Total Experience
How digital workflows empower customers and employees

The race to master digital experience
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Welcome to the Total Experience Issue

Historically, most companies have treated employee and customer experience as separate challenges, managed in different departments across the organization. Customer experience (CX) has generally gotten more attention than employee experience (EX) because customers provide the revenue that keeps companies in business. Yet it seems obvious that happier, more productive employees will in turn deliver better experiences for customers, benefitting the bottom line. Empirical research supports this hypothesis. For example, a 2017 MIT study found companies in the top quartile for EX delivered twice the innovation, double the customer satisfaction, and 25% greater profitability compared to companies in the bottom quartile. What can organizations achieve when customer and employee experiences are connected with seamless, consumer-grade tech that breaks down departmental silos, allowing work to flow smoothly from across the organization? We know the COVID-19 pandemic was a forcing function for digital transformation in general, because thousands of companies suddenly had to rely on digital platforms and business models to stay in business. How did this impact EX and CX in the enterprise?

We set out to answer these questions in the Total Experience Issue of Workflow Quarterly. Earlier this year, ServiceNow and ESI ThoughtLab surveyed 900 senior business leaders in five industries across 13 countries. We sought to understand how companies are using digital technologies and solutions to improve their CX and EX, the benefits they are seeing, and the challenges they face. Our goal was to help organizations develop a roadmap to excellence in using digital solutions to optimize customer and employee experiences and boost overall performance.

Our research showed that U.S. companies are furthest ahead in terms of digital experience maturity. About 26% of them ranked as digital experience leaders, versus 19% of European firms and 17% of companies in Asia. Financial services companies produced the highest proportion of digital experience leaders (31%), compared to 21% of public sector organizations and 17% of both manufacturing firms and telecoms. Healthcare produced the lowest number of leaders (15%).

Larger firms with bigger IT budgets tended to be more digitally mature than smaller companies. Thirty-three percent of firms with revenues of at least $5 billion were leaders, compared with 10% of firms with revenues below $1 billion, the smallest category.

COVID-19 clearly affected how our respondents thought about the value of using digital platforms to provide holistic EX and CX solutions. According to one survey respondent: “Businesses cannot continue to operate in silos, especially after the pandemic. Organizations were forced to work remotely, become more mobile and virtual, and hence needed to think about moving towards total experience to enhance their digital strategies.”

Another respondent said: “Companies need to move to total experience to establish trust and open communication with their clients, users, and employees. It is important to stay on top of all the touch points for delivering better experiences and staying in business.”

Digital platforms are a prerequisite for driving total experience, because they enable smart digital workflows that connect front, middle, and back-office functions. More than half of companies and four of the five industries in our survey said their top priority was modernizing digital platforms. Over the next year or two, executives also plan to drive total experience by hiring more talent, providing them with the right digital tools, integrating EX and CX further, and including employees in total experience design.

I hope you enjoy the Total Experience Issue, and that it helps you create better digital experiences for your own employees and customers.
The race is on to master digital experience...

Companies expect to accelerate progress over the next two years in digital CX and EX... ... as companies seek big payoffs

Experience leaders are seeing a variety of strategic benefits in both camps

Top CX benefits for leaders

- Improved diversity: 66%
- Attract talent: 58%
- Customer loyalty/retention: 49%
- New business models: 42%
- Lower capital costs: 38%
- Improved health/safety: 38%
- Improved reputation: 34%

Top EX benefits for leaders

- Improved diversity: 58%
- Attract talent: 53%
- Lower capital costs: 49%
- New business models: 61%
- Digital transformation capacity: 36%
- Increased innovation: 32%
- Improved reputation: 29%

Sectors gaining the fastest

- Digital CX: In two years: Public sector: +61%, Telecom: +59%, Manufacturing: +38%, Financial services: +35%, Healthcare: +30%
- Digital EX: In two years: Public sector: +46%, Telecom: +47%, Manufacturing: +32%, Financial services: +22%, Healthcare: +22%

