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A SAURAGE RESEARCH WHITE PAPER

CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE JOURNEY MAPPING

Big data has been the big rage for a while now. Long enough for companies to recognize its limitations. Namely, reams of detailed quantitative data may tell us about the past, but only go so far in predicting the future. While it may suggest trends, it doesn't delve deeply into the motivations behind behavior, which can reveal opportunities, which gets back to why people spend money for research in the first place.

Let's take a trip

It isn't enough to get into the minds of our customers. We want to get into their hearts. One of the ways we do this is through journey mapping. Through a collaborative process, research firms will attempt to document the entire customer experience. Getting customers to open up is an artful science in itself—read our article on Voice of Customer.

Journey mapping acknowledges the obvious. Upon seeing an ad, customers don't simply rush out to buy something, end of story. It's a process that begins long before the decision to purchase and extends beyond the next purchase, ad infinitum, with influencers every step of the way. Such touchpoints—moments of truth that will sway a customer toward or away from a brand—can be advertising, promotions, employee interactions, social media, online reviews, the opinion of a co-worker, the purchase experience, the satisfaction that results from use of the service or product, support after the sale, along with the accumulated perceptions of all previous touchpoints.

A scenic route, with many detours

Generally, this qualitative exercise begins with the client and the research firm identifying all potential customer milestones and listing them in chronological order. Touchpoints are then ranked in order of customer importance, identifying the areas in which the brand performs well and those areas in which it fails. Finally, this information is synthesized between the customer and the brand. In a perfect world, the company walks away with an action plan moving forward.

A touchpoint can be defined or influenced by several variables: the channel (for example, a website), the device (a smartphone), and the interaction itself (a quote request). None of these designations are static. In addition to all of the traditional channels that can influence a customer experience, new interaction modes continually emerge, such



as live chats, smartwatch apps, and kiosks. Understanding how these touchpoints work, and work together, is important.

An inventory of all available channels can be very helpful in developing a plan to ensure that your customers' needs are addressed and their questions are answered—through the entirety of their journey. It gives you the power to adjust your brand for consistency of message—maximizing your marketing dollar—and strategically align the experience to your customer, gaining a dual competitive advantage.

Visualizing the journey

Systematically documenting all the touchpoints, strengths, weaknesses, and key moments of truth on a customer's labyrinthine journey can be a daunting task. Particularly on paper, which is why many journey maps resemble complex engineering schematics. In the process of trying to communicate too much, some journey maps fail to communicate anything, least of all the value they bring to your business.

The journey determines the destination

As with any data, quality is determined by how you obtain it, while value is determined by what you do with it. At Saurage Marketing Research, we obsess about being thorough. In the case of journey mapping, that means we get perspectives not only from customers, but from internal stakeholders such as employees and front-line salespeople. If you're talking only to customers, you're getting only half the story.

In every customer-experience study we conduct, Saurage also adds a layer of quantitative to its qualitative data. If it were in our power, we'd decree that all research firms do the same. We are convinced, and have demonstrated, that a full contingent of methodologies is required to get an accurate and actionable picture of the World As It Is. Not enough information, in anyone's hands, is just dangerous.

Assuming you apply the appropriate methodologies (plural), carefully collect information both internally and externally, properly assess, synthesize, and package your data, a customer experience journey map can show you the shortest route to your customers' hearts, connecting them to your brand in a meaningful and lasting way.

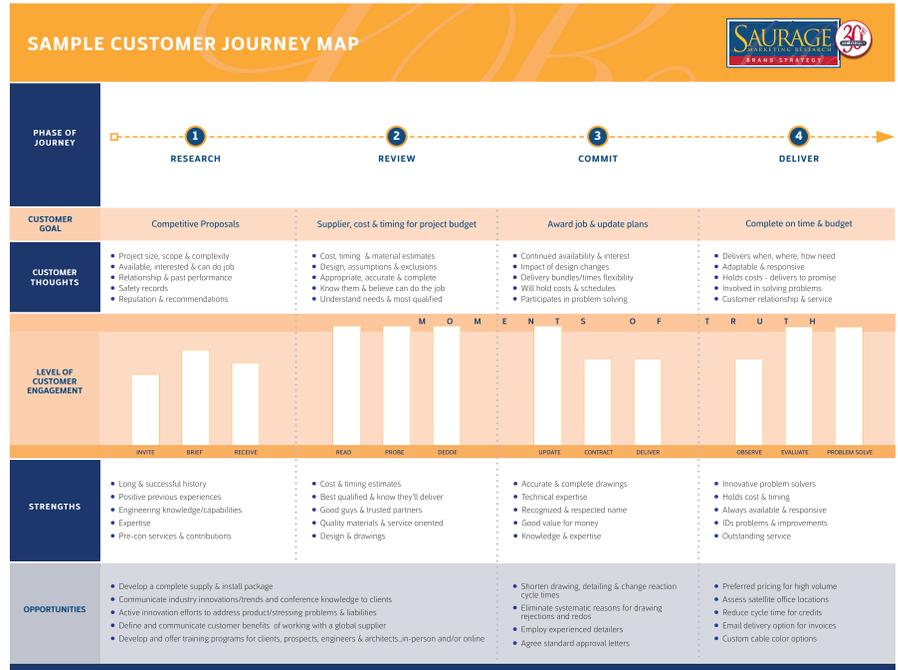
B2B: the overlooked experience

Remember, customers in business-to-business relationships are also human beings, equally capable of being influenced by mappable touchpoints along an experiential journey. Sadly, this fact is lost on both marketers and research firms, many of which have decided that B2B efforts simply lack the cachet of consumer-focused initiatives—a misconception they embrace at their own peril.

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At Saurage, we're passionate about B2B. It's no longer the simple process that it was forty years ago, controlled purely by procurement and contracts. Decision-makers down the chain have far more discretion. Protocols are complex and opportunities for influence exist around every corner.



Sample Customer Journey Map / 2 October 2017

This journey map illustrates the experience of a B2B customer, identifying strengths and weaknesses that can be strategically addressed.

A map doesn't just tell a story. It tells you where to go.

Most importantly, a well-executed journey map can help you capitalize on all of it—particularly with B2B, since it puts you that much ahead of competitors who are not paying attention. Just remember the right ingredients: strong data, balanced methodology, and a clear direction in which to channel those insights.

About Saurage Marketing Research

We are a full-service marketing research firm. We provide the answers that drive successful business strategies. Accurate, usable insights – packaged so that you can understand and act on them successfully.

Since 1987 we have worked closely with companies in many industries. It is rewarding to see our research used to create (or redirect) national advertising campaigns, bring faltering businesses into the black, and turn unconvincing promotional programs into success stories. We know our business and understand your needs. To request a bid or for more information, contact us now.

