Enhancing Customer Communications

The benefits of Total Experience Management

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Abstract

"Consumer technology empowerment has elevated customer experience to the forefront of our customers strategic objectives, making Total Experience (TX) vital for holistic interaction optimization."

**Ralph de Geest,
Canon Netherlands**

Consumers steeped in an age of proliferating technology offering instant access to goods and services online have inherited immense buying power and have helped to propel customer experience to the forefront of nearly every organization's key strategic objectives. In order to provide a holistic and consistent experience across the entire lifecycle, many businesses and institutions are now working to get a handle on **Total Experience (TX)** so they can examine the complete set of interactions within and between their employees and their customers or constituents. In this paper, we'll examine the impact TX can have on both businesses and consumers, explore the potential benefits of its adoption, and highlight some key areas organizations should focus on when adjusting their strategies for effective interaction.

Introduction to Total Experience (TX)

Aspire defines Customer Communications Management (CCM) as the creation, management, and fulfillment of data-driven, omni-channel customer communications at scale. This market has undergone an increasingly radical metamorphosis as consumer expectations of instant access to relevant, personalized information have made customer experience (CX) an increasingly important metric in business communications. As a result, enterprise communication priorities have shifted from a myopic focus on minimizing cost and risk to now include efforts to increase business value through improved customer experience. The overall market effect has been to transform CCM into Customer Experience Management (CXM), or the practice of managing all interactions that a business conducts with its customers with the express goal of improving the perception that customers have about that business. In order to
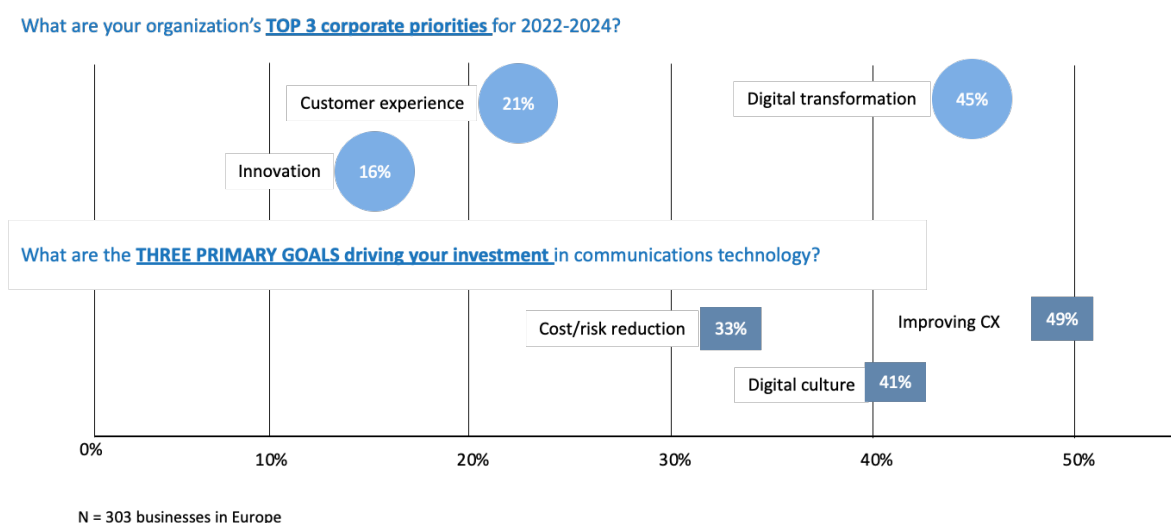
fulfill the ultimate promise of this evolution from CCM to CXM, businesses must transition from sending static messages triggered by regulatory obligations to carrying on a conversation with customers through bi-directional, omni-channel interactions based on their needs and calibrated to their preferences.

While this evolution has been progressing since at least the first decade of the 21st century, a spike in digital adoption in 2020 and the accompanying market disruption have brought the promise of CXM closer to reality and made customer communications more vital to an organization's overall success than ever before. At the same time, however, this disruption has also highlighted long-neglected deficiencies in both customer communications technology and workflow, particularly when employees are working remotely and have been physically separated from the means of production. Ironically, the elevated importance of B2C communications makes addressing these issues all the more imperative. As the figure below illustrates, businesses in Europe (and across the globe) remain focused on digital transformation and improving customer experience.

"While organizations have placed a greater focus on improving customer experience at every touchpoint, legacy technology cannot empower them to fully maximize their digital transformation journeys or support their hybrid working policies."

