

September 17, 2008

The Customer Experience Journey

by Bruce D. Temkin

for Customer Experience Professionals



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Customer-Centric DNA Propels Firms Through Five Levels Of Maturity

by **Bruce D. Temkin**
with Steven Geller

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Why is customer experience such a hot topic? Because it's important, complex, and broken. That's why firms should head toward Experience-Based Differentiation (EBD), a blueprint for customer experience excellence. But EBD can't be mastered overnight. Instead, companies must embark on a multiyear journey through five levels of EBD maturity: 1) interested; 2) invested; 3) committed; 4) engaged; and 5) embedded. Along the way, firms need to develop customer-centric DNA, a corporate culture with six components that include collective celebrations, commitment to employees, and consistent tradeoffs. To succeed in the transformation, firms must prepare for a multiyear journey and include their HR groups in the effort.

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NOTES & RESOURCES

Forrester interviewed more than 25 firms about their customer experience efforts, including: Alaska Airlines, All State Insurance, Cabela's, California State Automobile Association, Century Furniture, CIGNA, Edward Jones, H&R Block, Intuit, Lego, Marks & Spencer, Microsoft, One Communications, Reuters, Royal Bank Of Canada, Scholastic, SunTrust Banks, Symantec, UCN, Umpqua Bank, United Airlines, Wachovia, Walgreens, Wells Fargo, and Zappos. We also interviewed more than 20 firms that provide products or services for improving customer experience.

Related Research Documents

["The Business Impact Of Customer Experience"](#)
March 24, 2008

["The Customer Experience Index, 2007"](#)
November 21, 2007

["The Chief Customer/Experience Officer Playbook"](#)
October 3, 2007

["Experience-Based Differentiation"](#)
January 2, 2007

COMPANIES HEAD TOWARD EXPERIENCE-BASED DIFFERENTIATION

Customer experience is a popular concept. But why does it get so much attention? Because it's:

- **Important.** Executives tell us that customer experience is critical to their business (see Figure 1). This perspective makes sense. Our analysis shows that good customer experience is highly correlated to customer loyalty (see Figure 2).
- **Complex.** Only 12% of firms attack this high-priority area with a very disciplined approach (see Figure 3-1). In the void, most companies suffer from the lack of a clear strategy and less than ideal cooperation across organizations (see Figure 3-2).
- **Broken.** When we asked consumers how satisfied they were with a variety interactions, the results weren't great. Only one of the interactions, in-person buying, crossed the 70% satisfaction mark (see Figure 4). And only 10% of firms received an excellent rating in Forrester's 2007 Customer Experience Index, while 21% were poor or very poor.¹

Experience-Based Differentiation: The Blueprint For Customer Experience Excellence

As companies turn their attention to improving customer experience, they often don't know exactly where to head. That's why Forrester developed Experience-Based Differentiation, which we define as:²

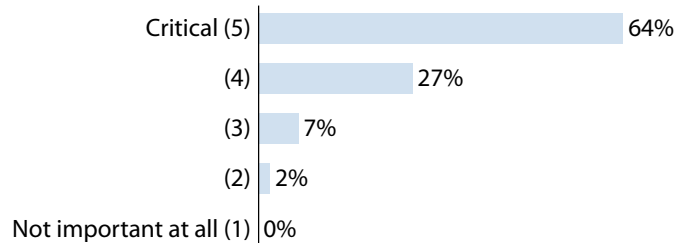
A systematic approach to interacting with customers that consistently builds loyalty.

To master EBD, firms need to adopt three principles (see Figure 5):

- **Principle No. 1: Obsess about customer needs, not product features.** Rather than racing to bring new product features to market, companies need to refocus on the needs of their customers — who might even want fewer features.³
- **Principle No. 2: Reinforce brands with every interaction, not just communications.** Traditional brand messaging is losing its power to influence consumers — that's why branding efforts need to expand beyond marketing communications to help define how customers should be treated.
- **Principle No. 3: Treat customer experience as a competence, not a function.** Delivering great customer experiences isn't something that a small group of people can do on their own — everyone in the company needs to be fully engaged in the effort.

Figure 1 Companies View Customer Experience As Important

“What role will customer experience — how your company interacts with customers — play in your company’s strategy in 2008?”



Base: 287 customer experience decision-makers from US firms with annual revenues of \$500 million or more

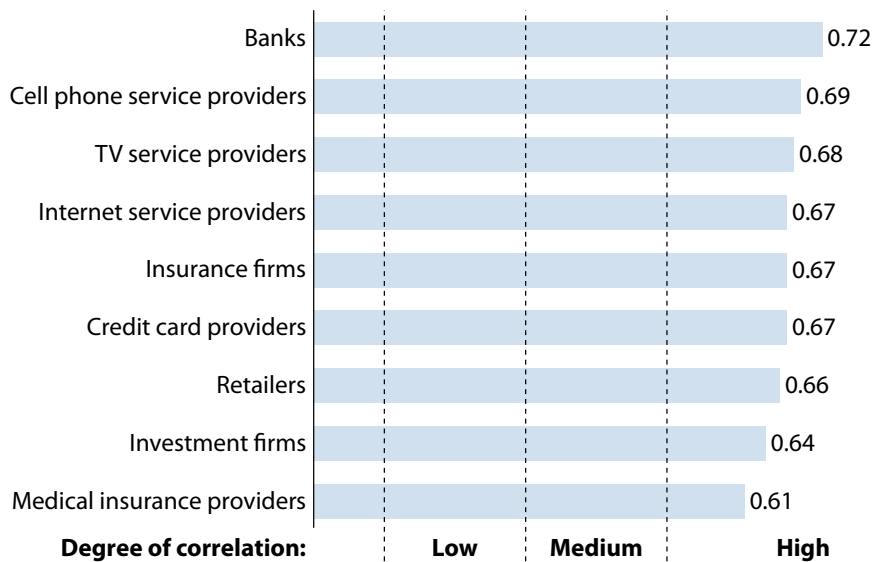
Source: Forrester’s Q4 2007 Customer Experience Peer Research Panel Survey

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Source: Forrester Research, Inc.

Figure 2 Customer Experience Correlates To Loyalty

Correlation between high Customer Experience Index and willingness to buy another purchase from provider



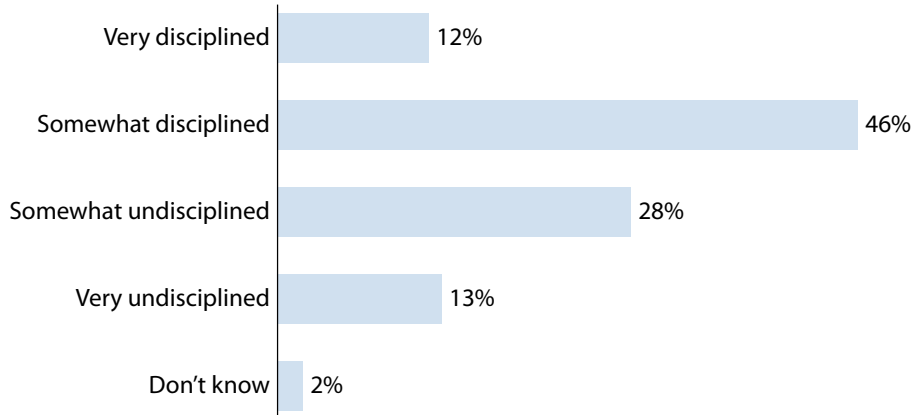
Source: North American Technographics® Customer Experience Online Survey, Q3 2007

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Source: Forrester Research, Inc.