By Evan Ramzipoor

Top benefits of total experience

Merging CX and EX efforts helps companies maximize returns

- Financial
  - Higher revenue: 15%
  - Attract investors: 9%
  - New business models: 7%  
- Organizational
  - Improved health/safety: 31%
  - Better products/services: 27%
  - Faster issue resolution: 22%
  - Deeper customer insights: 21%

- Customer/employee
  - Deeper customer insights: 34%
  - New business models: 24%
  - Customer loyalty/retention: 24%
  - Lower capital costs: 20%  
- TX
  - TX: 6%

By Evan Ramzipoor

SOURCE: ESI THOUGHTLAB/SERVICENOW

THE DATA PAGES

ARNAUD GHELFI

SUMMER 2021 INFOGRAPHIC BY ARNAUD GHELFI
The Rise of experience management

Why it makes sense to manage CX and EX as a unified discipline

By Laura Rich

Randy Clepp
Chief revenue officer
Advantage Communications
Randy Clapp faced a vexing management problem. The retention rate at his call center service was consistently dismal, as was the company’s customer satisfaction scores. But improving employee and customer metrics was critical to retaining the company’s large travel and telecom clients.

The solution, says Clapp, the chief revenue officer for Advantage Communications, was to recognize the two problems as symbiotic: Improving the employee experience for call center agents would lead to a better experience for callers; as customers’ experiences with the service improved, morale and job satisfaction among Advantage’s staff would rise.

Advantage Communications is not alone. Many companies are finding that as they convert more manual processes into digital ones, customer experience (CX) and employee experience (EX) depend on one another to succeed.

As EX and CX teams collaborate more and combine skills and resources, a new strategic discipline, called experience management, is emerging.

With the help of new digital tools, merging an organization’s CX and EX efforts can help raise employee performance and increase customer loyalty, according to recent studies. The combination forces more data sharing between teams—something many companies do poorly—and can help boost revenue, growth, and profit.

Executives at companies whose CX and EX performance measures were “significantly above average” said their companies beat competitors in revenue and employee retention, according to a recent survey from Qualtrics, a consultancy focused on experience management.

“We’ve looked at and recognized the experience customers are having,” says Aimee Lucas, principal analyst at Qualtrics. “Their satisfaction comes from the employee—the ones delivering it directly, but also those involved in the design of the product or service.”

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Building agents’ confidence

At Advantage, Clapp found the solution to his experience-management problem in the very place where employee and customer meet: in the calls.

First, Clapp’s team used natural-language processing tools to evaluate calls’ literal and emotional content. They found that the chief difference between more and less successful calls was the agent’s level of confidence.

“A really good performing agent just feels better and better the more they have successful calls,” Clapp says. “One bad call after another, your psyche gets damaged.”

To improve agents’ confidence, Advantage added software that would listen in and provide
“Now, agents feel great about their work, and customers get what they’re calling for.”

RANDY CLAPP, CHIEF REVENUE OFFICER, ADVANTAGE COMMUNICATIONS

scripts to agents on the fly, depending on how the conversation was going. Agents would also create “playbooks” that laid out scripts and best practices for the calls.

“Now, agents feel great about their work, and customers get what they’re calling for,” says Clapp. After a three-month test of the new approach, the company went from completely turning over its staff of agents to an attrition rate of 20%. A key customer satisfaction increase was measured at 20%.

Companies that made CX a top priority from the C-suite to the front lines, according to McKinsey research, saw gains of up to 20% in both customer satisfaction and employee engagement. Their customer service costs also fell by as much as 20%.

“The way employees experience work has become more important than ever before,” says Chris Pope, global VP of innovation for Human Capital at McKinsey. “In a world where people can easily switch jobs and find other options, employee experience has never been more critical.”

Building an XM team

Setting up an experience-management practice can mean re-drawing lines in the org chart, but it doesn’t necessarily have to. XMs can come in a variety of forms and can be run by different executives.