**Darren Rands,
Canon Europe**

Figure 1: Digital transformation and CX improvements are top concerns

What are your organization's **TOP 3 corporate priorities** for 2022-2024?

Customer experience — 21%
Digital transformation — 45%
Innovation — 16%

What are the **THREE PRIMARY GOALS driving your investment** in communications technology?

Cost/risk reduction — 33%
Improving CX — 49%
Digital culture — 41%

0%   10%   20%   30%   40%   50%

N = 303 businesses in Europe

Source: Aspire, *The State of CCM-to-CXM Transformation*, 2022

These two initiatives top the list of both the most important corporate communications priorities and the primary goals driving technology investment. Furthermore, enterprise efforts to digitally transform their communications and improve customer experience are indelibly linked. In a follow up question, respondents selected "shifting customers to digital channels" as the top tactic they use to improve customer communications experience. In other words, organizations hope to boost loyalty and ensure customer satisfaction by delivering superior digital interactions.
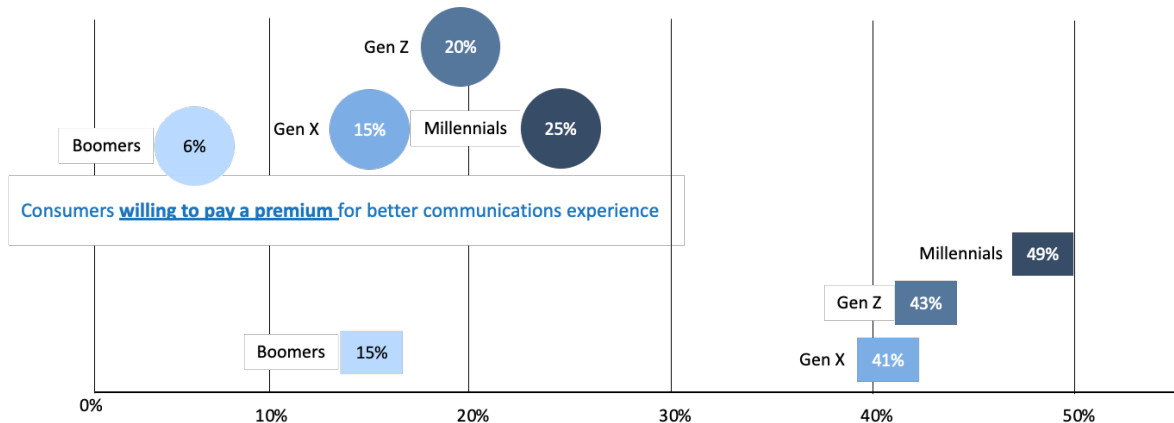
Unfortunately, while our research shows that Millennials and Gen Z (consumers aged 18 to 42 years) were in every case the most likely to embrace digital interactions following social distancing lockdowns in 2020, these younger generations were the least likely to be pleased with those interactions and they were the least likely to report that they planned to continue digitally interacting with their providers. Young customers' desire for interaction and a seamless experience is at the root of their dissatisfaction with the current state of digital communications. Moreover, our research has found that affluent consumers (who also correspond with the most technologically sophisticated respondents) demand seamless interaction across their chosen communications channels as well. But B2C communications today often do not embrace the true interaction customers expect or that digital platforms make possible, squandering these opportunities for engagement. And an ineffective approach to digital engagement can be disastrous. One in eight consumers overall (and one in four Millennials) reported that they had switched providers in the past 12 months after a negative communications experience. Furthermore, between 40% and 50% of consumers between the ages of 18 and 42 years old said that they would be willing to pay more for a better communications experience.

The young, wealthy, and tech savvy demand relevant, personalized interactions across their chosen channels. One in four consumers under the age of 42 have switched providers after a negative communications experience and half said they would be willing to pay more for better interactions.

Figure 2: Businesses that don't meet customer expectations risk losing them

Consumers who **switched providers** in the past year due to poor communications experience

Gen Z — 20%
Gen X — 15%   Millennials — 25%
Boomers — 6%

Consumers **willing to pay a premium** for better communications experience

Millennials — 49%
Gen Z — 43%
Gen X — 41%
Boomers — 15%

0%   10%   20%   30%   40%   50%

N = 2,000 consumers in the U.S. and Canada

Source: Aspire, *Understanding the New Digital Reality*, 2020

This is the unmistakable takeaway: Demographics vital to the future of any business (the young, the wealthy, and the tech savvy) will do what it takes to secure better communications. Therefore, businesses must make communications investments that will better engage customers in a holistic way or risk losing a competitive advantage and the promise of future earnings.