Figure 3 Companies Lack Customer Experience Discipline And Clear Strategies

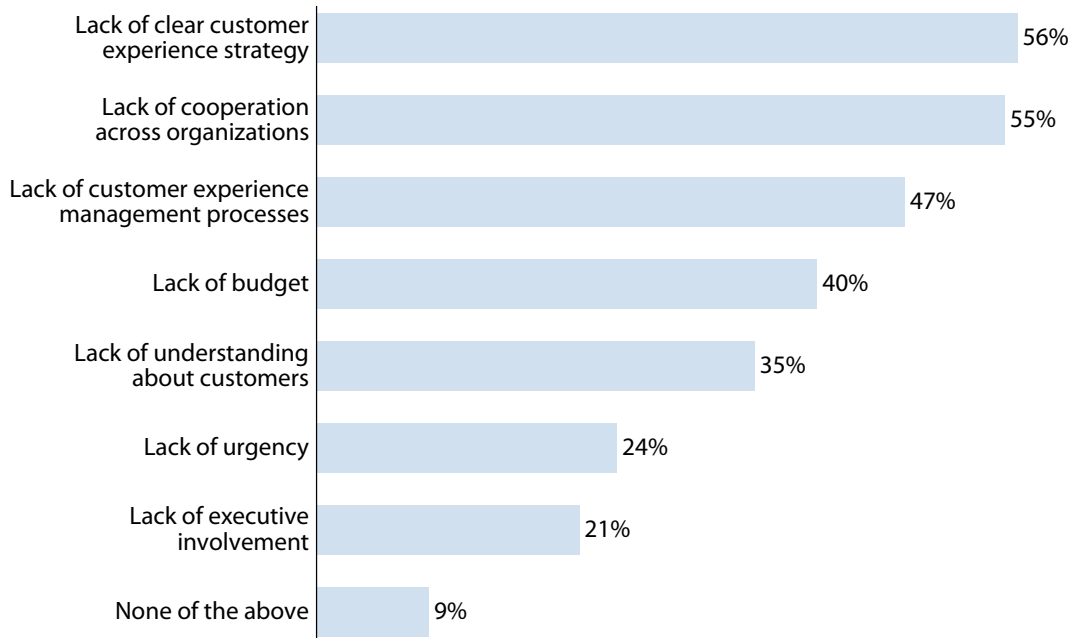
3-1 “How would you describe your company’s overall approach to customer experience management?”



Base: 287 customer experience decision-makers from US firms with annual revenues of \$500 million or more

Source: Forrester’s Q4 2007 Customer Experience Peer Research Panel Survey

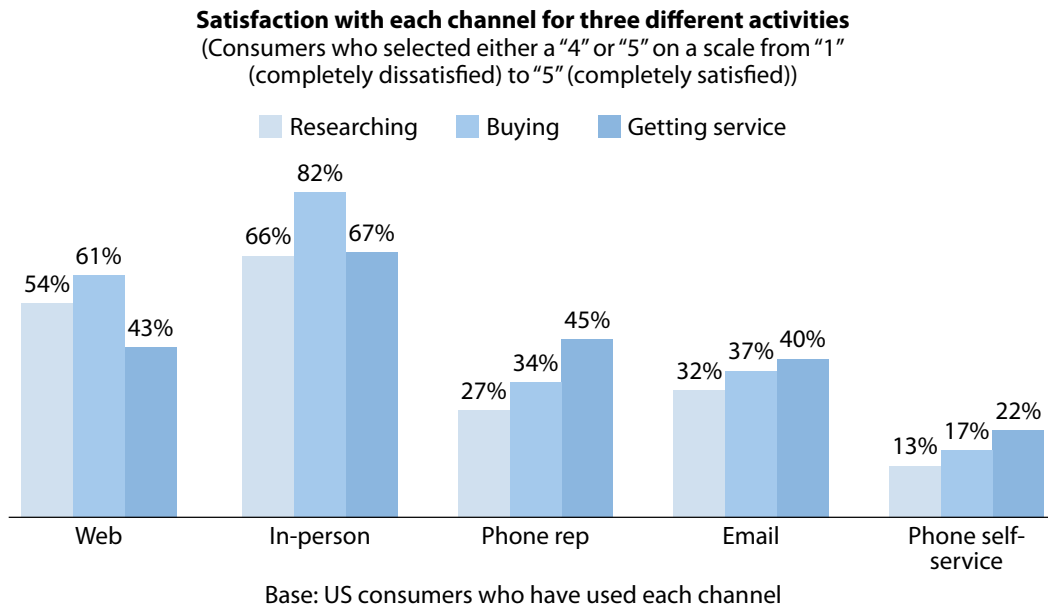
3-2 “Which of the following are significant obstacles to improving the customer experience that your company delivers?”



Base: 287 customer experience decision-makers from US firms with annual revenues of \$500 million or more

Source: Forrester’s Q4 2007 Customer Experience Peer Research Panel Survey

Figure 4 Consumers Aren't Satisfied With Company Interactions



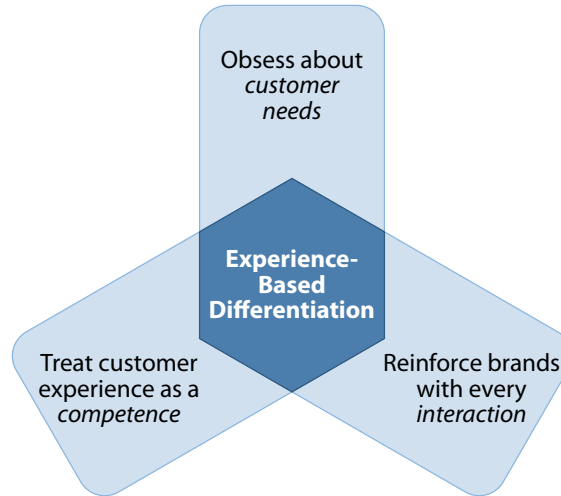
Source: North American Technographics® Benchmark Survey, 2007

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Source: Forrester Research, Inc.

Figure 5 EBD Represents The Blueprint For Customer Experience Excellence

5-1 The principles of Experience-Based Differentiation



5-2 Experience-Based Differentiation requires a different approach to customer experience

	Status quo	Experience-Based Differentiation
Key customer insights	How the company interacts with customers	How the customers accomplish their goals
Go-to-market offerings	Product features	Solutions that combine products, services, and digital interfaces
Use of brand attributes	Limited; drives marketing communications	Extensive; translated into requirements for all interactions
Employee involvement	Mandated	Cultivated
Structural changes	Organizational	Cultural
Senior executive commitment	Execs support customer experience efforts	Execs are actively involved in customer experience efforts

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Source: Forrester Research, Inc.

THE EXPERIENCE-BASED DIFFERENTIATION MATURITY MODEL

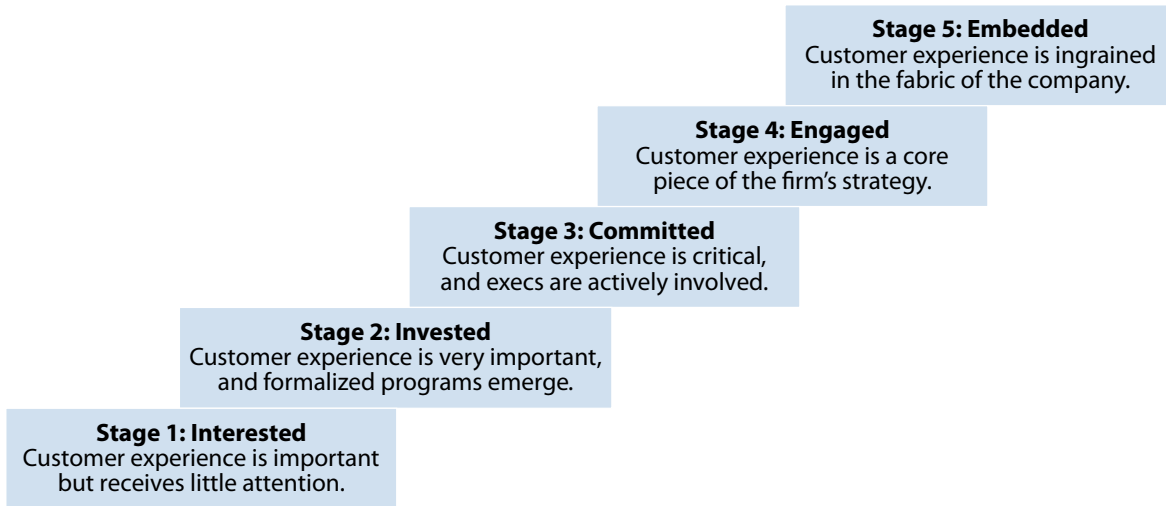
While EBD represents a blueprint for excellence, most firms are still in the early stages of their customer experience journeys; far from mastering all three of its principles.⁴ To understand how large organizations can make their way toward EBD, we interviewed nearly 50 organizations — a combination of companies that are on customer experience journeys and vendors that help with these efforts. Our discussions identified the following five levels of maturity that companies progress through on their way toward EBD (see Figure 6):⁵

- **Level No. 1: interested.** Customer experience is important but receives little investment from the executive team.
- **Level No. 2: invested.** Customer experience is considered very important, and formalized programs emerge.
- **Level No. 3: committed.** Customer experience is critical, and execs are actively involved in an effort to transform the company.
- **Level No. 4: engaged.** Customer experience is a core piece of the firm's strategy.
- **Level No. 5: embedded.** Customer experience is ingrained in the fabric of the company.

