internal information:

- Who are the customers?
- How do customers perceive their relationship with the company?
- What roadblocks within the company prevent customers from having the experience described in the mission statement?

To identify problematic internal relationships that might prevent customers from receiving the intended experience, Walker and the company developed an internal customer listening program in coordination with the external program. All employees were surveyed on their interactions with up to three other functions within the company. Walker correlated the internal and external ratings to determine opportunities for improvement. Walker worked with leaders in the company to create plans to address low areas.

A year after implementation, survey data showed improved customer experience, both internally and externally. Improving relationships among functional areas within the company helped improve satisfaction externally too.

OPTIMIZED CHARACTERISTICS

- Employees act and think in a customer-focused way because they believe in the benefit of being customer centric.
- Associates are hired for customer focus and cultural fit.
- Training is provided.
- Rewards and recognition are given for demonstrating customer-focused behavior.
- Being customer centric is reinforced as part of professional development activities.
- Customer-centric rituals and routines are practiced.

"This is the third year of our relationship with Walker. In the last three years, we have been able to drive customer focus within the company, have defined "Think Customer" as one of our core values, and initiated several customer experience initiatives that have not only improved customer experience but have driven strong top line growth"

— Customer Experience Professional, Web Security



RESOURCES

Today's most effective CX teams are resource wise. **The most notable resource they leverage is people, which involves far more than just having a person or team to run a program.**

Instead, for CX to be effective company wide, the best initiatives have a C-level executive serving as the champion, supported by a steering team charged with carrying out the necessary plans. Effective steering teams establish a network of customer advocates who serve as ambassadors of CX initiatives to their respective departments, functions or regions. In this way, virtually every employee is engaged in CX.

Optimized CX also means the necessary investment is made to provide the right tools, training and access to consultants who provide specialized support, expertise and outside perspective.

Governance has emerged as a necessary component to ensure that processes are in place to coordinate customer data from across the company and govern what analysis says about the customer. Given the immense amount of data within today's organizations, this coordinated approach has become a necessary element.

CASE: OPTIMIZED RESOURCES AT WORK

With customer satisfaction scores flattening and the competition closing in, this company needed a dramatically new approach to CX. With strong executive sponsorship, the company's Brand and CX team embarked upon a new customer experience strategy by establishing a comprehensive CX governance structure and a three-year roadmap.

In particular, the company's outdated measurement listening system needed to be updated; it was inwardly focused and driving changes in silos. The update consisted of two phases:

Phase 1: Assess and Strategize – Walker assessed the situation and synthesized the recommendations to refresh the listening system with a new approach, methodology, frequency and questions. Including all internal stakeholders early in the process and reflecting their input in the design of the new system led to buy-in for the proposed plan.

Phase 2: Design and Pilot – With the strategy set, the team set out to redesign the company-wide customer measurement system. After a pilot test, the new surveys were rolled out.

The new program is aligned with company-wide CX transformation and customer-focused strategy, leverages best practices in customer measurement techniques and technologies and encourages cross-functional improvements. The program's success inspired commitment to long-term plans to accelerate the CX initiatives within the company, especially the listening ecosystem and methodologies.

OPTIMIZED CHARACTERISTICS

- An executive owns, manages and champions the CX strategy.
- CX steering team has authority to mobilize resources.
- A cross-functional network of customer experience advocates exists.
- Funding is allocated.
- External experts are leveraged to enhance its CX competency.
- A centralized CX analytics function exists.
- A formal data governance team and process are used.

“With Walker, when considering an exec conversation, Walker understands the changes and how they will impact the customer. It is more than just running a project. Walker understands the ins and outs of the business. This is a huge value over time – it is a better approach than doing it alone or using a variety of vendors on a project basis.”

— Customer Experience Professional, Software Provider



INSIGHTS

Conducting an annual survey as the heart of your CX initiative no longer cuts it. Customers today expect you to know their business and proactively manage their experience. **This means CX teams must have an agile system to quickly and easily gather the customer insights needed to make short-term decisions and guide long-term strategies.**

The right approach to customer insights must be both wide – embracing a broad range of listening approaches – and deep – using advanced analytics to anticipate customer issues and actions. CX teams skilled at taking action have effective ways of gathering the right customer intelligence and transforming it into useful insights that can effectively be put to use.