Components of a TX strategy

Even if companies realize the importance of providing a positive Customer Experience (CX), only a few have adopted a holistic mindset that views these interactions as part of a **Total Experience (TX)** that also considers User Experience (UX) and Employee Experience (EX) as they relate to the production, delivery, and consumption of customer communications. While any single touchpoint in isolation may frustrate or satisfy, a customer's overall experience will determine if they go on to become an advocate for your business or if they will seek out an alternative product or service.

> Customer journey maps can help businesses can a consumer-centric view from the outside into their organization.

Customer Journey Management (CJM) is the process of mapping, analyzing, and optimizing an individual customer's interactions across the life of their relationship with a company or brand. When businesses gain a proper and complete understanding of every touchpoint in relation to what the customer aims to achieve through each interaction, they can then identify and isolate opportunities to improve customer experience, streamline costs, increase competitive differentiation, and drive overall business growth. Customer journey maps plot out each touchpoint in this Total Experience, giving organizations the information they need to make conscious and informed decisions on how to manage these interactions in a cohesive and meaningful way.

How Customer Journeys apply TX to customer communications and digital experience

Journey maps helps businesses visualize the "moments of truth" specific to each touchpoint. These moments of truth are the critical elements that build the consumer's relationship with a brand. These maps – and the underlying insights they depict – enable marketers and business users to shift their perspective from a business-centered view ("inside-out") to a **customer-centric view ("outside-in")**. When contemplating customer engagement from the "inside-out", stakeholders ask themselves, "How can we best serve customers using our brand's current capabilities and available resources?" But if they have gathered enough insights to adopt a customer's view from the "outside-in", then they will instead ask, "What capabilities and resources do we need to best serve our customers?"

Over time, organizations will evolve from evaluating current-state experiences based on existing products and services to producing maps that help them brainstorm about future-state

experiences, including new product offerings or areas of the business that still need to be automated or digitally transformed. Based on the newly gained understanding, next-generation decisioning and orchestration will help brands provide richer experiences that not only meet the evolving needs of the customer but also address the internal business motives that brands are seeking to solve.

When looking from the "outside-in" and talking about customer needs as they relate to each stage along the lifecycle, the visualization typically transcends organizational functions and boundaries. This allows businesses to get a more complete picture of how customers engage with the brand, how value is delivered, where experiences may be broken, and how automated orchestration and personalization can be deployed in order to drive meaningful, cross-channel, real-time, profitable engagement. This is how journey management differs from campaign management. While campaign management's primary aim is to automate engagement for better conversion, journey management works to orchestrate a better overall Total Experience, which is inherently more valuable.
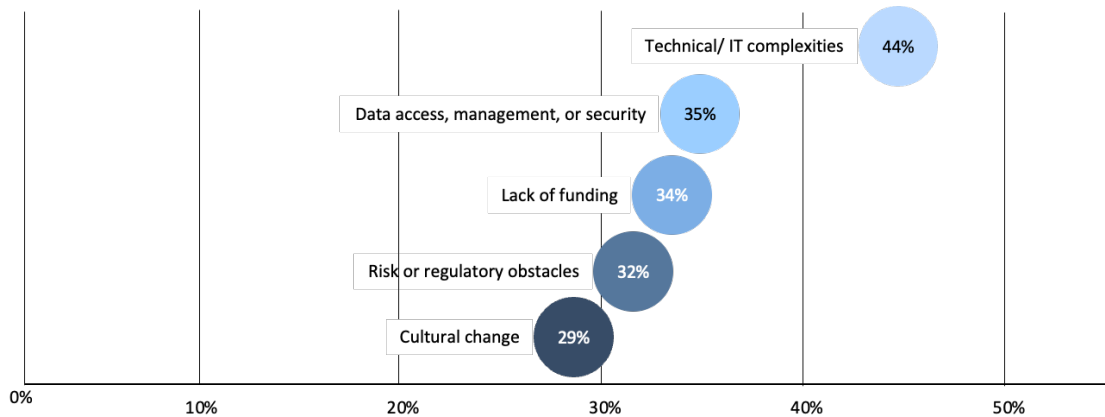
Unfortunately, many organizations are complex, functionally siloed, and they don't have the necessary organizational structure in place to make the most of customer journey maps.

An "outside-in" view can enable organizations to gain a more complete notion of how customer engage, where experiences may be broken, and how automated orchestration and personalization can drive meaningful communications across channels and touchpoints.