Using our EBD self-test, we assessed the maturity level of 287 North American firms (see Figure 7).⁶ Interestingly, 37% of the firms were not yet on the path to EBD maturity (see Figure 8). Of the firms that were on the path, nearly two-thirds were in the first two stages of maturity.

Figure 6 Companies Progress To EBD Through Five Stages Of Maturity

6-1 The five stages of EBD maturity



6-2 Key differences across the five stages of customer experience maturity

	Voice of the customer (VoC) programs	Key role of centralized customer experience organization	Perspective of senior executives
Stage 5: Embedded	Customer insight prevalent in every aspect of the business	Reinforcement of customer-centric culture	View their role as keeper of customer-centric culture
Stage 4: Engaged	VoC integrated into key processes	Best practice sharing across organizations	Incorporate customer experience as a core tenet of overall business strategy
Stage 3: Committed	VoC tailored to the needs of different organizations	Provide consultative support to, and build network of customer experience advocates across, the organization	Understand link between customer experience and business results and willing to make significant investments
Stage 2: Invested	Consolidated customer experience metrics and process for fixing problems	Manage VoC process, internal communications, and small number of projects	Believe that customer experience is very important and add goals to their direct reports
Stage 1: Interested	Evaluating different customer experience listening posts	Evangelism and collection of existing customer insights	Think that customer experience may be important

Figure 7 Use The EBD Self-Test To Identify Your Firm's Stage Of Maturity

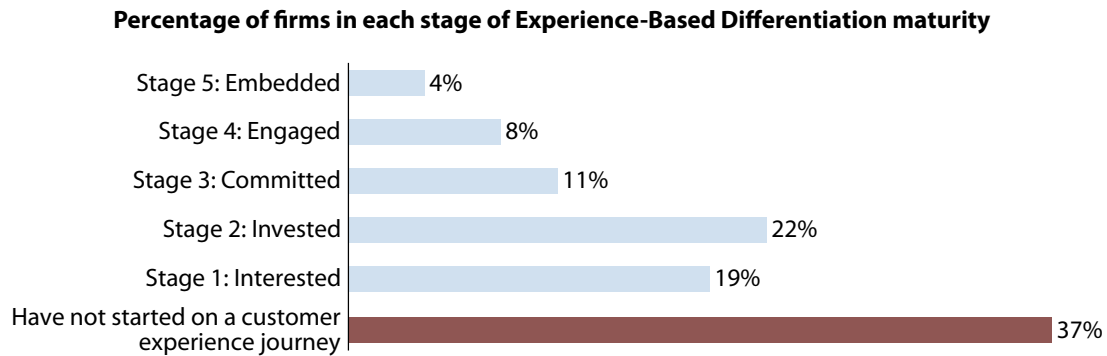
Rating your firm

Determine how much you agree with each statement:

- +2: Completely agree
- +1: Somewhat agree
- 0: Neither agree nor disagree
- 1: Somewhat disagree
- 2: Completely disagree

Principle No. 1: Obsess about customer needs, not product features	Rating
"Our company has a clearly defined set of target customer segments."	<input style="width: 40px; height: 25px;" type="text"/>
"Employees across the company share a consistent and vivid image of target customers."	<input style="width: 40px; height: 25px;" type="text"/>
"Primary research is used to fully understand the needs and behaviors of target customers."	<input style="width: 40px; height: 25px;" type="text"/>
"Decision-making processes systematically incorporate the needs of target customers."	<input style="width: 40px; height: 25px;" type="text"/>
Total	<input style="width: 40px; height: 25px;" type="text"/>
Principle No. 2: Reinforce brands with every interaction, not just communications	
"The attributes of our company's brand are well defined."	<input style="width: 40px; height: 25px;" type="text"/>
"Employees fully understand the key attributes of our brand."	<input style="width: 40px; height: 25px;" type="text"/>
"Our company's brand drives how we design customer experiences."	<input style="width: 40px; height: 25px;" type="text"/>
"We translate brand attributes into specific promises we make to customers."	<input style="width: 40px; height: 25px;" type="text"/>
Total	<input style="width: 40px; height: 25px;" type="text"/>
Principle No. 3: Treat customer experience as a competence, not a function	
"Senior executives regularly interact with target customers."	<input style="width: 40px; height: 25px;" type="text"/>
"Senior executives consistently communicate the importance of serving target customers."	<input style="width: 40px; height: 25px;" type="text"/>
"Employees across the company are recognized and rewarded for improving the experience of target customers."	<input style="width: 40px; height: 25px;" type="text"/>
"The quality of interactions with target customers is closely monitored."	<input style="width: 40px; height: 25px;" type="text"/>
Total	<input style="width: 40px; height: 25px;" type="text"/>
Grand total	<input style="width: 40px; height: 25px;" type="text"/>

Interpreting scores for each principle		Grand total	Stage of EBD maturity
6 to 8	Excellent	20 to 24	Stage 5: Embedded
3 to 5	Good	15 to 19	Stage 4: Engaged
0 to 2	Problem	10 to 14	Stage 3: Committed
<0	Major flaw	5 to 9	Stage 2: Invested
		0 to 4	Stage 1: Interested
		<0	Not on customer experience journey

Figure 8 Most Firms Are In The Early Stages Of Their Customer Experience Journeys

Base: 287 customer experience decision-makers from US firms with annual revenues of \$500 million or more

Source: Forrester's Q4 2007 Customer Experience Peer Research Panel Survey

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Source: Forrester Research, Inc.

EBD Maturity Level No. 1: Interested

In the first level of EBD maturity, organizations begin to believe that customer experience is an important part of their business. They start undertaking a number of different efforts without making any major investments, attempting to get a handle on the current situation. In these organizations, you will often find:

- **Customer experience task forces.** After recognizing that customer experience is important, the executive team initiates a task force to improve customer experience. Without clear leadership or sufficient funding, these groups often struggle to agree on a concise road map. One company identified more than 100 cross-functional processes that were broken and created 50 teams to go after quick hits. Sometimes companies create a position like chief customer officer in this phase.⁷ But at this early maturity level, these executives often don't get the cooperation they need to succeed (see Figure 9).⁸
- **Examination of existing customer insights.** One of the first things that companies recognize is the lack of a consistent approach to monitoring and measuring customer feedback. While there are many places the company gets customer feedback, it hasn't yet developed a cohesive voice of the customer program.⁹ So it often starts to inventory the existing customer listening posts and measurements.
- **A flurry of uncoordinated efforts.** Since customer experience is important to the executive team, but there aren't too many corporate guidelines, individual organizations attempt to showcase their customer experience "leadership." In this heightened political environment, different groups either start their own new initiatives or try to convince others that their current approach is the best way to go.

Figure 9 Evaluating The Readiness For A Senior Customer Experience Executive

	No	Yes
Does your company view customer experience as critical to its success?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does your company have the ambition to change how it interacts with customers?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is customer experience viewed as an integral part of your firm's overall strategy?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is your CEO willing to hold the executive team accountable for customer experience improvements?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Can the CC/EO candidate be comfortable without a large organization?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Readiness for a senior customer experience executive	
<u>Number of "Yes" answers</u>	<u>Readiness</u>
5	Good
4	Fair
3	Poor
0, 1, or 2	Terrible

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Source: Forrester Research, Inc.

EBD Maturity Level No. 2: Invested

Companies enter into the second level of EBD maturity after they recognize that customer experience is worthy of a significant investment; in both capital and key personnel. So the approach to customer experience becomes more organized with an intensified focus on fixing problems. In this phase, you can see:

- **Senior executive anxiety.** In this stage of maturity, the executive team is willing to make investments to improve customer experience, but it wants results soon. Without a clear road map, these executives can add pressure to the organization, which does not yet have the discipline to make significant improvements.
- **Centralized customer experience groups.** At this point in time, a part-time task force is no longer able to keep up with the customer experience mandate. So companies appoint or hire an executive to lead a centralized customer experience organization (see Figure 10).¹⁰ A large insurer showcases a typical scope for this type of organization; its centralized group is responsible for four key activities: 1) understanding voice of the customer, 2) driving customer advocacy and culture change; 3) establishing and maintaining a measurement framework; and 4) providing solutions delivery consulting services. The rise of these groups often creates a political battle as individual operating units push to retain their autonomy.