These CX teams also take advantage of customer intelligence that already exists. They know how to access and use behavioral data, financial information, operational metrics and other customer intelligence from across the company.

CASE: OPTIMIZED INSIGHTS AT WORK

How does a company live out a promise of customer focus? For one company, it started with effectively listening to customer needs through a global Voice of Customer program.

The VoC program encompasses a variety of listening posts designed to gather insight from three types of customer contacts:

- Executive (CxO) leadership level
- Mid-tier level of management and influence
- Engineers and end users of their products and services

The main focus is on executive interviews conducted with key senior leaders at the company's top accounts. These one-hour, one-on-one interviews are conducted face to face when possible. The insights:

- Provide an unfiltered view of customer feedback at the highest levels
- Prompt internal executive engagement in CX efforts
- Identify real risks and opportunities

The VoC program has strengthened relationships. Customers have commented that they are impressed with the company's focus and investment on understanding their needs and goals.

OPTIMIZED CHARACTERISTICS

- The customer listening system is agile.
- Customers willingly provide feedback.
- Predictive and prescriptive analytics are used.
- Customer insight is provided at various levels, functions and business processes.
- Multiple sources of information are used to gain customer insight.

“Walker is helping to shape our thinking on the listening architecture. Walker helps me bring best practices to the data. They help on an analytical perspective and the B-to-B benchmark. Having a market research expert has been helpful.”

— **Customer Experience Professional**, Financial Services



ACTION

Turning customer insights into action and change is the most common challenge for customer experience professionals. It is more than gathering the right intelligence and delivering impressive reports. **Instead, it requires that CX professionals get employees engaged in customer issues, provide easy access to relevant insights and track action plans to ensure follow-through takes place.**

Companies with a strong orientation for action leverage customer insights with a focus on continuous improvement, and they make every effort to not only distribute customer insights but also to embed them into the systems they use to guide day-to-day decisions.

What's more, these organizations often deploy a "test-and-learn" approach that encourages constant experimentation to facilitate rapid deployment of ideas. Once refined, these are entrenched in the way the company does business to provide an improved customer experience and to gain an edge on the competition.

CASE: OPTIMIZED ACTION AT WORK

A financing company was losing market share and wanted to create a new baseline CX program.

Walker worked with the company to measure customer loyalty, educate employees on customer feedback, implement small changes and start planning large programs. Then, a smaller checkup survey was launched to:

- Assess the impact of actions taken to date
- Validate the company's business model against the competition
- Identify potential new opportunities for future business

After this progress check, Walker facilitated an action planning workshop to confirm key action priorities.

The company's CX team ensured action took place by sharing feedback and changing policies to reflect insights from the feedback. The team then conducted employee training. They also brought in new technology to improve the ease of doing business for customers.

These actions resulted in cost reductions, improved customer loyalty and increased revenue.

OPTIMIZED CHARACTERISTICS

- CX insights inform continuous improvement efforts.
- The company executes on the priorities identified by the CX steering team.
- Daily decision-making is facilitated by customer insights.
- Experiments are used to enable quick movement.

"Walker has been instrumental in providing us a way to make more informed decisions on how to improve our overall customer experience."

— Customer Experience Professional, Geospatial Content



IMPACT

Impact involves demonstrating how CX initiatives deliver a financial return to the company. However, it's more than simply tracking dollars and cents. It begins with an intentional approach, evaluating CX undertakings on the potential impact they will ultimately have on the experience of customers.

Too often, impact is associated with metrics such as satisfaction and loyalty. While these metrics are important, they are not the end goal. Successful CX teams establish the connection between CX metrics and business impact – showing evidence of increased revenue or cost savings. They clearly define their targets for success metrics and monitor the impact an improved customer experience has on the business. Showing such evidence is expected of CX professionals and continues to be the most persuasive way to show the value of CX.