Figure 3: The greatest obstacle to CX improvements

What are the 5 GREATEST CHALLENGES to improving customer experience?

Technical/ IT complexities	44%
Data access, management, or security	35%
Lack of funding	34%
Risk or regulatory obstacles	32%
Cultural change	29%

0%   10%   20%   30%   40%   50%

N = 303 businesses in Europe

Source: Aspire, *The State of CCM-to-CXM Transformation*, 2022

"Many of our clients come to us working independently in silos on two or three separate platforms. By standardizing on one customer communications solution, they vastly improve collaboration and coordination between teams.

**Darren Rands,
Canon Europe**

As customers communications have become more important to the reputation and success of the businesses, a growing number of stakeholders and decision makers have emerged to play a part and have a say in the messages going out to customers. While this is still a transforming space with undefined boundaries, a successful solution for producing and perpetuating interactive communications will incorporate all these voices, define clear roles for them, and allow each stakeholder to work in tandem without running into approval bottlenecks.

But many organizations have encountered great difficulty in coordinating all of these voices into a singular message. As businesses grow and expand their reach through mergers and acquisitions, they may accumulate a variety of legacy systems that each manage separate and limited aspects of customer communications within individual silos. These disparate systems often operate independently and in ignorance of one another while the stakeholders using them compose communications without pertinent data that may be in another silo's possession and then deliver them with no knowledge of the actions of other

units. If we again refer to the figure above, we see that over time this confusion creates a snare of technologies and templates with limited integration and data sharing, fostering a culture of unclear communications ownership and a lack of coordination between teams.

Customers don't have any awareness of or interest in a brand's organizational structure or the business processes that govern interaction across silos. From the customer's perspective, there is only the result: When business units don't share data or a single view of customer and their legacy systems cannot be integrated, each silo works independently, sending irrelevant and often conflicting interactions that will negatively impact the recipient's experience and damage the business' reputation and competitive edge.

A good journey map includes every touchpoint across the entire customer lifecycle, regardless of channel or even product line, and overlays customer insights and analytics based on a single customer view. Stakeholders need a clear, complete, and concise picture of every interaction between the business and the customer and should use a standardized format to define different types of interaction. Furthermore, a common structural framework must be developed and linked to a CX lifecycle architecture ensuring that every journey can be compared against another (so it's clear where one journey ends and another begins) and aligned into a holistic, end-to-end view (from the customer's perspective).

Finally, businesses must centralize control of customer communications to ensure data is shared throughout the organization and that they speak to the customer in a unified voice. A center of excellence (CoE) overseeing these operations should have cross-functional expertise so that it can train, coach,

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and share best practices with other CX professionals in decentralized business or marketing teams. The CoE should take direction from top-level executives (e.g., Chief Experience Officer, Chief Marketing Officer) and translate it into measurable goals, metrics, and actionable improvements that transcend organizational functions. Additionally, the CoE should act as a technology hub that can provide modern SaaS capabilities across the organization or work with IT to integrate more complex systems. The CoE can also identify the need for regular updates to journey maps, flag areas of communication overload, and have content writers and UX designers who ensure that branding, navigation, tone-of-voice, and the look-and-feel of touchpoints, interactions, and communications are consistent.

The importance of customer data and its collection

To develop an effective CJM strategy, organizations need to have access to various systems of intelligence that can provide insights into customer behavior across various touchpoints. This requires the right data management strategies, as well as modern capabilities such as a data lake or Customer Data Platform (CDP). By leveraging a CDP, organizations can consolidate intelligence data from various sources such as CRM, social media, website analytics, and more. This enables them to create a unified view of customers, which is an essential element when creating effective journey maps.