Figure 10 Potential Responsibilities For A Centralized Customer Experience Organization

Role	Activities
Customer insight management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage voice of the customer efforts. • Collect information from listening posts, analyze data, and provide tailored insights to meet the needs of different organizations. • Evangelize the use of voice of the customer data across the company.
Customer experience measurement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define customer experience measurement frameworks. • Create overall customer experience dashboard. • Track metrics and provide regular scorecard of results.
Employee communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop communications plan for ongoing and episodic communications. • Establish Intranet access to customer experience efforts and progress. • Coach executives on content and style of communications.
Process improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish framework for describing interactions from the customer point-of-view. • Help different organizations map existing processes and identify problem areas. • Help different organizations design improved processes.
Customer advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proactively define key customer experience “opportunities to improve.” • Infuse customer point of view in decision-making.
Culture and training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help executive team codify organization’s desired culture. • Develop programs for instilling the culture in new and existing employees. • Define measurements for cultural alignment.
Issue resolution management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define process for identifying and responding to customer problems. • Escalate problems that do not get resolved.
Cross-organizational coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify needs of different organizational groups. • Build network of customer experience advocates across the company. • Share best practices across the company.

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Source: Forrester Research, Inc.

- **Enterprisewide programs.** Companies kick off initiatives that touch many employees. When the food service company Delaware North realized that it needed to improve customer experience, the firm developed its “Guestpath” program across all of its business units, setting standards for experience delivery across all frontline employees. To stop confusing customers with technical jargon, CIGNA developed a “naughty word list” and has employees donate five cents to a charity pool whenever they use one of those words.
- **Concrete customer experience metrics.** One of the first tasks that happen in this stage is the development of a common set of customer experience metrics. Many companies end up developing a program that centers on a single metric like Net Promoter.¹¹ Walgreens, for instance, measures stores based on three customer experience metrics: satisfaction survey scores, mystery shopper feedback, and supervisor checks. Alaska Airlines gives employees monthly bonuses if the company hits a set of customer experience metrics. Each of the brands at IAC has

an action plan based on its own target segments and competitive landscape but uses common metrics in a standard dashboard for tracking results.¹²

- **Formalized voice of the customer processes.** At this stage in the evolution, firms are not only collecting feedback from customers, but they are also developing processes for fixing problems that they find.¹³ California State Automotive Association holds “Accountability Forums” with 30 top executives to regularly examine feedback across the life cycle of customer experiences. The group identifies the top five issues, and then individuals in the room take ownership for fixing them.

EBD Maturity Level No. 3: Committed

In the third level of EBD maturity, firms are embracing customer experience because they understand the specific impact it has on business results like growth and profitability. The effort is no longer isolated to a few groups as customer experience becomes a major transformational effort across the organization. Instead of just trying to fix problems, the focus turns to redesigning processes.¹⁴ Here’s what to expect in this environment:

- **Active executive involvement.** During this stage, customer experience is a major component of the firm’s transformational efforts, so the executive team gets actively involved in the process. Customer experience programs can take up half of the agenda during senior executive team meetings — and they each have significant customer experience goals in their bonus plans. Howard Janzen, CEO of One Communications, holds “Ask Howard” sessions once per month to listen to what employees across the company have to say, and he encourages his direct reports to have these “ask sessions” as well. Royal Bank of Canada created a Client Experience Council of 10 top leaders to monitor customer experience progress and make sure that there’s alignment in efforts across organizations.
- **Customer life cycle analysis.** To focus on the key opportunities, companies map out the interactions that customers have with their firms — across the life cycle from initial interest through renewal or abandonment. This insight helps companies focus on moments of truth, many of which cross over internal organizations. Wells Fargo created a task model that identified more than 150 different things that customers do and H&R Block categorizes its feedback into more than 200 categories of customer interactions. To understand the needs of disabled customers, members of Credit Suisse’s customer experience team spend an entire day in a wheelchair.¹⁵ Disney Parks and Resorts’ “Customer Relationship Magic” strategy reaches prospects in pre-visit research, delivers personalized information while on property, and sends relevant product and event offers post-visit.¹⁶
- **Attempts to motivate employees.** Transformation requires people to make changes. But change isn’t easy. So companies explore ways to motivate their employees to change. One large firm established a monthly award to recognize employees who delivered great customer experiences

and celebrates this at the same level as top sales performers. Wachovia shares customer satisfaction scores with employees across its financial centers and provides them with a potential to earn more than \$100 per month based on the results. IBM has started to celebrate when value is created at its clients not just when it closes a deal in an attempt to shift the focus from selling to customer experience.

- **Tailored customer insights.** Companies find that one size does not fit all with customer insights; every organization looks at the data through a different lens. In this phase, customer experience groups help other organizations understand how they can use customer insights and then provide the data in a form that meets their needs. If a customer provides feedback on a drill he bought at Home Depot, the information gets routed to the appropriate category manager. The customer insights group at a large bank realized that verbatims organized by product-specific topics could be very useful to the bank's product management organization. At Walgreen's, all store employees get access to a monthly report that lists the satisfaction scores for their stores (compared with others) with a list of dissatisfaction drivers that each store should be working on.
- **Proactive customer feedback.** After reacting to voice of the customer insights, some firms get more proactive — seeking out insights from key customer groups. Many companies will also create processes for reaching out to customers who give negative feedback on surveys. Alaska Airlines' top 20 or so senior executives call its top customers after they've had a service issue. These "surprise and delight" calls make the airline's best customers feel special and also make sure that executives are regularly hearing what they like and dislike. Lego selects 40 people every year to be Lego Ambassadors: a community of adults who provide feedback on items like new product ideas and marketing concepts.¹⁷ The 400 members in Del Mont's "I Love My Dog" online community provide feedback on new product ideas, which included uncovering demand for pet breakfast foods.¹⁸

EBD Maturity Level No. 4: Engaged

When companies enter into the fourth level of EBD maturity, customer experience is a key component of everything they do. Instead of re-engineering processes, the focus turns to designing break-through experiences and solidifying the culture. When companies reach this stage, you find:

- **Customer needs embedded within processes.** At this stage, customer experience steps are defined across most key processes — from innovation through requirements definition.¹⁹ It is a normal operating procedure to get customer insights, and employees don't need to "make the case" for it. One company requires its project teams to collect "critical to quality" statements from clients before the groups are allowed to submit requirements documents. Discover Financial requires that funding requests for new projects attach a copy of the specific persona that's being addressed by the effort. Monster created a user experience War Room where product managers, software engineers, interactive designers, visual designers, usability specialists, systems analysts, and business analysts could brainstorm ideas.²⁰

- **Significant attention to employee engagement.** With the major transformation well under way, the key remaining element is to refine the culture. So companies heavily focus on training and enabling employees to deliver great customer experience. Walgreens, for instance, moved some activities for store managers to off-hours so they could spend more time coaching employees. Wachovia Bank codified the best practices for customer interaction across its branches in something it calls BASICS, which stands for behaviors, assessment, statement of commitment, inspections, common courtesies, and summary of services. The bank trains all branch personnel on the BASICS. Companies may also start tracking employee engagement using employee survey questions like “how likely are you to recommend our company to a friend or family member as a good place to work?”
- **Decentralization of customer experience management.** As individual organizations become more customer-centric, they end up needing less help from the centralized customer experience organization. So the centralized group now acts as a facilitator to the network of customer experience advocates across the company. Its key activity is sharing best practices across the organization. At this stage in the evolution, there’s no longer a strong need for a chief customer officer. According to CEO Tony Hsieh, all managers at Zappos are expected to inspire the firm’s 10 core values; the first one on the list is “Deliver Wow Through Service.” Alaska Airlines calls employees who understand the culture “legacy keepers,” and All State is building a network of customer experience advocates across the company.

