

The bottom-line value of Cx

Mandip Dulay explores how legal firms can optimise the customer experience strategy in building a sustainable and competitive practice.

The environment in which the service industry operates in today continues to evolve at a rapid rate, with the ongoing shift in global dynamics, intense technological intervention and emerging buying patterns of a digitally-connected client. Such megatrends have influenced the critical need to market at the speed of expectation, and the GCC region is no exception.

The region has prominent positioning which includes being recognised as the innovation hub, sees the emergence of smart cities and is the home to various digital disruptors. Furthermore, the rate at which digital and social media is consumed

is rapidly evolving, with the UAE and Saudi Arabia holding the leading position as having the highest smartphone penetration rate in the world.

Digital disruption across the region has given rise to investors who are driving the evolution of tech start-ups, these entrepreneurial businesses are venturing into the once superlative service industry, providing digital and virtual services at a fraction of the price. Likewise, technology has transformed the way clients interact with businesses in the digital age.

To remain relevant, firms must continue to shift and adapt to market and client needs, whilst leveraging the new valuable



currency of data, particularly given that in less than 15 months over 70 per cent of the world will be on the internet, with 24bn connected things and 95 per cent of new products connected to IoT.

The scale and penetration of technology will provide valuable data which if unlocked effectively will generate a deep insight into client preference, sentiment and behaviours. This will further support the development of client journeys and experiences, which when delivered effectively will contribute to increased client loyalty, along with going some way to addressing the demand for immediacy.

A further emerging trend which alongside data is presenting a challenge for firms is the need to enable professionals to deliver an agile service through the convergence of digital and human interaction at key 'trust-points' of the client journey. This trend correlates to the global theme, with Gartner projecting that 85 per cent of all client and consumer interaction will be handled without a human by 2020.

In a bid to unite the power of data with the development and delivery of digital client experiences, we are observing the prominence of the Chief Experience Officer (CxO) in the boardroom. This role is imperative as clients showcase behavioural patterns of exiting a transaction where client experience is not a central attribute. This was further highlighted in a recent Salesforce survey¹ (refer image on page 22).

Organisations across multiple sectors are investing time and budget to overcome the challenge of driving sustainable and profitable growth in an era of commoditisation. This effort is driving regional players to focus on cost efficiency and process optimisation. Such inside-out perspectives will drive incremental change which will be challenged further as new digital market entrants emerge, clients becoming increasingly demanding and the talent of tomorrow become a challenge to attain.

BOTTOM-LINE VALUE OF CX

Unless firms build an exceptional experience, which is present across their brand, processes and actions, they risk losing the all-important loyalty of their clients, which can now be translated into measurable commercial value, particularly as clients are willing to pay a premium price when they recognise the value which

is driven from a bespoke and personalised approach.

The link between customer experience and profitability is clear. Clients will 'pay more for a great experience' and 57 per cent of those surveyed have 'stopped buying from a company because a competitor provided a better experience'.¹

Customer experience is the new business currency, each interaction a client has with your brand - positive, negative, seamless or slow - shapes their perception of you, and those perceptions translate to money spent.

Those who bring customers on board and keep them there by offering an exceptional customer experience maximise the chance of increased business performance in the long term. Customer loyalty and ultimately businesses' bottom lines are now determined by having client's best interests at heart during the entire lifecycle.

UNLOCKING CLIENT EXPERIENCE POTENTIAL

The service industry must continue to elevate its client experience effort in order to continue differentiating from the multiple service providers who are distinct through size and appearance, which for the new informed buyer will not be compelling enough as a decision driver.

Legal firms can benefit from looking outside of the industry in order to unlock their client experience potential. Well cited brands such as Apple, Amazon and to a large extent the hotel industry can be looked upon as pioneers in this space, who balance the data driven digital experience with the human touch.

Having said that, assuming you can use data and digital in harmony to elevate your client experience will be an agnostic approach. Such transformation programmes should capture the essence of simplicity, which will be key to driving scalable and effective impact, this starts by segmenting your current client profiles of today and those of your aspirational buyers of the future, followed by asking the right questions around their service preferences.

Once you have a clear view of the profile which your future buyers and current clients fit into, develop an onboarding process which informs the true points of digitisation versus the trust points which are important and require the human touch. Furthermore, it is important to leverage an omni-channel presence to



The scale and penetration of technology will provide valuable data which if unlocked effectively will generate a deep insight into client preference, sentiment and behaviours.”



57%

of customers have stopped buying from a company because a competitor provided a better experience.



80%

Customers who say the experience a company provides is as important as its products and service.



67%

Customers who are willing to 'pay more for a great experience'.

continue building insights to your client preference and behaviours in the wider context of your firm and engagement journey. These insights will enable engagement teams to refine their approach, whilst ensuring they digitally show up where their clients are.

If managed effectively, an experience programme will drive the application of curiously-challenging questions which will lead to transformative programmes, including how you onboard a client, automate the engagement delivery, manage the payment approach of a client through to how you run your client feedback programmes, all of which are in the path of being challenged to reduce costs and increase the experience of a client, which in turn will drive ongoing loyalty, increased satisfaction and further referrals.

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

In order to build and deliver a robust client experience programme, whilst driving a lean and cost-effective operational model, legal firms must consider the redesign of legacy processes, systems and ways of working. A digital discipline and adoption will be required which serves as a central concept to integrate the entire coordination, prioritisation and implementation of client experience.

Such transformational programmes need not be expensive, incremental improvement on a regular basis have proven to provide commercial benefit and service impact. The challenge which legal firms have in today's market is developing a Cx strategy which is achievable and measurable.

The exploitation of such strategies

will impact service offerings, business processes, sales channels and market positioning. The benefits of such are manifold and include increase in sales, productivity, innovation and a new-found value creation for the firm which will include the attraction of new digital talent.

The new digital landscape will force the focus beyond the singular, inspirational moments, to a more consistent and real-time reaction to expectations, which require constant evolution as traditional legal firm boundaries are being disrupted by companies outside of the industry.

There has been an exponential increase in the number of Government bodies and organisations who are emphasising the importance of customer experience and customer journey planning across the region, which amidst increasing competition and rising client expectations will be a key differentiator in an increasingly digital era. ➔

1. Salesforce, 'State of the Connected Customer', second edition



Text by:
MANDIP DULAY, director, marketing and client experience and founder of COO.ME Network