At Starwood Hotels, Jeff Cava, the company’s former chief human resources manager, introduced an early form of experience management shortly after he joined the company in 2008 and had XM teams report to him. (Cava left Starwood in 2016 and is now a senior external advisor at McKinsey.) Cava recruited the support of the CFO, set up a “guest experience index” that integrated customer and employee data and showed the impact of both, and established incentives among both teams to keep the index high.

Still, experts say a chief experience officer who heads up both CX and CX could more closely align the two organizations. “Designing a chief experience officer can serve as a powerful signal to the organization about how important XM is,” Lucas says.

Adobe, for example, installed an executive with specific XM responsibilities. Donna Morris, the company’s former executive VP of customer and employee experience, focused on aligning the two sides through feedback, metrics, and incentives among both teams, with a focus on engagement and retention, attraction, and development.

Assigning a single chief of XM can help keep both teams focused on the same strategy and meeting the same standards, says Isabelle Zdanny, XM analyst at Qualtrics, and “can influence how employees think and act to align with the company’s XM vision.”

Adds Lucas, the Qualtrics analyst: “Start with small, double things in places where there are natural connections and teams are open to doing it. Get those success stories and make the organization accountable.”
Low-code tools empower employees to create better experiences for customers and themselves

By Chris Bedi

designing; great work. experiences

((high.calling;for. low=code:)))
When I was starting my career in tech, software development was the preserve of skilled engineers.

That paradigm is rapidly becoming obsolete, thanks to the rise of low-code development tools that allow citizen developers, with little or no coding experience, to create powerful apps using prebuilt templates and intuitive, drag-and-drop interfaces.

The rapid advance of low-code tools is happening at a critical moment. To stay competitive in the digital economy, companies are under pressure to create intuitive, consumer-like apps and experiences for their employees and customers. Doing so requires pervasive automation throughout the enterprise, touching every process, department, and team.

Problem is, there aren’t nearly enough pro developers in the talent marketplace to automate all those processes and design those experiences. That’s one reason why Gartner predicts low-code tools will account for 65% of all software development by 2024.

IT pros often argue that low-code dev platforms are fine for simple tasks, but aren’t useful for building “real” applications. Yet throughout the history of computing, we’ve heard the same skepticism about every new coding language: Fortran in the 1950s, Basic and C in the 1960s, Perl in the 1980s, Javascript in the 1990s. Each new language reduced the complexity of software development and made the field accessible to more people. In every case, developers started off using the new language to solve simple problems, and then quickly moved on to tougher challenges. I expect the same trend to play out with low-code tools.

At ServiceNow, citizen developers are already using our App Engine Studio tool to design better work experiences. One team used it to build a deal-pricing app for our sales leads. The new app has a chatbot interface and incorporates all the pricing rules that deal desk employees used to keep in their heads. Sales teams will use the bot to answer routine pricing questions, freeing our deal-desk experts to focus on more complex issues that the bot can’t handle.

Many of our customers are also building their own low-code apps with App Engine. At the start of the pandemic, the City of Los Angeles designed, built, and launched a covid-19 testing app in 72 hours. In Memphis, Tenn., St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital is using low-code development to design custom workflows that help deliver critical services to pediatric patients.

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Low-code limitations

Low-code is not a panacea for all the inefficiencies of modern business. For example, I don’t recommend using App Engine to automate bad workflows. You can’t streamline a broken process. I also don’t encourage the use of low-code tools to build redundant apps. Even if an employee dislikes your company’s travel booking system, it’s probably not a good use of time for them to go off and build their own booking app!

Basically, you don’t want your citizen developers turning into a shadow IT department. You can avoid that by putting guardrails around the development process. At ServiceNow, we launched a lightweight governance program that certifies citizen developers, reviewing their work to ensure no bad code finds its way into production instances.

In theory, anyone can build powerful apps using low-code tools. But that doesn’t mean everyone in your company should add “developer” to their resume. In my experience, good citizen developer candidates are tech-savvy, familiar with spreadsheets, and interested in building new tools—which describes almost everyone from the current generation entering the workforce.