Organizations must ensure their data collection methods are aligned with the overall positive experience they are working to create. Asking for too much information upfront can irritate customers and lead to higher abandonment rates. To build trust with customers, businesses should explain how their data is collected and used, and they should only ask for the information necessary to drive the next part of the customer journey. Modern forms technology leveraging intelligent customer data
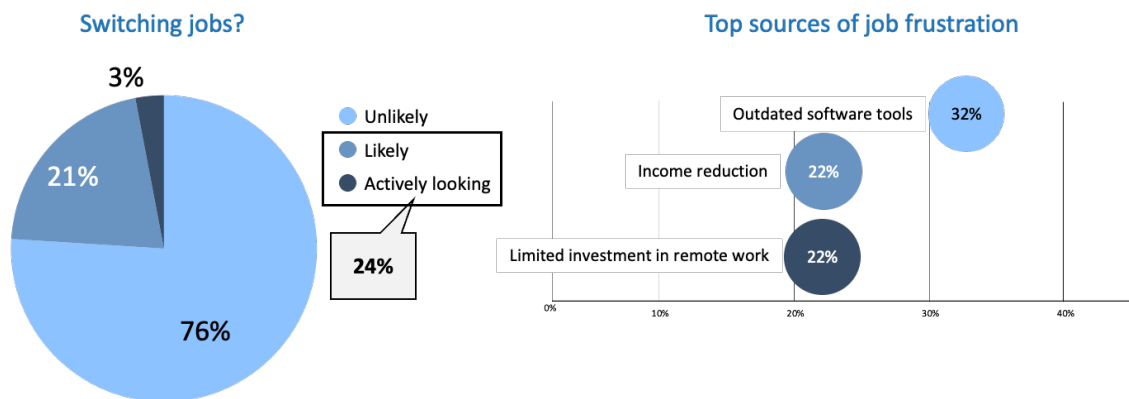
> By leveraging a CDP, organizations can consolidate intelligence data from various sources such as CRM, social media, website analytics, and more. This enables them to create a unified view of customers, which is an essential element when creating effective journey maps.

collection and processing can be helpful in this regard.

How EX impacts Customer Journeys

In the wake of social distancing lockdowns, over 90% of the businesses we surveyed reported that they had enabled or planned to enable employees to create and manage communications while working remotely. Similarly, one third of enterprise respondents named an "easy-to-operate" user interface as among their most important considerations when purchasing an online CCM platform. This is in keeping with continuing efforts to empower business users with limited technical expertise to manage communications on their own with minimal IT involvement, particularly when working remotely. Unfortunately, in 2022, a quarter of European respondents with responsibility for customer communications reported they were likely to leave their jobs or were already looking for new employment, and they overwhelmingly selected outdated software tools as their top source of job frustration.

Figure 4: Inefficient technology turns talent away

Switching jobs?

- Unlikely
- Likely
- Actively looking

3%

21%

76%

24%

Top sources of job frustration

Outdated software tools — 32%

Income reduction — 22%

Limited investment in remote work — 22%

N = 303 businesses in Europe (employees with communications responsibility)

Source: Aspire, *The State of CCM-to-CXM Transformation***, 2022**

It should be noted, however, that as organizations advance toward CXM maturity, employee experience improves alongside

customer experience. Businesses with CX teams in charge of their communications were three-to-five times more likely to retain employees.

By now, it's a well-established notion that positive customer communications experience is a vital component of overall business health, but the industry is only just beginning to understand that the experience of the employees sending communications is an equally essential element of a successful strategy. If an employee leaves and there is no unified system to manage communications, the resulting loss of experience and institutional knowledge will inevitably erode customer satisfaction as new or reassigned employees take time to learn old processes or develop new ones. These issues will be exacerbated if each business unit operates independently, walled off from vital customer data, managing its own communications independently and in ignorance of the relationships and interactions other units have with their shared customers. Sharing data and establishing centralized communications control throughout the organization will not only empower business users to do their jobs well from wherever they may be working, it will also improve employee experience by giving them the tools they need to effectively and efficiently engage customers.

> The industry is only beginning to understand that the experience of the employees sending communications is an equally essential element of a successful strategy.

How to achieve a TX approach

A Total Experience approach to customer communications management will centralize orchestration and accelerate the time to market for messaging and interactive content across all customer journeys, channels, applications, and disciplines. In order to create a consistent experience throughout the lifecycle, businesses must break down organizational silos, removing the separation between marketing and customer communications as

well as between customer acquisition and retention.