EBD Maturity Level No. 5: Embedded

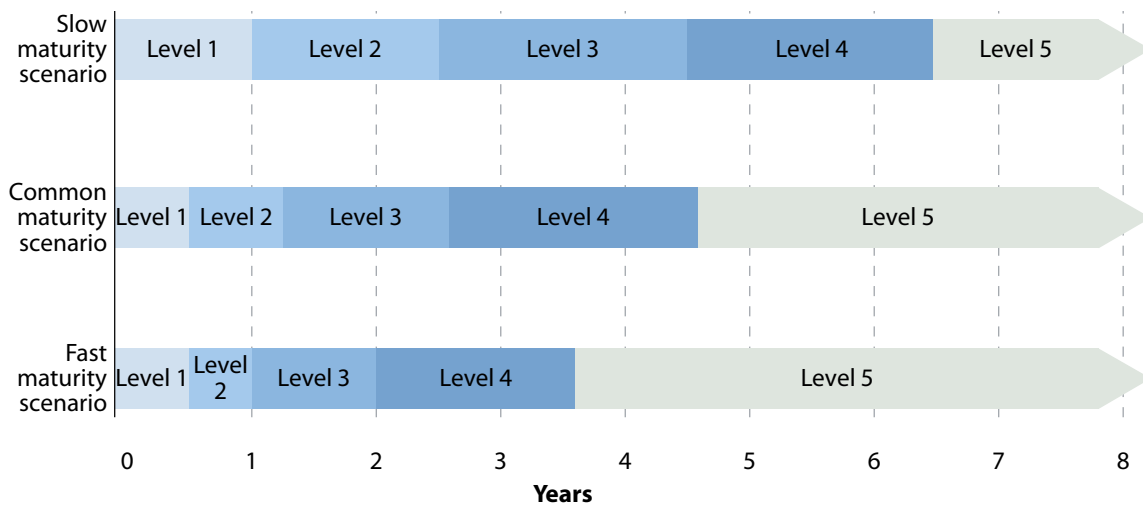
At the highest level of EBD maturity, which can take companies several years to achieve, customer experience is deeply ingrained throughout the organization (see Figure 11). Just about every employee feels ownership for maintaining the culture. The executive team no longer focuses on change but views itself as keeper of the customer-centric culture, which is viewed as a critical asset. Companies in this final stage of EBD maturity:

- **Obsess about customer needs.** Every decision that happens within these companies takes into consideration the needs of customers. Activities like marketing campaigns, product development, or new fee structures are always done in the context of how they’ll affect key customer groups. But this effort is not always driven by formal processes; employees (including executives) constantly strive to better understand their customers. Jim Cabela, co-founder and vice chairman of Cabela’s, reads every note that call center reps write about the top two or three most important issues that they’ve heard. USAA’s frontline staff regularly identifies enhancements like changing its insurance billing cycles to synchronize with the military’s biweekly pay cycles, making cash flow easier on members.²¹
- **Reinforce the brand with every interaction.** Employees at this stage are fully aware of what the company’s brand stands for. How do they know? It’s a part of the hiring process, the new employee training processes, and is reinforced by every other employee they run into. These

employees don't just understand the firm's brand; they are brand advocates.²² Ritz-Carlton holds meetings on Monday mornings to share a story of how one individual exemplified the firm's service "Gold Standards" by creating a "wow" guest experience (see Figure 12).²³ Just about every employee at Umpqua Bank, for instance, understands the bank's mission "to be the world's greatest bank." And the employees constantly try to provide the products, services, and experiences that will get customers to believe that it is.

- **Treat customer experience as a competency.** Customer experience is a core element of what the CEO thinks about, and he holds the entire executive team accountable for maintaining the customer-centric culture. As a result, customer experience is continuously viewed as the responsibility of everyone in the company. Edward Jones, for instance, is establishing a program called "Profiles Of Caring" that displays stories about how employees have helped clients — reinforcing the firm's customer-centric culture. To make sure that new employees buy in to Zappos' customer-centric culture, the HR department does an explicit interview on cultural fit. The company goes even further to ensure employee alignment; it offers \$1,000 to new employees to quit during their initial training period.²⁴ Pret A Manger requires manager recruits to work a day in a store, and employees vote on whether to hire the candidate.

Figure 11 Three Potential Timelines For EBD Maturity



Source: Forrester estimates

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Source: Forrester Research, Inc.

Figure 12 Elements Of Ritz-Carlton's "Gold Standards"

12-1 The credo

The Ritz-Carlton Hotel is a place where the genuine care and comfort of our guests is our highest mission.

We pledge to provide the finest personal service and facilities for our guests who will always enjoy a warm, relaxed, yet refined ambience.

The Ritz-Carlton experience enlivens the senses, instills well-being, and fulfills even the unexpressed wishes and needs of our guests.

12-2 Three steps of service

1. A warm and sincere greeting. Use the guest's name.
2. Anticipation and fulfillment of each guest's needs
3. Fond farewell. Give a warm goodbye and use the guest's name.

12-3 Service values: I am proud to be Ritz-Carlton

1. I build strong relationships and create Ritz-Carlton guests for life.
2. I am always responsive to the expressed and unexpressed wishes and needs of our guests.
3. I am empowered to create unique, memorable, and personal experiences for our guests.
4. I understand my role in achieving the Key Success Factors, embracing Community Footprints, and creating The Ritz-Carlton Mystique.
5. I continuously seek opportunities to innovate and improve The Ritz-Carlton experience.
6. I own and immediately resolve guest problems.
7. I create a work environment of teamwork and lateral service so that the needs of our guests and each other are met.
8. I have the opportunity to continuously learn and grow.
9. I am involved in the planning of the work that affects me.
10. I am proud of my professional appearance, language, and behavior.
11. I protect the privacy and security of our guests, my fellow employees, and the company's confidential information and assets.
12. I am responsible for uncompromising levels of cleanliness and creating a safe and accident-free environment.

12-4 The employee promise

At The Ritz-Carlton, our Ladies and Gentlemen are the most important resource in our service commitment to our guests.

By applying the principles of trust, honesty, respect, integrity, and commitment, we nurture and maximize talent to the benefit of each individual and the company.

The Ritz-Carlton fosters a work environment where diversity is valued, quality of life is enhanced, individual aspirations are fulfilled, and The Ritz-Carlton Mystique is strengthened.

Source: www.ritzcarlton.com

45190

Source: Forrester Research, Inc.

CUSTOMER-CENTRIC DNA FUELS CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE MATURITY

As companies evolve through higher levels of EBD maturity, customer experience becomes an increasingly important part of the corporate culture (see Figure 13). Starting in the third level of maturity, companies begin to exhibit signs of customer-centric DNA, which Forrester defines as:

A strong, shared set of beliefs that guides how customers are treated.

Our research uncovered six key components of customer-centric DNA (see Figure 14):

- **Clear beliefs.** The only way for an organization to operate consistently is if everyone understands what's important. That's why Zappos widely publishes its 10 core values to customers and employees (see Figure 15). Here's what Tony Hsieh, Zappos CEO, told us about these values: "For most companies it's just something you hear about on day one and then it's a poster. We use it as a reason to hire and fire someone." Edward Jones went through a four-month program to codify its culture in which it asked employees what Edward Jones was all about. What did they come up with? "A spirit of caring." And an acronym for CARES: clients come first, associates work in partnership, relationships are mutually beneficial, excellence is our standard, and service is our business.
- **Constant communications.** When a company goes through a major transformation, which is happening in maturity levels 2 and 3, it's important for employees to continuously hear what's going on. The former CMO of JetBlue once told me that she spent half of her time on internal communications. Microsoft established its Channel 9 to have an interactive, unencumbered dialogue across employees and customers.²⁵ It also helps communications if employees use some common terminology. If you go around Royal Bank of Canada, for instance, everyone can probably talk about how they are trying to "kill the top 10 irritants." This is a widespread program where organizations identify, and then try to remove, the issues that most irritate customers.
- **Collective celebrations.** Most organizations celebrate when individuals or groups outperform their key metrics for sales growth or profitability. To change the culture, companies need to make customer experience just as important. Starbucks encourages personal recognition with green-apron cards, which employees give to each other as a thank you for delivering better customer experiences. At Umpqua Bank, employees at all locations get together for five minutes each day for "motivational moments," taking turns sharing some learning they've had that connects back to Umpqua. In Walgreens' "Extra Mile Program," all of the employees in stores that receive top customer experience scores (across a few metrics) are entered into a contest to win a new car; Walgreens has given away more than 50 cars.
- **Compelling stories.** The author Philip Pullman was quoted as saying "'Thou shalt not' is soon forgotten, but 'Once upon a time' lasts forever."²⁶ Stories play a powerful key role in shaping the culture of any firm. Companies use stories to tell how founders or employees have helped customers, demonstrating behaviors that are valued by the organization. One large financial

services firm tells the story about how a customer service rep helped a lady get her medicine when she called their number. Why did she call them? Her recently deceased husband had told her to call the company whenever she was in trouble. California State Automotive Association posts stories on its intranet from employees who talk about how they've used voice of the customer insights to make a difference.