And there’s no substitute for domain expertise. Citizen developers need it to understand which new app will move the needle for their team.

Finally, I don’t see citizen developers putting traditional software engineers out of business. Rather, I see a natural division of tasks in the enterprise where citizen developers concentrate on digitalizing department needs, while pro developers focus on more complex, enterprise-level work.

With the right tools and guardrails in place, citizen developers can help accelerate innovation and boost productivity throughout your organization. In a world where software increasingly is the business, they are the fuel your company needs to take off.
Using empathy to design great experiences

Human-centered design helps organizations deliver high-quality experiences faster than ever before

By Gregg Aldana

Mobile vaccination clinic near Dodger Stadium in Los Angeles, February 2021.
The concept of human-centered design—putting people’s needs at the center of creating new products or services—has been around for decades.

Until recently, however, putting it into practice required big-budget assistance from design firms like IDEO to conduct user research and lead design and development. Today, the tables have been flipped. Gone are the days of lengthy requirement gathering and waterfall software development cycles. Low-code app development, paired with human-centered design and digital workflow platforms, are helping companies reimagine how they can create better experiences for employees and customers.

Traditional software development has historically focused on system owners. By contrast, human-centered design is about using empathy to address the specific pain points of end users. This is critical in delivering great experiences, and requires ideating and co-creating solutions directly with end users in an interactive manner.

Low-code application development platforms are ideal for that challenge, because they allow for the rapid design, development, and delivery of new digital experiences that address those pain points. Projects that once took months or years can be completed in hours and days. The marketplace for low-code technologies and tools reached $10.6 billion in 2020, according to Gartner. And a global survey by ESI ThoughtLab showed that 67% of large enterprises have already made progress with low-code software development.

Here are three examples of how this powerful tandem is creating innovative digital experiences on the fly. All were motivated by the need to achieve new business outcomes by improving the user experience—quickly and at scale.

Giving retail employees a new “open door”

When one major global retailer got its start in the 1950s, it created an “open door” policy for worker feedback. Any employee could approach senior managers with a problem or concern. That was a manageable policy for several decades, but it’s become untenable today with more than 2 million employees worldwide who rely heavily on digital technology. Until recently, 18,000 employee emails would pile up in the CEO’s inbox each month. Many ideas and concerns went unaddressed. Employee engagement and satisfaction levels were low; turnover was high.

To address these problems, the retailer ran a series of design-thinking sprints with corporate and retail employees. The challenge was to figure out how to deliver on the original “open door” promise using digital experiences that would resonate with employees.

The sprints yielded the idea of a new online portal, through which all employees could enter ideas or concerns on any device. Retail employees who lacked corporate email ac-
counts and computers could even use tablets to draw out their ideas. Using low-code, automat-
ed digital workflows, the portal routed requests to the appropriate manager, and employees were guaranteed a response within 36 hours.

The new service went from ideation to develop-
ment and launch within three weeks. Results were employee satisfaction and engagement in-
creased and turnover declined.

Military fitness exams get a digital redesign

For years, one branch of the U.S. military held fast to its manual, paper-and-clipboard process for fitness evaluations of all service personnel who had to be tested every six months in order to be deployed to combat theaters.

It was an inefficient process. Personnel made phone calls and sent emails to schedule exams. Examiners recorded the data by hand and transferred it to spreadsheets at their desks. Per-
sonnel made more calls to check on the status of results.

During a two-day design thinking exercise with senior officers and personnel, the organi-
zation reimagined the entire, clunky process as a new set of digital workflows. Using low-code development, the team built a mobile app that personnel could use to both schedule exams and view results.

The project yielded multiple payoffs: Exam-
iners used iPad apps to record live test results; officers benefited from data insights about the health and readiness of personnel; military commanders got a clearer view into resourcing needs for exams at different locations. The new app was delivered in three weeks.

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Rapid solution for rapid testing

In March 2020, at the onset of the COVID-19 crisis, Los Angeles officials were in dire need of a digital tool that city residents could use to schedule drive-up COVID tests. The mayor mandated that the new platform be rolled out within days. The solution needed to pri-
oritize at-risk groups and scheduling capac-
ity at specific locations. The process needed to be as painless and friendly as possible for citizens.

