



The True Value of Customer Journey Mapping

The growing number of channels and devices has made it hard for companies to deliver a unified customer experience across touchpoints. Journey mapping gives companies a fighting chance to tame the complexity and catch up to the rising expectations of customers.

The practice of customer journey mapping has been around for a decade or so. Over that time, it has gradually become the preferred method for paving over cracks in the customer experience. A journey map is a visual depiction of the stages a customer goes through as they interact with a company to achieve a specific goal, like paying a bill or making a service inquiry, along with a description of how they feel based on the degree of difficulty. The goal is to identify the make-or-break moments that drive brand loyalty by seeing the experience through the eyes of a customer.

It is easy to understand why journey mapping has become so popular. The proliferation of channels and devices has made it hard for companies to keep up with the rising expectations of customers who know that anything is now possible. The complexity of managing cross-channel interactions puts a huge strain on legacy processes and systems that were never designed to support an on-demand world. But market pressure is forcing companies to make a do-or-die choice – either they invest in the future to save customers from falling between the cracks, or they risk the possibility of losing them forever to companies that make it easy to do business.

The act of retail shopping at a big box store illustrates the dilemma. A shopper may choose to use the retailer's mobile app to search for what they want, check out the different brand options, read the product

reviews, compare features and prices and then find the nearest location where the item they want is in stock, along with directions to get there. So far so good! But on arrival at the store, the experience often takes a wrong turn. The vast store layout defies navigation – a shortage of knowledgeable staff prolongs the shopping trip – and the cryptic shelf displays offer little help. Even more exasperating: If a purchased product is defective or unwanted, the shopper is forced to wait anxiously in a customer service line to negotiate its return. No wonder Amazon has retailers quivering in fear: by comparison, its purchase journey is practically worry free.

While store retailers must adapt to the omnichannel shopper or surrender to Amazon, they are not alone in their desperation to unify the customer journey across multiple touchpoints. The wireless providers, who in customer satisfaction studies usually rank dead last, face a disgruntled population of mobile subscribers who feel trapped by a lack of choice and moan about a long list of abuses: hyper-aggressive selling methods, lack of transparency, byzantine rate plans, restrictive contracts, inadequate service, misleading offers, “cancellation bargaining”, billing overages, and so on. Which is why the wireless providers in Canada usually account for the greatest number of complaints filed with the [Commission of Complaints for Telecom-Television Services](#).

However, there is one exception amongst Canadian wireless providers – one brand which consistently tops all the others in satisfaction ratings – and which in 2017 ranked first in the **J.D. Power 2017 Canadian Wireless Purchase Experience Study**: Koodo Mobile. Its recipe for success: a heartfelt commitment to pleasing its customers, and a heavy reliance on customer journey mapping to systematically eliminate the pain points in the customer experience.

Peeling the Layers of the Onion

Koodo Mobile is a “flanker” brand introduced by Telus in 2008 during the “talk and text” phone era. Catering primarily to the young adult market, it differs from most providers by not requiring a fixed term contract. Unable to lock in subscribers contractually, Koodo must keep them loyal by appealing to them in other ways, mainly by minimizing the hassle factor. Its governing principles: simplicity, fairness, and dependability. But that promise, as grand as it sounds, is not easy to convert into a “paint by numbers” playbook. What is simple for some subscribers is not always simple for others.

And fairness is a highly subjective judgement, affected mostly by how well treated a person felt the last time they were serviced. “Where the industry has fallen on its face is setting expectations that were not delivered upon,” explains Bernard Szederkenyi, Koodo’s Head of Customer Experience. “That’s why the true competitive differentiator is the management of the customer experience”.

Koodo relies on “likelihood to recommend” as its beacon metric which it has found to be a reliable predictor of purchase behaviour and accounts for the remarkable health of the brand. In fact, Koodo believes so strongly in “word of mouth” that it has calculated the incremental revenue associated with each one percent increase in “L2R”. The key variable in that equation is the level of effort required by customers to resolve a problem or issue. “For the last two years or so, we’ve elevated customer effort reduction to the highest

priority. It’s at the top of our scorecard – because it’s the main loyalty driver”, Szederkenyi says.

Consistently earning the “kudos” of customers demands a pre-emptive and systematic approach to experience design. “To win the battle, it’s not enough just to understand the pain points,” Szederkenyi cautions. “Operationalizing and implementing the changes is critical”. To identify and prioritize new opportunities to improve the experience, Koodo has established a service design team which specializes in customer journey mapping.

“To truly understand the journey end-to-end is like peeling the layers of an onion,” Szederkenyi observes. “Journey mapping has helped us move from a ‘find and fix’ model to ‘predict and prevent’.” Since

first embracing the tool four years ago, Szederkenyi figures Koodo has tackled 150 or so mapping projects, sponsored by the various business units responsible for different facets of the experience.

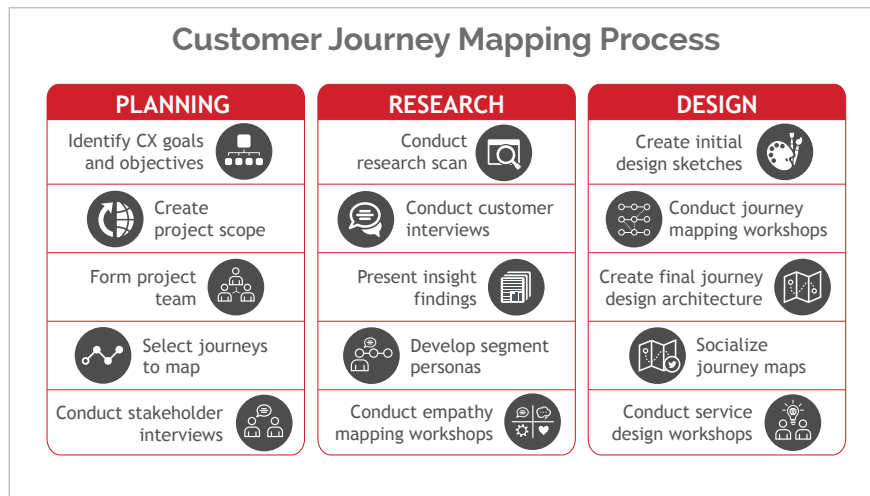
Walk in Their Shoes

When Koodo first started down the path of journey mapping, the initial goal was to fix the processes known to cause