Impact also extends beyond the balance sheet to include the effect CX has on the company's reputation. Is the company known for delivering an exceptional experience? And, when a new CX initiative is put in place, do customers even notice?

CASE: OPTIMIZED IMPACT AT WORK

At a large industrial manufacturer, ensuring that dealer and distributor needs are met is essential to retaining customers and growing in the residential market. Focused on retention and growth, Walker overhauled the existing customer experience program, with emphasis on taking effective action to yield impact for the business. Equipped with the right input and priorities, the manufacturer:

- Developed targeted action plans to improve the dealer/distributor experience
- Recognized top performing dealers for their commitment to customers
- Resolved the disenchantment of detractors

The results speak for themselves. Now more than 90 percent of homeowners will recommend; but perhaps most significant is that dealers/distributors are rewarding the manufacturer with greater share of business, increasing bookings by 12 percent.

OPTIMIZED CHARACTERISTICS

- Forecast the business impact of changes to the experience.
- Track movement of CX metrics with spending patterns.
- Communicate impact beyond financials, like culture change.
- Validate improvements post-implementation.
- Document case studies on individual customer successes.

“Walker has been great and is trying to help us pull reports on revenue so we can tie customer feedback to revenue trends. It's actually making an impact.”

— Customer Experience Professional, Communications

BOOSTERS

The Walker Maturity Model incorporates two additional elements that are important to boost the performance of the six key competencies. Communication and technology are essential capabilities that serve to support, enhance and heighten the organization's CX initiatives.



COMMUNICATION

More and more, CX professionals are required to be skilled communicators, ensuring that the customer's story resonates and prompts desired action and change.

Effective communication programs serve to:

- Regularly reinforce the importance of being customer centric.
- Ensure customer intelligence is distributed broadly via a formalized system for sharing intelligence on demand across customer touchpoints.
- Go beyond the data and statistics to tell customer stories to promote empathy and understanding of what it is like to be a customer.
- Ensure customers receive corporate communication that highlights improvements made based on their input.
- Capture success stories that can be celebrated and replicated in other parts of the business.

Like any company initiative, CX initiatives must be communicated effectively to ensure employees are aware, understand their role and believe in the strategy. Only then will the desired action and change occur.

“My job has a lot of different areas, but in the CX space – proactive communications to our customers has really helped us. Financials saw a big jump in truly loyal customers – now beating company set goals which is great. We launched a customer-facing communication plan that seems to have helped.”

— **Customer Experience Professional**, Hardware and Software Company



TECHNOLOGY

One can't ignore the impact of technology in today's business environment – and CX is no exception. In fact, technology-savvy CX professionals often leverage these tools to accelerate the collection of customer insights, the analysis of data, the distribution of reports and much more.

Effective technology implementation ensures that:

- Input from customers is processed in real time, allowing for immediate action on critical customer issues.
- Models and algorithms are embedded in the right tools and processes stakeholders use to make day-to-day decisions impacting the customer.
- Data warehouses are set up to store and manage customer data, making it accessible to better serve customers.
- Customer intelligence is housed in a secure environment.

While technology does not serve as a substitute for critical CX competencies, today's CX professionals can benefit from embracing the use of technology tools to support, enhance and accelerate their efforts.

“The Walker team is able to provide great software in order to fulfill our requests, has been flexible with changes to those requests and willing to answer any questions. Not much more to ask for.”

— **Customer Experience Professional**, Software



WHERE'S THE STARTING LINE?

Now that you know how to accelerate through the stages of CX maturity, make sure you know your position in the starting line.

The Walker Maturity Model serves as the foundation of AccelerateCX, Walker's program to help companies assess their current effectiveness and chart a path to optimize their CX approach.

AccelerateCX is the fastest and most effective way to make customer experience your company's biggest competitive advantage. Walker's experts work closely with you to assess key areas of competency and readiness for customer experience success. Then we build a practical roadmap to enable you to not only plan for a sustainable competitive advantage but also to identify quick wins to jump start your CX success.