Over the course of a weekend, officials com-
pleted a human-centered design sprint, and a development team used a low-code platform to build a test-scheduling app. Within 36 hours, it was available to millions of LA residents.

Each example illustrates how human-
centered design thinking and low-code de-
velopment are helping organizations deliver high-quality experiences faster than ever before. That’s good news for CIOs, who must increasingly deliver intuitive, consumer-grade experiences to stay in the game.
Can GPT-3 reinvent customer experience?

A powerful new machine learning tool makes it possible to deliver more detailed, realistic content for customer-facing applications.

By Christopher Null
A new artificial intelligence model for creating text promises to give companies a powerful tool for improving customer experience.

Last June, OpenAI, a San Francisco–based nonprofit, released the world’s most powerful natural language processing software to date. Known as gpt-3, it can automatically complete a statement, respond to questions, or generate lines of code based on a few simple commands, and can do so with more human-like realism than any previous AI-based language program.

The technology isn’t available to the wider public, and commercial applications are limited. Still, developers have used the model’s API to produce more than 300 applications, including tools to help gather material for legal briefs or create simple websites. Experts predict that GPT-3 apps (the name stands for Generative Pre-trained Transformer 3) could enhance a wide range of business operations, from analyzing the content in documents to producing marketing materials.

As gpt-3’s advanced use of everyday language accelerates automation of all sorts of tasks across the enterprise, perhaps its biggest impact will come from how it helps companies rethink customer and employee experiences—to create more realistic customer-service chatbots and voice-response systems, deliver more detailed site-search results, and give “citizen developers” the power to write simple apps using plain language.

“I think gpt-3 will have a significant and lasting impact on NLU [natural language understanding] technologies,” says Bryan Healey, CTO of Aiera, a company that produces financial-news digests. “But we’re still in early days for this technology.”

Chatbots are a natural place to showcase gpt-3’s abilities, mining a company’s knowledge base and providing human customer-service agents with bespoke answers instead of canned, pre-written dialogue. Its responses can be far more relevant and realistic-sounding than those from previous NLU technologies. For example, check out the italicized paragraphs of this blog post, which were written by a GPT-3 bot in response to the previous paragraphs, written by people.

Early days
To be sure, no one is hailing gpt-3 as a panacea for complex customer-service challenges. By itself, gpt-3 isn’t ready to handle real-life queries, according to customer-service practitioners. It is also unable to read between the lines when a customer phrases a question imperfectly, and will respond with bland, generic answers instead of something more helpful.

The technology isn’t just for chatbots. At Resemble.ai, a producer of synthetic voices, gpt-3 is being used to create vocal interactions for video games or voice-response systems in call centers. While this normally requires hiring voice actors to record every conceivable situation, Resemble’s AI can create responses on the fly. Game players can have conversations with characters that don’t rely on pre-recorded dialogue, providing a much more satisfying experience.

GPT-3, which works like a super-powered version of Google’s text-prediction algorithm, can also be used to improve users’ search experience. At Aiera, based in New York, Healey has experimented with the model’s ability to provide summaries of news releases and the highlights from corporate-earnings calls. Summaries could also deliver more useful results to customers’ search queries. Rather than respond with a list of links, it could provide a digest with the requested information. If a customer wants to know what Apple’s most important product is, GPT-3 could respond with something more coherent and usable than a list of every story written about the company’s products.

“My users are going to need to know the specialized logic for the query. It’s worth noting that the early enthusiasm for the technology may be overblown, or at least premature,” says Bryan Healey, OpenAI’s CTO, who wrote on Twitter last year that “gpt-3 hype is way too much.” While it might free content creators from routine writing tasks, it’s incapable of understanding or reasoning, and its output is sometimes incoherent or nonsensical. For some time, humans will need to be on hand to make sure that gpt-3 improves, not damages, the customer experience.
High-quality digital experiences aren't just for customers
By Daniel Terdiman

Getting started with employee experience design
During a project to improve employee experience, a technology services company with more than 300,000 employees discovered that many were struggling with an outdated online performance-management system. Human resources managers asked workers for ideas on how to fix it.