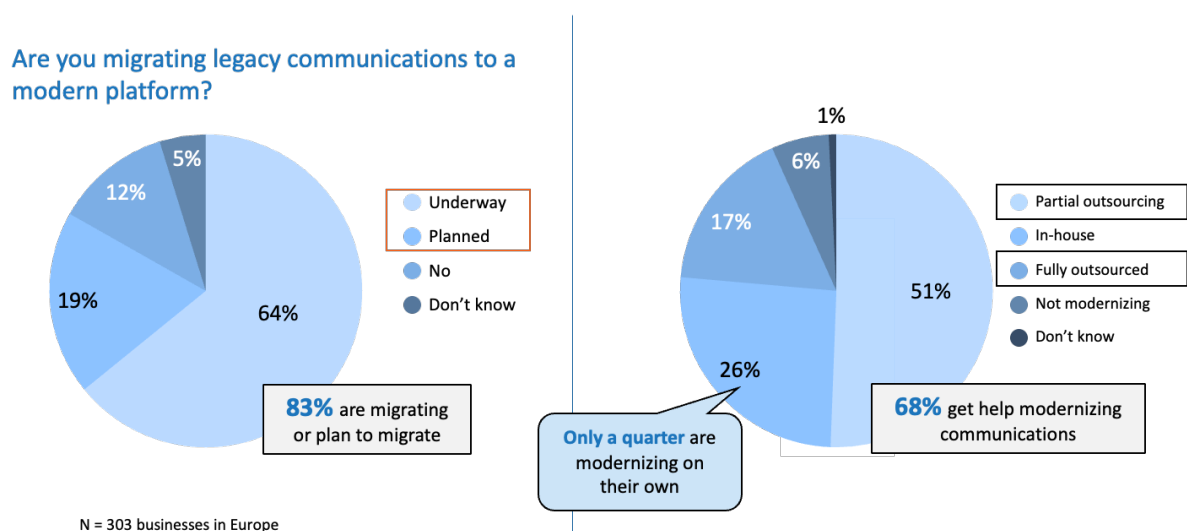**Figure 5: Connecting experiences across the lifecycle**
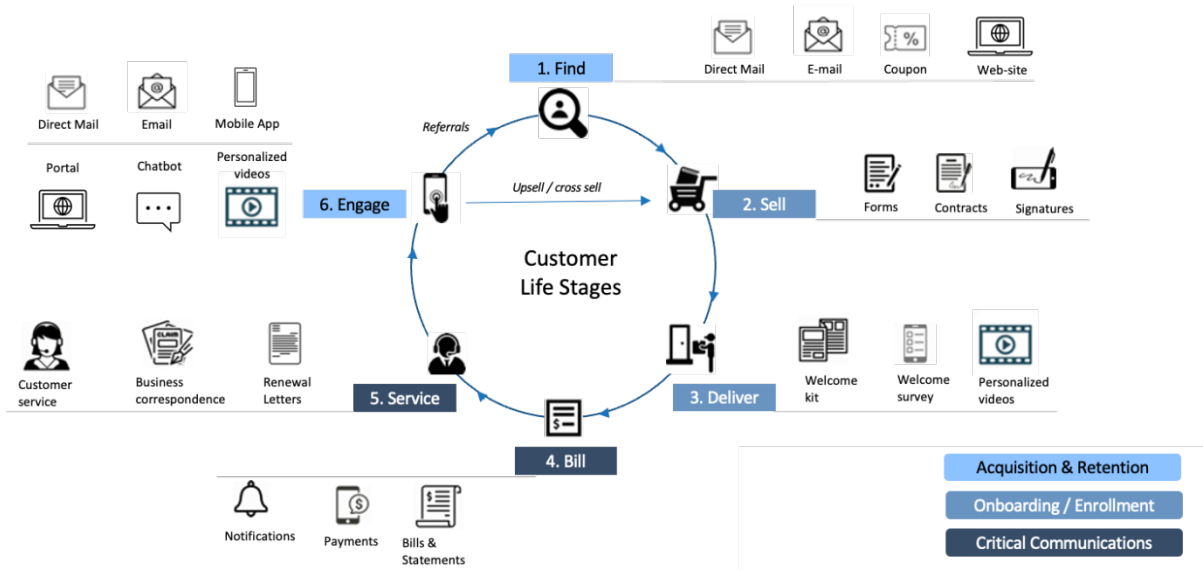
Source: Aspire, 2023

This TX approach will also empower those closest to customers and most familiar with their needs by reducing dependence on outside providers and internal IT while making it faster and easier for business users to create personalized communications. It will also expand digital transformation and overcome the limitations of legacy systems, ideally through automation, reducing costs and freeing employees from manually designing communications and templates. By reducing tedious, redundant tasks, automation will not only improve productivity and employee experience, it will also boost customer experience by eliminating human error and giving employees the freedom to practice hands-on customer care. Finally, all of these elements will work together to ensure communications reflect a customer's personal circumstances while also remaining compliant with evolving legalization and policies, doing away with the old process-driven paradigm and ushering in a customer-focused approach.

Most businesses don't have the knowledge or experience they need to accomplish these goals. Over 80% of European businesses are migrating or plan to migrate their communications away from legacy applications. Over two thirds of them will seek help from a vendor or service provider when modernizing their customer communications while only a quarter reported that they are going it alone.