- **Commitment to employees.** There's no way to deliver great customer experience if employees are not on board. But you can't just "expect" employees to do what's right. Companies need to help employees better serve customers with investments in training and enabling tools. It's hard for anyone to provide excellent service to an irate customer if the resolution spans 20 screens across five different applications. United Airlines sends its global customer service agents to the Disney Institute to "inspire them." One company we interviewed has created a new role in its call center, a customer voice analyst, who reads verbatims and uses the insight to coach employees. UK's Nationwide Building Society wanted to help employees better serve customers, so it invested in a system that gives call center reps and branch employees easy access to customers' interactions — from recent offers to outstanding service issues.²⁷
- **Consistent tradeoffs.** Employees respond to what execs do more than to what they say. So guess what happens when execs proclaim that customer experience is important but continue to reward other behavior. Nothing. The true commitment to customer experience shows up when executives have to make tradeoffs. If you want call center reps to improve customers' experience, then you can't constantly push them to cut down on average handle time. And if your Web site has usability problems, then you need to invest in fixing it — not just push for new functionality. One large financial institution allows business units to make investments that improve customer experience even if they don't meet the company's requirements for short-term payback.

Figure 13 Customer-Centric DNA Evolves Across The Five Stages Of Customer Experience Maturity

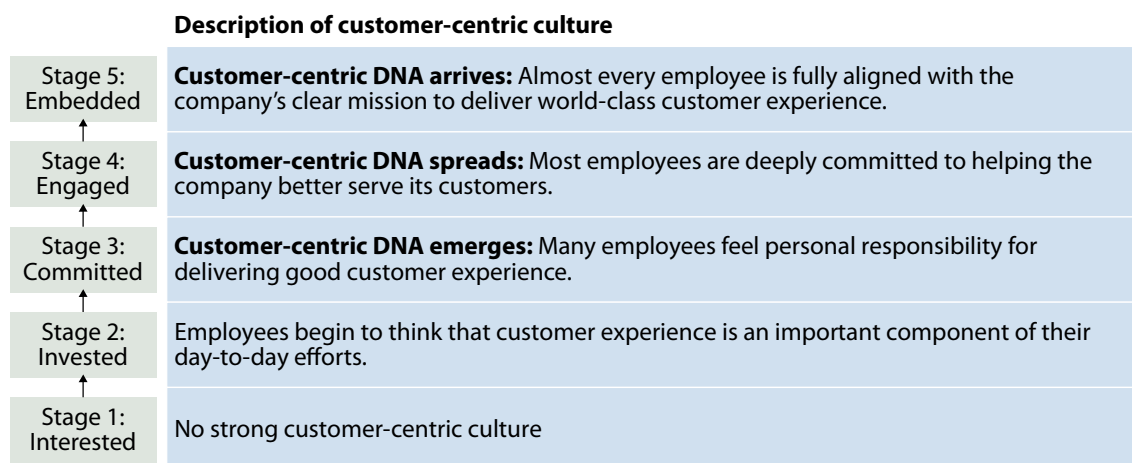


Figure 14 The Six C's Of Customer-Centric DNA

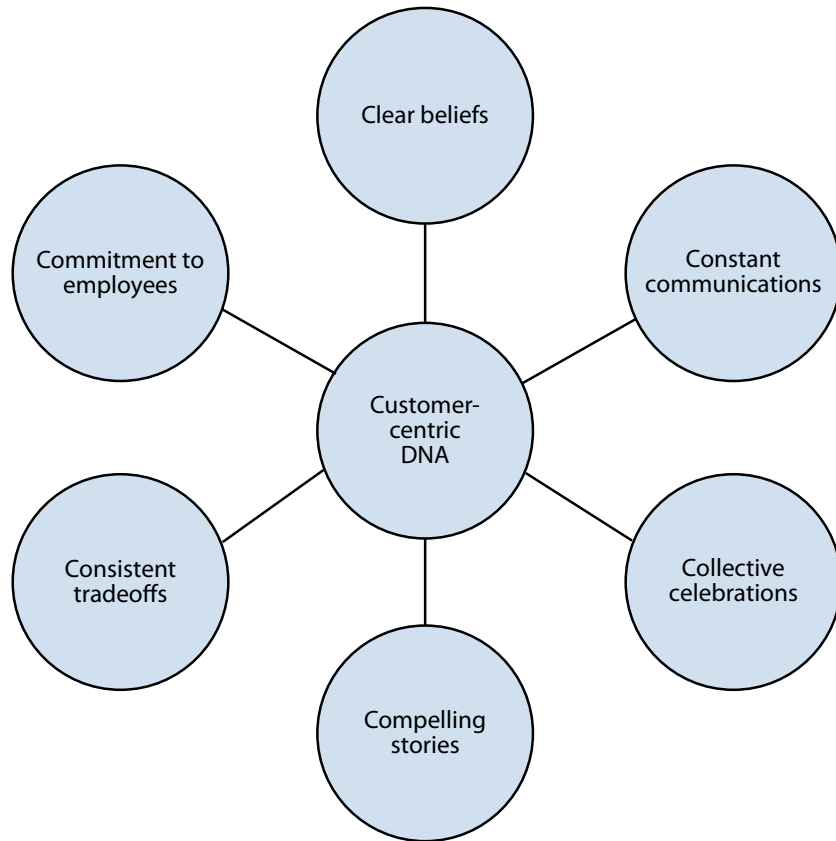


Figure 15 Zappos' 10 Core Values

The screenshot shows the Zappos.com website interface. At the top, there are navigation links for 'Zappos Sites: Zappos.com', 'Couture', 'RideShop', 'Running', 'Outdoor', 'Blogs', 'Shopping Cart', 'My Account', 'My Favorites', and 'Help'. Below this is the Zappos logo with the tagline 'POWERED by SERVICE™'. A horizontal menu contains categories: 'Shoes', 'Clothing', 'Bags', 'Accessories', 'Brands', 'On Sale', and 'Search'. Below the menu are sub-categories: 'Women', 'Men', 'Kids', 'Gift Ideas', and 'New Styles'. Promotional banners include 'Free Shipping & Free 365 Day Returns' and '24/7 Customer Service 1-800-927-7671 (Español 1-888-927-4104)'. A search bar is present with a 'Search Zappos' button and a link to 'Search by Shoe Size'. Below the search bar, a list of 'Popular Searches' includes terms like 'shoes', 'uggs', 'nike', 'nike shoes', 'womens shoes', 'ugg boots', 'ugg', 'wide shoes', 'heelys', 'dansko', 'keen shoes', 'crocs', 'darks shoes', 'mbt shoes', 'frye boots', 'snow boots', 'cowboy boots', 'new balance', 'born shoes', 'stuart weitzman', 'dansko shoes', 'boots', 'donald pliner', 'donald pliner shoes', 'sandals', 'clothing', 'womens boots', 'leather shoes', and 'mens shoes'. The main content area is titled 'Zappos.com Core Values' and features a graphic of a white envelope labeled 'CORE VALUES'. To the right of the graphic is the text: 'We'd like to share the top 10 principles we embrace to make Zappos a better place and to serve you better.' Below this is a numbered list of 10 core values. To the right of the list is a sidebar with a 'FREE SHIPPING BOTH WAYS' banner, buttons for 'CUSTOMER TESTIMONIALS' and 'SHOP FOR LATEST STYLES', and a section titled 'Zappos.com is NOW FEATURING CLOTHING' with a list of product categories: Home, Brand List, Latest Styles, Shoes, Clothing, Bags & Luggage, Backpacks, Boots, Slippers, Accessories, Electronics, Entertainment, and Eyewear.

