How Customer Journey Mapping Can Shape Customer Experience Strategy

Let’s be honest: hardly anyone is a fan of gas and electricity companies. We don’t queue for hours to catch a glimpse of the company’s CEO. We don’t stick their logos on our laptops, nor do we have Pinterest boards dedicated to their brands. Utilities companies are simply a painful fact of life. Some utilities companies, however, are breaking the mould. One utilities company not only won an Overall Customer Satisfaction award in both 2012 and 2013, but in 2013 they also achieved the highest customer satisfaction score amongst the six major UK suppliers, with an overall customer satisfaction rate of 71%. The company’s Net Promoter Scores are consistently above industry average as well. So how has this leading energy company climbed the customer experience ladder?

Starting with the customer

This company began by investing in a customer journey mapping exercise, pinpointing every customer interaction from the time customers first research on their website to when the customer calls into the customer service team. They then took their journey map and used it to direct their customer experience strategy, redesign the customer journey, and pinpoint specific areas that needed improvement.

Since then, customer satisfaction has become a key business goal; Net Promoter Scores (NPS) are even included in the CEO’s bonus calculations. Every decision this company makes is now substantiated with hard data and an understanding of how the decision will impact the customer experience. To support this, the company’s Customer Experience (CX) team collects customer feedback data from phone calls, complaints records, and survey data, and delivers the feedback insight across the entire organisation.

Sharing the data

Analysing customer feedback data hasn’t always been easy. Historically, the team manually sifted through the data, pulling out insights based on what they saw as recurring trends. There was no way to quantify issues or base decisions on hard facts. These drawbacks led the team to invest in a Customer Experience Management Solution. The CX team chose Clarabridge to help them analyse data and glean more objective, quantifiable and actionable insights in real-time. This gave the team the confidence to make more informed business decisions.

Soon, they began pulling in additional sources of customer feedback, such as social media data, in order to have a more comprehensive understanding of the holistic customer experience.

Insights pulled from the raw data are captured through reports that are built to resonate with specific stakeholder preferences. For example, operations teams receive motion cloud maps and heat maps while others receive trend graphics and tables. The various teams analyse the data to prioritise their activities. For example, the CX team’s analysis of top customer pain points is delivered to the Customer Research team, which focuses on areas such as persona studies and idea generation. In turn, the Customer Research team ensures the customer journey map is constantly updated to reflect current trends, effectively making the customer an active stakeholder in the decision making process.

Understanding Customer Pain

During the company’s customer journey mapping process, they outlined the key journey touch-points, drilling into individual customer pain points at each stage to understand what was driving the issues. Here are two examples of pain points from the “I’m Joining” journey touch-point that led to significant actions:
**Pain Point 1: Increased transparency and trust allow for a 22% decrease in customer churn rate**

- **Customer pain point identified:** Customers were not being kept informed during the 6 week transfer period when joining or switching to this Utilities Company.

- **Action taken:** The company implemented a trial SMS text messaging programme. They sent three SMS messages to each customer over the six-week transfer period. This ensured that they kept their customers up-to-date during the transfer process without being overly intrusive.

- **Result:** Customer feedback analysis showed that customers were very favourable to the transparency promoted by the SMS programme (a key win in an industry not known for eliciting much trust). The real win, however, is shown in the numbers. It cost the company €0.12 to send three SMS messages to each customer. The resulting ROI though, was a 69% improvement in NPS and a 22% decrease in their churn rate. SMS text messages are now a standard process during this touch-point of the customer journey.

**Pain Point 2: Hard facts, not assumptions, are key to a 26% increase in online renewal rates**

- **Customer pain point identified:** Key functionality, such as the ability to input meter readings and renew services online, was very difficult to find on the company website. As a result, customers were frustrated. They had very low trust in bills they received that were based on estimated meter readings, and they wanted to renew online.

- **Action taken:** The CX team collaborated with the Digital Team to edit the company website to make it easier to submit meter readings and renew services online. They also informed customers of the online renewal option through the automated hold message on call centre calls.

- **Results:**
  - A 10% uplift in meter readings captured online.
  - An increase from 30% to 56% in their online renewal rate.

**Key take-aways:** In both situations, relatively low-investment actions made a big difference. The key was to prioritise activities based on hard facts derived from what customers are actually asking for, rather than on assumptions about what customer might want. Sometimes, it’s not the size of the problem that should be looked at, but the potential impact it can have on the customer journey.