GETTING STARTED - WE MAKE IT EASY

Walker provides three easy options to get started:

CX FAST TRIAL

Want to get a taste of AccelerateCX? Take our free online assessment. Log in and answer questions about your company's current customer experience initiatives. Your input will trigger a comprehensive report of how you perform in key areas of CX competency and how you stack up against others.

To begin your trial, visit www.walkerinfo.com/AccelerateCX.

CX QUICK CHECK

A more detailed approach, Walker engages with you to gather input from a broad and diverse group within your company. Each participant provides input on your current CX programs and a Walker consultant performs a review that culminates in a one-hour consultative conference call providing valuable perspective, insights and recommendations.

CX ACCELERATION ROADMAP

Our most comprehensive approach, Walker gathers insights from a broad range of employees and conducts in-depth interviews with key stakeholders involved in the design and implementation of your CX initiatives. Armed with this information, our experts deliver a full report of our findings as well as a comprehensive three-year roadmap for accelerating your customer experience success.



ABOUT WALKER

Walker is a customer experience consulting firm. We specialize in helping today's business-to-business companies build and maintain a competitive advantage by delivering an exceptional customer experience. Our team of senior consultants averages more than 20 years of experience and they deliver a wide range of services to meet and exceed our clients' objectives.

And it works – Walker clients outperform the market by more than six to one!

WALKER'S SOLUTIONS AND SERVICES

No two companies are alike, so we collaborate with each client to understand their business, focus on their objectives and deliver the right combination of services to accelerate their success. No consulting firm can match Walker's focus on customer experience and the broad range of solutions and services we deliver, which includes:

- Customer experience assessment programs, which result in execution-ready strategic roadmaps.
- Journey mapping services to document the customer touchpoints and focus on "moments of truth."
- Design of customer "ideal experiences," targeting problem areas and identifying opportunities for breakthroughs.
- Collection of customer insights, leveraging a wide range of methods to understand the perspective of the customer.
- Advanced analytics services to interpret customer intelligence and improve decision-making.
- A full range of technology services to manage customer data and integrate with clients' existing systems.
- Action planning and change management services to prompt transformation across the organization.
- Education and training services to engage employees and foster a customer-focused culture.

Learn more about Walker at www.walkerinfo.com.

WALKER RESOURCES

WALKER B-TO-B CX SUMMIT

The industry's only conference focused on the latest and best customer experience strategies for B-to-B companies. We feature powerful keynote presentations, engaging workshops, and valuable networking all aimed at sharing best practices to improve the way companies drive business success. Learn more at www.walkercxsummit.com.

WALKER WEBCASTS

We produce a popular series of monthly 30-minute webcasts on a variety of customer experience topics. Each webcast is hosted by Walker's thought leaders. Learn more at www.walkerinfo.com/knowledge-center/webcasts.asp.

KEYNOTE PRESENTATIONS

Walker's thought leaders deliver excellent keynote presentations on a wide range of customer experience topics. Consider bringing a Walker executive to your next big event.

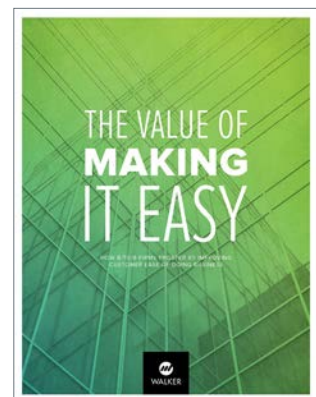
CUSTOMER WORKSHOPS

Walker conducts dozens of workshops for leading companies. Whether you're considering a session of two hours or two days, consider hiring the experts at Walker to help plan and execute your next customer experience workshop.

WALKER KNOWLEDGE CENTER

Walker's Knowledge Center is an outstanding resource for customer experience leaders. You have access to informative webcasts, thought-provoking white papers, powerful case studies, eBooks, and more. Learn more at www.walkerinfo.com/knowledge-center.

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