Zappos Sites: [Zappos.com](#) [Couture](#) [RideShop](#) [Running](#) [Outdoor](#) [Blogs](#) [Shopping Cart](#) | [My Account](#) | [My Favorites](#) | [Help](#)

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Free Shipping & Free 365 Day Returns **24/7 Customer Service 1-800-927-7671** (Español 1-888-927-4104)

Search: [Search Zappos](#) [Search by Shoe Size](#)

Popular Searches: shoes, uggs, nike, nike shoes, womens shoes, ugg boots, ugg, wide shoes, heelys, dansko, keen shoes, crocs, darks shoes, mbt shoes, frye boots, snow boots, cowboy boots, new balance, born shoes, stuart weitzman, dansko shoes, boots, donald pliner, donald pliner shoes, sandals, clothing, womens boots, leather shoes, mens shoes

Zappos.com Core Values

CORE VALUES

We'd like to share the top 10 principles we embrace to make Zappos a better place and to serve you better.

1. Deliver WOW Through Service
2. Embrace and Drive Change
3. Create Fun and A Little Weirdness
4. Be Adventurous, Creative, and Open-Minded
5. Pursue Growth and Learning
6. Build Open and Honest Relationships With Communication
7. Build a Positive Team and Family Spirit
8. Do More With Less
9. Be Passionate and Determined
10. Be Humble

FREE SHIPPING BOTH WAYS

[CUSTOMER TESTIMONIALS](#) [SHOP FOR LATEST STYLES](#)

Zappos.com is NOW FEATURING **CLOTHING**

- > [Home](#)
- > [Brand List](#)
- > [Latest Styles](#)
- > [Shoes](#)
- > [Clothing](#)
- > [Bags & Luggage](#)
- > [Backpacks](#)
- > [Boots](#)
- > [Slippers](#)
- > [Accessories](#)
- > [Electronics](#)
- > [Entertainment](#)
- > [Eyewear](#)

45190

Source: Forrester Research, Inc.

RECOMMENDATIONS

PREPARE FOR YOUR CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE JOURNEY

Whether you recognize it or not, your company has likely started its customer experience journey. Here's how you can help accelerate the path.

- **Recognize that it's a journey not a project.** We estimate that it can take two to four years to fully progress through the first three stages of EBD maturity. So the executive team needs to look at customer experience improvement as a multiyear initiative not as a short-term set of projects.
- **Take the EBD self-test.** The maturity model is not an exact description of how all companies will evolve. But it does provide a good sense of the activities that companies need to think about and the obstacles they'll want to avoid. To gauge where your firm is at in the journey, have multiple people in your company take the EBD self-test, and then discuss the implications of the results. Take the test annually to chart your progress.
- **Invest in centralized resources.** Even the most decentralized organizations will need centralized resources to facilitate enterprisewide customer experience transformation. The effort requires some people to be fully dedicated to the effort. While centralized groups should never grow too large, they can help develop common processes and metrics. These groups can also provide capabilities like process mapping, customer insight analysis, and internal communications that might not exist across all of the organizations.
- **Get HR involved.** As companies move beyond the second stage of maturity, they must address changes in their corporate culture. That's why it's critical to get the human resources organization involved in the effort. They can help permeate the changes needed to goals, incentives, training, and hiring practices.
- **Don't over-hype your experience.** Instead of telling customers how you are going to improve their experiences, do it first. There's no reason to raise expectations until you can deliver on them. Customers and employees will lose faith in anything that your company has to say. A good rule of thumb: Don't market your commitment to customer experience until you can convince employees that these proclamations are true.
- **Keep asking three questions.** One of the cornerstones of Forrester's customer experience research is Scenario Design.²⁸ This concept helps companies develop a customer-centric focus by constantly asking — and answering — three questions: Who are your target users? What are their goals? And how can you help them accomplish those goals?

WHAT IT MEANS

ONLY A FEW ORGANIZATIONS WILL FULLY MATURE

Despite a lot of effort, some companies may never get past maturity level two. Why not? Executive teams may think that customer experience is important but not recognize that it requires an enterprisewide transformational effort. And only a few companies that get past that point will make it to the final stage of maturity. So companies that are willing to sustain their efforts will likely bypass many of their competitors. But this level of long-term commitment won't be easy. It will take a dedicated, unrelenting focus from the CEO for at least three to five years.

SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIAL

User Companies Interviewed For This Document

All State Insurance	Experience Engineering	Reuters
Avenue A Razorfish	ForeSee Results	Right Now Technologies
Blast Radius	H&R Block	Royal Bank Of Canada
Cabela's	IBM Business Consulting Services	Sapient
California State Automobile Association	Intuit	Scholastic
Century Furniture	iPerceptions	SunTrust Banks
Chordiant	Jeanne Bliss	Symantec
CIGNA	Lego	UCN
Clarabridge	LRA Worldwide	Umpqua Bank
Communispace	Marks & Spencer	United Airlines
Confirmit	Microsoft	Visible Technologies
Convergys	Nielsen	Wachovia
Cymfony	One Communications	Walgreens
Deloitte Consulting	Pegasystems	Wells Fargo
Edward Jones	ResponseTek	Zappos

Methodology

For this report, we interviewed a wide group of organizations. While we used their insights to develop a five-stage maturity model, each company's journey varies somewhat from this archetypical model. Throughout this document, we've selected examples that are illustrative of specific activities, but we did not attempt to assess the EBD maturity level of any of the organizations we interviewed. Since companies are likely to exhibit behaviors that cross over more than one level of maturity, the appearance of a company within an example does not imply that the company is at that level.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Forrester asked nearly 5,000 consumers about their interactions with a variety of companies, gauging the usefulness, usability, and enjoyability of those experiences. Based on these consumer responses, we calculated the Customer Experience Index for 112 firms in nine different industries. Led by Costco, Borders, and Barnes & Noble, retailers dominated the top of the rankings. But on average, there's a lot of room for improvement: Only 10% of the firms wound up with "excellent" ratings — and 21% were "poor" or "very poor." See the November 21, 2007, "[The Customer Experience Index, 2007](#)" report.
- ² With more access to information, more sensitivity to price, and less sensitivity to advertising, customers are getting harder to win and keep. Organizations try to woo these empowered consumers with mediocre customer experiences — but it won't work. Firms need to dramatically raise the bar on the customer experience they provide. How? By adopting what Forrester calls Experience-Based Differentiation (EBD). This enterprisewide effort focuses on three principles: obsess about customer needs; reinforce brands with every interaction; and treat customer experience as a competence, not a function. To succeed with EBD, firms must commit to a multiyear journey. That's why firms need to make this one of their top corporate initiatives. See the January 2, 2007, "[Experience-Based Differentiation](#)" report.
- ³ Companies often compete with each other by squeezing new features into their offerings. Over time, this process of continuous enhancement can lead to products and services with more capabilities than most customers need. How many Microsoft Word customers, for instance, use macros? When the offerings in a market get overly complex, there's an opportunity for one or more firms to disrupt the market by stripping away features and creating a highly simplified offering. See the December 7, 2006, "[Five Disruptive Customer Experience Strategies](#)."
- ⁴ To gauge these firms' overall progress toward Experience-Based Differentiation, we input responses from 287 large North American firms into Forrester's EBD self-test. Across all three principles of EBD, 12% or less of companies ended up with an excellent rating and the largest percentage were characterized as having major flaws. See the February 19, 2008, "[The State Of Experience-Based Differentiation](#)" report.
- ⁵ For this report, we interviewed a wide group of organizations. While we used their insights to develop a five-stage maturity model, each company's journey varies somewhat from this archetypical model. Throughout this document, we've selected examples that are illustrative of specific activities, but we did not attempt to assess the EBD maturity level of any of the organizations we interviewed. Since companies are likely to exhibit behaviors that cross over more than one level of maturity, the appearance of a company within an example does not imply that the company is at that level.