Figure 6: Businesses are modernizing communications, and most rely on partners

Are you migrating legacy communications to a modern platform?

Underway
Planned
No
Don't know

5%
12%
19%
64%

83% are migrating or plan to migrate

N = 303 businesses in Europe

1%
6%
17%
51%
26%

Partial outsourcing
In-house
Fully outsourced
Not modernizing
Don't know

68% get help modernizing communications

Only a quarter are modernizing on their own

Source: The State of CCM-to-CXM Transformation, Aspire, 2022

A transformation partner can offer the technology that will enable organizations to stay ahead of increasing customer demands and an evolving market while complying with ever-changing regulations. Business users and stakeholders working in agile teams can also reach out to their consulting partner for advice and project support.

This partner will ideally provide the centralized platform that enables businesses to gather and share customer data while giving users direct access to communications workflows through the cloud. In this way, business users can automatically create

message templates in multiple channels and route delivery based on customer preferences, getting disruptive ideas and offerings to the market faster than their competitors, all with consistent branding and guaranteed compliance but without having to navigate IT bottlenecks.

Ultimately, these organizations will gain new capabilities without having to overhaul their entire system and by expanding and integrating existing solutions wherever possible. They'll also do more with less, saving time and money by reducing the need for employee involvement in tasks that are better served through automation. Next, businesses will achieve flexibility, gaining the ability to add new channels and communications as the business grows and evolves; and finally, they'll establish a competitive advantage since customer experience has become a significant differentiating factor, especially in mature markets and highly controlled regulated industries

A transformation partner can offer the technology that will enable organizations to stay ahead of increasing customer demands and an evolving market while complying with ever-changing regulations. Business users and stakeholders working in agile teams can also reach out to their consulting partner for advice and project support.

How Canon can help

Canon is a global Fortune 500 company with over 300 worldwide subsidiaries and 184,000 employees. Canon is a leader in the CCM-CXM implementation services market In Europe, the Middle East, and Africa, and it has made several investments (including acquisitions) in this effort over the last few years. With over 22,000 employees active in 120 markets, Canon Europe can call upon significant resources and manpower to deliver implementation and support services. It can as a transformation partner for both regulated and unregulated industries, supplementing client's own expertise with skilled resources. Canon also has a broad portfolio, working with more individual customer communications solutions providers than any other reseller. It has close relationships with its partners (including Quadient) and its pan-European CCM Competence Center

supports local services implementing both its own and its partners CCM technology solutions. Canon now has over a decade of experience implementing solutions at scale.

Its overall philosophy is based around the "*Kyosei*" principle, the Japanese ethic of living and working together with clients, partners, and the community for the common good. To that end, Canon Europe follows a Consultative Engagement methodology, that enables it to work closely together with clients throughout the process.

After meeting with the client to understand both key drivers and requirements, Canon identifies gaps between current IT solutions and the targeted results. It then supports clients in their digital transformation journey from CCM to CXM, using data to drive automation so as to reduce costs, preserve data privacy, and maintain regulatory and compliance. Canon then provides detailed work on the solution design, both for technical implementation and supporting services, while working to increase standardization in order to minimize maintenance and ongoing support costs. Alongside the technical solution, Canon supports customers with communications design, journey mapping, and preference management, collaborating across different line-of-business groups to drive consistent messaging to customers.

Beyond the physical deployment and implementation of the underlying technologies, Canon works with clients to create champions in the business community, allowing clients to drive acceptance of the delivered functionality and to jointly define their own responsibilities for the project. Canon's extensive experience with migrations from both legacy systems and alternative platforms enables it to help clients decide between the simpler "as-is" approach and a more complex and complete

Canon Europe's philosophy is based around the "Kyosei" principle, the Japanese ethic of living and working together with clients, partners, and the community for the common good.

redesign of the data architecture.

Canon's approach supports transformation of both in-bound data capture and outbound communications and incorporates the vision of Total Experience by ensuring data capture is in line with the overall experience businesses want to provide for their customers while also enabling organizations to gather the information they need to provide personalized interactions. Canon also the Employee Experience portion of the TX equation by putting business users in control of communications management and leveraging easy-to-use, human-centered design interfaces.

Canon invests a significant portion of sales revenue into R&D across all its portfolio of products and services. In fact, it registered over three thousand new patents in 2021. With a strong emphasis on minimizing manual touchpoints and maximizing document automation, Canon works across a range of different communication needs, linking transactional output management with marketing communications, driving clients from traditional print communications (CCM) towards personalized interactive digital experiences (CXM). For clients who have not yet made the transition to CXM, Canon leverages variable data production to reduce operational costs and drive digital transformation.