Suggestions poured in. HR used them to design a beta version of a new system, which the chief human resources executive posted on the company’s intranet. The post generated 20,000 comments in a matter of hours.

The result was a new process that replaced periodic performance reviews with continuous employee feedback, and the employees loved it. Further validation came about a year later, when employee-engagement scores jumped by 20%, says Isabelle Zdatny, an experience management researcher at Qualtrics XM Institute who studied the project.

The project is an example of experience design—developing digital tools and processes to improve engagement with customers, employees, and other groups. The practice, which originally focused on consumers, has proved especially valuable in upgrading applications used by employees. In contrast, consumer apps, thanks to years of improvements, are easy to learn and use and do the job they’re supposed to do.

Employees now expect the same experience in the workplace and want their work applications to be more functional, elegant, and efficient than ever. Just as user experience (UX) design has shown success at increasing customer engagement and loyalty, applying the practice to the workplace can mean big payoffs for companies.

Consumers expect great intuitive digital experiences and spend more with companies that provide them, says Gregg Aldana, global senior director of Creator Workflows for ServiceNow. “We’re seeing this same behavior impacting recruiting and employee retention,” he says. “Especially among the youngest and most talented in the workforce. They are leaving or turning down offers with companies that have famously been far less user-friendly than the systems available to customers. In contrast, consumer apps, thanks to years of improvements, are easy to learn and use and do the job they’re supposed to do.

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Creating great digital experiences for employees requires multiple strategies and capabilities, including tight collaboration between IT and HR, efficient feedback channels for employees, and investments in workflow automation, to name a few. We asked several enterprise technology leaders what organizations should focus on to build their expertise in this critical new discipline.

I see two common obstacles when it comes to digitizing and improving employee experience. The first is the tendency to try to be perfect the first time, which can send organizations down a path of never-ending development cycles without really solving anything.

The second is not thinking comprehensively or strategically enough. Companies need to adopt an agile and iterative mindset when redesigning employee experiences. Get the first version of your experience solution out as quickly as possible. Test it. Improve it based on feedback. Then repeat the cycle, as necessary.

Also, recognize that attempting to solve employee experience issues in one fell swoop isn’t realistic. You’ll be much better off starting with the most critical pain points and then addressing other projects over time as part of a strategic plan.

Josh Bersin
INDUSTRY ANALYST AND DEAN
JOSH BERSIN ACADEMY

Bruce Temkin
HEAD OF QUALITICS
XM INSTITUTE

Amy Lokey
GLOBAL HEAD OF DESIGN
SERVICENOW

Target processes that cause the most friction and frustration.

Too often, companies forget the key part of digitizing employee experiences: great design. Typically, they’ll apply process and technology skills to develop self-service applications and workflows. They’ll look great on flow charts, and the apps may gain initial adoption by pushing employees to use them, but it doesn’t always end well.

When applications are poorly designed, employees either stop using them or end up so confused they do not use them appropriately. When digitizing employee experiences, companies need to apply the same design rigor they would with any important customer interaction. Employees don’t need to love every experience, but every experience should be easy to navigate, easy to understand, and clearly configured to help employees achieve their goals.

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Get good at experience design.”

To create great employee experiences, it’s important for user experience teams to take a close look at the processes and systems at work that create the most friction, frustration, and tedium for employees. Frequently these are processes and workflows created by siloed teams and systems that create unnecessary complexity and a lack of transparency for the employee trying to complete a task.

To create great experiences for employees, these journeys must be connected across systems, offering employees a single destination to resolve issues or get information, with heightened efficiencies powered by automation and AI, to reduce tedium and frustration, and enable employees to focus the majority of their time on their creative, collaborative and intellectual work.

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Start small, and with an Agile mindset.”

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