- ⁶ To find out how far firms are along the path to Experience-Based Differentiation (EBD), we asked 287 customer experience decision-makers about their firms' capabilities in the three key areas of EBD: 1) Obsess about customer needs; 2) reinforce brands with every interaction; and 3) treat customer experience as a competence, not a function. It turned out that most firms, especially larger firms, received poor ratings in our EBD self-test. See the February 19, 2008, "[The State Of Experience-Based Differentiation](#)" report.
- ⁷ As many firms take on corporatewide efforts to improve customer experience, more of them are establishing positions like chief customer officer or SVP of customer experience — that we collectively call the chief customer/experience officer (CC/EO). To understand what it takes to be a successful CC/EO, we interviewed executives from a variety of firms that currently have those positions. Their insights fell into five categories: 1) Make sure that you've got the right environment; 2) prepare to take on a broad change agenda; 3) establish a strong operating structure; 4) kick off high-priority activities; and 5) look ahead to the future. See the October 3, 2007, "[The Chief Customer/Experience Officer Playbook](#)" report.
- ⁸ Companies are increasingly trying to improve the experiences that they deliver to customers. So should they turn to a chief customer/experience officer as part of the effort? These execs can be very valuable, but only if they are charged with the appropriate responsibilities — otherwise, they don't have any chance of success. If the CEO is intent on instituting changes and will hold all execs accountable, then a CC/EO can help as a change agent. But if the plan is to make the CC/EO responsible for customer experience, then the company would be better off without creating this position. See the November 2, 2006, "[Considering A Chief Customer/Experience Officer?](#)" report.
- ⁹ Many companies say that they don't have a good connection with customers. That's why firms should consider developing a systematic approach for incorporating the needs of customers into the design of customer experiences; what Forrester calls a voice of the customer (VoC) program. Successful VoC programs will incorporate listening, interpreting, responding, and monitoring. As customer experience professionals roll out VoC programs, they should be prepared to overcome internal organizational obstacles. See the February 8, 2007, "[Building Your Voice Of The Customer Program](#)" report.
- ¹⁰ As many firms take on corporatewide efforts to improve customer experience, more of them are establishing positions like chief customer officer or SVP of customer experience — that we collectively call the chief customer/experience officer. To understand what it takes to be a successful CC/EO, we interviewed executives from a variety of firms that currently have those positions. Their insights fell into five categories: 1) Make sure that you've got the right environment; 2) prepare to take on a broad change agenda; 3) establish a strong operating structure; 4) kick off high-priority activities; and 5) look ahead to the future. See the October 3, 2007, "[The Chief Customer/Experience Officer Playbook](#)" report.
- ¹¹ Net Promoter has become a popular way to measure customer satisfaction and loyalty. But as with any single measurement, it doesn't tell the entire story. To put a Net Promoter Score — or any customer metric — into action, companies need to analyze it alongside other insights, operational metrics, and ongoing customer improvement efforts. See the February 2, 2007, "[Net Promoter Scores: Good, But Not Enough](#)" report.
- ¹² The four P's are no longer an effective model for marketing organizations. Mass media is challenged to reach customers effectively, while emerging channels and technology increasingly shift power away from

brands. Today, customer-centric marketing is the new model for marketing effectiveness. But to make customer centricity real, marketers must implement best practices in metrics, culture, and technology. See the July 25, 2007, "[Best Practices: Customer-Centric Marketing](#)" report.

- ¹³ Many companies say that they don't have a good connection with customers. That's why firms should consider developing a systematic approach for incorporating the needs of customers into the design of customer experiences; what Forrester calls a voice of the customer (VoC) program. Successful VoC programs will incorporate listening, interpreting, responding, and monitoring. As customer experience professionals roll out VoC programs, they should be prepared to overcome internal organizational obstacles. See the February 8, 2007, "[Building Your Voice Of The Customer Program](#)" report.
- ¹⁴ The focus on process change is shown in the title given to the leader of customer experience at One Communications: EVP, Kaizen & Customer Experience. Kaizen is a term meaning continuous process improvement.
- ¹⁵ In 2004, Credit Suisse was struggling with poor customer satisfaction results and a lack of clear differentiation from its competitors. Enter a fledgling customer experience group started by three committed and passionate customer experience believers who, using a series of innovative and practical tactics, produced millions of dollars worth of cost savings, increased branch ATM usage, won multiple awards, and — most important of all — helped change the way that Credit Suisse thought about customer experience design. See the May 27, 2008, "[Case Study: How Credit Suisse Made Customer Experience Matter](#)."
- ¹⁶ The four P's are no longer an effective model for marketing organizations. Mass media is challenged to reach customers effectively, while emerging channels and technology increasingly shift power away from brands. Today, customer-centric marketing is the new model for marketing effectiveness. But to make customer centricity real, marketers must implement best practices in metrics, culture, and technology. See the July 25, 2007, "[Best Practices: Customer-Centric Marketing](#)" report.
- ¹⁷ Lego also gets feedback from its Kids Inner Circle, a community of more than 4,000 active Lego users between the ages of eight and 13.
- ¹⁸ An obvious, but often overlooked, tenet of customer centricity is listening to customers. Del Monte leverages technology to listen to a wider range of customers and uses customer input to influence product development and drive more customer-focused marketing communications. The company uses brand monitoring to uncover general needs and a private virtual community to drill down into specific issues. See the June 19, 2007, "[Case Study: Del Monte Listens With Customer-Centric Technology](#)" report.
- ¹⁹ Consumers are still left out of new product development — despite two facts: 1) An estimated 80% of new products still fail, and 2) digital technologies present an open door to learning what consumers want and need. Marketers must take the lead on integrating the customer into the new product development process on three critical dimensions: discovery, design, and deployment. To spearhead their internal process innovation, marketing leaders should get CEO buy-in to appoint a Consumer-Driven Innovation champion. See the August 27, 2008, "[CDI: Defined But Not Adopted](#)" report.
- ²⁰ In the past eight years, Monster has expanded into more than 50 countries on four continents through an aggressive acquisition program. Even as Monster focused on platform integration, go-to-market

strategies, and infrastructure, it neglected user experience as a discipline — a growing pain that had to be addressed. Under a new product and technology leadership team, the company has undertaken a rigorous process for adopting user-centered design tools and for creating a collaborative development environment. See the August 26, 2008, “Case Study: How Monster Puts UX At The Heart Of Its New Global Product Development Strategy” report.

- ²¹ USAA consistently wins accolades for superior customer service. The insurer was founded by members for their own mutual benefit, which has engendered a best practice customer-centric culture. While competitors look to cut costs by reducing direct customer contact, USAA encourages its members to phone in and prepares its service reps for the interactions. As a result, member loyalty fuels consistent annual growth of USAA’s asset and member bases. See the June 22, 2007, “Case Study: USAA Drives Fierce Loyalty With Its Customer-Centric Culture” report.
- ²² Marketers spend significant dollars to promote their brands. However, if employees aren’t aligned with and rallied around that brand, then delivery of the brand promise is broken, leading to suboptimal customer experiences, missed opportunities for brand differentiation, and even customer defection. A first step in building internal brand advocacy is the assessment of the current level of brand engagement of employees. See the April 22, 2008, “Stimulate Employee Brand Advocacy” report.
- ²³ For more information about Ritz-Carlton’s service values and other parts of its “Gold Standards,” go to: <http://corporate.ritzcarlton.com/en/about/goldstandards.htm>.
- ²⁴ During the initial training of new employees, Zappos offers a \$1,000 bonus to any of the new employees who are willing to quit. That way they only keep employees that really “buy in” to the Zappos culture. Tony Hsieh, the Zappos CEO, told us that he was considering raising the amount of the payment because he did not feel that enough people were taking the company up on the offer.
- ²⁵ For more information see Microsoft’s Channel 9 (<http://channel9.msdn.com/>).
- ²⁶ For more information about Phillip Pullman, visit his Web site (<http://www.philip-pullman.com/>).
- ²⁷ In the late 1990s, the UK’s Nationwide Building Society faced a challenge — many members were pushing the institution toward demutualization. Nationwide rebuffed this move by improving its customers’ experience — changing its products, pricing, marketing, and customer relationship management (CRM). In a market where customers are increasingly cynical about and distrustful of financial services providers, Nationwide stands out as a customer advocate that tries to do what’s best for its customers. Nationwide’s practices include continuously tracking and acting on customer feedback, using predictive analytics to power service messages, and creating internal marketing campaigns. See the August 15, 2007, “The UK’s Nationwide Puts Its Members First” report.
- ²⁸ Firms need a disciplined approach to customer experience. Forrester recommends that companies adopt Scenario Design, a concept built on a simple assumption: No experience is inherently good or bad; it can only be judged by looking at how well it helps customers achieve their goals. This approach requires companies to continually ask — and answer — three questions: Who are your users? What are their goals? And how can you help them achieve those goals? See the July 19, 2004, “Scenario Design: A Disciplined Approach To Customer Experience” report.

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