

Customer experience trumps product and price in 2020

With the new year already well on its way, South African business leaders will be looking to claw any advantage they can over their competitors. Nathalie Schooling, CEO of customer experience specialists nlighten, urges companies to prioritise CX spend this year, and shares five simple steps to get started.



Nathalie Schooling

[Research shows](#) that 2020 is the year in which customer experience (CX) will overtake price and product as the key brand differentiator. So compelling is the appeal, that a joint Econsultancy and Adobe study found that 86% of buyers are willing to pay more for a great customer experience.

“As we enter the new decade, it’s important for businesses to realise that they are going to be left behind if they are product-centric. Investing in smart technology can make for a great product and selling point but boosts in sales will be short-lived if you are not taking steps to consider the holistic customer journey and user experience,” says Schooling.



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While budgets may limit the extent to which local brands can take advantage of this shift, here are five areas they can start addressing to win customers’ affection.

1. You can’t manage what you don’t measure

Measuring how satisfied your customers are is vital, but what’s even more important is understanding the context. What this means is that any customer feedback mechanisms should attempt to build your understanding of what your customers want, as well as what they expect.

Brands can implement simple direct-feedback mechanisms to harvest customer opinions, or through unbiased third-party providers who offer this service.

2. The devil is in the detail

You can only fix what you know is broken in your customer experience. And the best way to gain that knowledge is to understand what it's like doing business with you from the start to finish – at every single touchpoint.

Armed with this information, you can create a customer journey map. This tool should then be used to track customers' experience, and constantly refine that experience to ensure that it consistently meets their expectations.

3. Be clear and bold

This may come as a surprise, but not all your clients are aware of your unique value proposition. It is therefore essential that you clearly articulate to them why they should rather do business with you rather than your competitors.

It should not be taken for granted that your customers are aware of this, and the best way to reinforce this is to communicate this internally first. Armed with this knowledge, your staff are better able to communicate this to clients and thereby win their loyalty.

4. Build a CX culture

Which brings us to probably the most effective, and least costly way to ensure that your customers receive a consistently high-quality experience – communication. Only if everyone in your organisation understands their role in ensuring that your customers' expectations are met (possibly even exceeded) can you be assured of CX success.

You can achieve that through ongoing internal communication, training programmes (especially during onboarding of new staff), leading from the front by management and reward and recognition programmes.

5. Keep at it

Building great customer experiences and engraining that into your organisation's culture takes commitment to continually improving. And it takes time – this won't happen overnight.

Creating a business that differentiates by understanding what customers want and need is an iterative, ongoing process that adapts as people change and their needs and wants change.