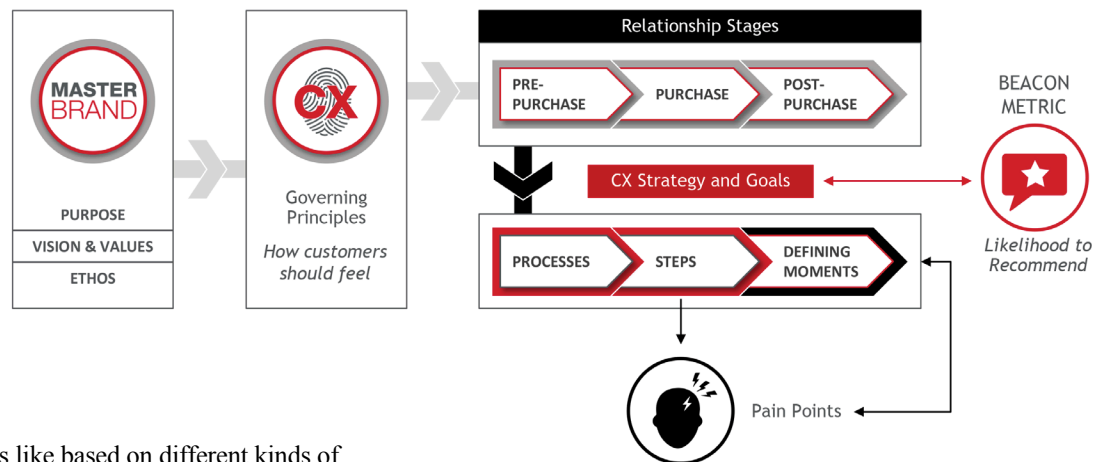
disillusionment with the brand (“I thought you said it was going to be easy and simple!”). It sought to improve the on-boarding process at both retail outlets and mall kiosks, and create a smoother experience during the first 90-days following purchase of a plan.

To dissect the current experience, extensive interviews were conducted with customer-facing staff who could identify the process gaps based on frontline feedback. Together with primary customer research, an initial picture began to emerge of the most vexing problems customers were experiencing. To determine the relative severity of these issues, call centre data was rolled into the analysis to see what impact each pain point had on contract cancellations that gave Koodo the factual evidence to prove the reputational damage.

Select stakeholders were then invited to participate in an Empathy Mapping workshop, where they were invited to imagine what a



For Journey Mapping to be successful, it must be an integral part of a broader customer experience strategy.



typical customer experience was like based on different kinds of service encounters. One scenario, for example, revolved around a persona named “Jack” who has set out to buy a new phone at a Koodo kiosk after doing extensive online research – another was based on an anxious buyer by the name of “Mary” who is about to activate her new phone. The participants were asked to walk in their shoes by speculating on what they see, feel, and think. The findings from the Empathy Mapping exercise served as the basis for the initial set of Journey Maps: large diagrams graphically transformed into poster-sized art. These were then used in workshops to validate the pain points and solicit immediate ideas to improve the customer experience.

A total of thirty-five pain points was identified across four different journeys. Issues such as “I don’t understand why my bill is different than expected”, “I can’t find the answers I’m looking for on the web site”, and “I don’t know what the right rate plan is for me”, were all flagged as leading concerns. Koodo was then able to come up with solutions for those decisive moments when the “likelihood to recommend” was at greatest risk.

In Plain Sight

Keeping up with the expectations of customers, as Koodo has discovered, is a moving target: This year’s stretch goal becomes next year’s baseline, mainly due to the relentless pace of digital change. Each time customer satisfaction hits a plateau, the pressure is on to reach a higher level, just to keep a safe distance from the competition. The most loved brands – like Netflix, Amazon, Disney, Costco, Virgin Airlines, Ritz Carlton – always find a way of towering over their competitors by creating signature experiences which are tangible expressions of their business purpose and vision. Those experiences, unique to each brand, are designed around the moments that make the greatest difference in the lives of their

customers. As Amazon’s Jeff Bezos says, “We start with what the customer needs and work backwards”.

Customer journey mapping is the best way to keep the needs of customers in plain sight. But the time and effort required to make it worthwhile demands a sustained commitment. Otherwise the energy and enthusiasm initially gained through quick fixes and early wins quickly drains away. An ongoing investment is required, in people, resources and cultural change to maintain momentum. Everybody must have faith in the process, from one end of the company to another, plus the endorsement of the C-suite. Once the basic needs of customers are met – whether that’s ordering a product or arranging a delivery time or resolving a billing discrepancy – the company can move on to tackling the defining moments that lead a customer to feel: “You make my life better”, or “I can’t think of doing business with anyone else”. Get those moments right and a brand can reach the heights of customer advocacy.

For a company first starting down the path of journey mapping, the effort required can seem overwhelming. But over time, as the multichannel experience becomes easier, simpler and more streamlined, the positive emotions it evokes amongst customers will more than justify the effort: a growing likelihood to recommend the brand.



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