Canon's 'customer first' approach to solution implementation is centered on guiding organizations through technology selection to achieve the communication and customer experience goals that will meet the needs of the business. Canon favors using the most appropriate solution, whether it's a best-of-breed vendor tool or one of its own solutions. With experienced resources across a broad portfolio of CCM technologies, it can remain agnostic when helping customers define their solution

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requirements and strategy. Nevertheless, it is strongest when working with its close partners Quadient and Objectif Lune. Canon has been an award-winning distributor for both for over a decade. When necessary, Canon Europe can supplement vendor platforms with its own software components, such as SysHub, to provide low-code integration capabilities.

Final Recommendations

Aspire's proprietary research tells us that organizations taking a holistic approach to communications design drive better integrated experiences and grow revenues 41% faster than siloed businesses. We also know that for many large, complex organizations, the shift to Total Experience requires small, incremental steps rather than one big "rip-and-replace" project. Therefore, we believe businesses should take the time to plan out their next steps and identify "quick wins" that will deliver fast results and provide organizational momentum to take on more complex changes, including those that require organizational redesign.

An AMA offers a comprehensive evaluation of an organization's communications management strategy, workflow, and mindset so that stakeholders can better understand their current capabilities, identify areas for growth, and chart a customer-centric path.

1. **Take a snapshot of your current communications management practices and formulate a plan to achieve your desired state**. Maturity assessments, like Aspire's Maturity Assessment (AMA), are useful tools in this regard, combining market research and industry best practices to present a series of questions that determine an enterprise's place along a maturity curve from simple, reactive communications management to proactive and interactive Customer Experience Management. An assessment offers a comprehensive evaluation of an organization's communications management strategy, workflow, and mindset so that stakeholders can better understand their current

capabilities, identify areas for growth, and chart a path towards customer-centric excellence.

2. **Make the TX journey insightful and measurable by creating meaningful metrics that will help you view customer interactions from the "outside-in"**. To measure the effectiveness of a TX strategy, businesses must have the right metrics in place. This requires organizations to identify the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) most relevant to their business goals. These KPIs should be based on a clear understanding of the customer journey and the interaction touchpoints that matter most to customers. While it's easy to feel overwhelmed by the number of KPIs applicable to the CX field, when thinking about how customer experience contributes to overall business success, it helps to break the total experience down into smaller insights based on the company's unique goals and all the different parts of the customer journey. In this way, a business can develop a goal-oriented approach to determine which KPIs are better suited to measure its performance. Businesses should also consider adopting KPIs that will measure Employee Experience, particularly where it intersects with the strategies and methods that are critical to driving improvements in TX.

> It can help to break the total experience down into smaller insights based on an organization's unique goals and all the different parts of the customer journey.

3. **Look at tooling and how to manage interactions**. CXM software solutions help drive CX improvements through personalization, consistent multichannel experiences, faster time to market, improved compliance and consistency, automated workflows, as well as real-time monitoring and analytics. However, to achieve the maximum benefits, an organization must select and implement the right CCM/CXM software based on its

> To achieve maximum benefit, an organization must select and implement the right CCM/CXM software based on its specific needs and its desired goals.

specific needs and its desired goals.

4. **Engage the relevant expertise**. Successful TX transformation requires a combination of skill and expertise spanning a wide spectrum, from operational strategy to complex integration with business systems and processes alongside diligent change management. To ensure a successful outcome, organizations without the relevant experience to holistically address these concerns using internal resources should engage external partners with the right breadth of capabilities and a proven record.

Organizations without the relevant experience to holistically address the wide spectrum of CCM concerns using internal resources should engage external partners.

About Canon

Canon Europe is a globally trusted and financially stable European services partner. With decades of delivery experience and award-winning strong reseller partnerships with key CCM technology vendors, it offers customers deep expertise across the Customer Experience solutions spectrum and it also boasts broader capabilities in process management and orchestration.

About Aspire

Aspire is a global analyst and market research firm providing independent insight and trusted advice to the Customer Communications Management (CCM) and Customer Experience Management (CXM) industries. Aspire empowers Enterprises, CCM/CXM Software, Services and Solution providers, and Business Advisories and Private Equity Firms, with unbiased guidance and actionable insights delivered through a variety of highly specialized services.

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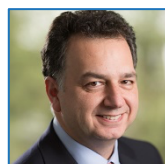
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