



## **Customer Experience Insights**

### **The Number One Quality of Customer Experience Leadership**

***By Jeffrey Bean, based on his book: *The Customer Experience Revolution - How Companies Like Apple, Amazon, and Starbucks Have Changed Business Forever****

#### **Commitment**

If you were to listen to a discussion about customer experience leadership among many of the leaders at “experience maker companies,” what would be the first quality you would notice common to all of them? It would likely be their total commitment to continuously be determining, developing and delivering valuable customer experiences above all else. This commitment starts at the very top and is an integral part of the culture throughout the company.

This commitment to customer experience leadership embraces the entire customer experience continuum. It includes the interactions people have with and about the company’s messages, processes, people, products, and services.

Next you would notice that customer experience leaders agree on when the customer experience starts. It begins before people are customers, when they first interact with part of the customer continuum.

At Amazon, Jeff Bezos’s strategy has been to determine what the customer wants, and then find people who have the skills to develop it and deliver it with an extraordinary experience along the entire customer experience continuum. Bezos’s philosophy is that a company is not defined by its technology, processes, or people, but by its customers.

#### **Delivering an extraordinary experience - more important than delivering on time**

Another quality of customer experience leadership is the priority of providing people extraordinary experiences over internal production or promotion schedules. According to Larry Tesler, who worked alongside Steve Jobs as Apple’s Vice President and Chief Scientist, “Whether it was positioning the marketing message, customer service and support, or upgrades and repairs, Steve Jobs usually said, ‘delay the product so you can fix it.’”

#### **Customer experience specific measures**

The leaders have metrics that are specific to customer experience. These measures are separate from economic, market and efficiency indicators. Customer experience leaders typically measure activated advocacy: the percentage of their customer base that is actively selling for them, usually by sharing their experiences with others. This is different from the customer satisfaction metric that measures if a customer would recommend. Dell transitioned from economic to customer experience measures when it changed the metric of call center success from number of calls handled by each person per day to the number of customer problems solved. Short term measures of success were sacrificed for long term success with positive impact on other “experience specific” measures.

### **Customer experience lifecycles: Rejuvenate or Innovate?**

Like product and services, customer experiences have a lifecycle. Customer experience leaders know that there is a time in the lifecycle of a customer experience to decide whether to rejuvenate it or innovate a completely new customer experience. Rejuvenation makes the experience relevant and valuable again with most of the existing pieces people interact with like the messages, processes, people, products, and services.

There will also come a time when the economics, changes in customer behavior, competitive pressures or technological advances indicate it's best to leave the past behind, or plan to replace it, and innovate an all new customer experience. This means departing from the present messages, processes, people, products and services to determine, develop and deliver a completely new customer experience. Netflix, Intuit, Apple, Amazon, and Starbucks are well known examples of customer experience leaders who have had to make difficult decisions whether to refresh or replace a customer experience. All the leaders have lost their way for a short time. The best learn from their missteps and recover quickly.

### **Where do customer experience leaders come from?**

Many of the best were focused on customer experience from the beginning, including Starbucks, Amazon, BMWs [MINI](#), Intuit, Google, and Apple. Others made the transition from leading with products or services to [profitably differentiating](#) with hard to copy customer experience like retail kiosk maker EMN8.

Some companies, facing a market transitioned from products, pricing, features, and services to experience are faced with being marginalized or eliminated. If they are to come back, they need to quickly learn to be a customer experience leader. Blackberry, Nokia and Yahoo are in that position now. Yahoo hired Marissa Mayer from Google as their new CEO. Will [hiring the top people](#) from an experience maker work? This is one to watch.

Start-up [Tesla Motors](#) has customer experience as a priority from the beginning. Its Apple-influenced stores, with design overseen by former Apple executive [George Blankenship](#), plays a critical role in the overall customer experience to attract and engage affluent buyers.

Whether customer experience is in a company from the start or is obtained through thoughtful and good executive transition, total commitment to continuously be determined to develop and deliver valuable customer experiences must be the result for effective and sustainable customer experience leadership.

