Workshop on
Customer Experience Management
> Strategy > Research > Technology > Branding
December 5 & 6, 2013, The Sheraton Park Hotel and Towers, Chennai

Custommerce Service Excellence Foundation conducted a Workshop on "Customer Experience Management" covering the four modules, namely, Strategy, Research, Technology and Branding on 5th and 6th of December 2013 at The Sheraton Park Hotel and Towers, Chennai. The faculty members were Directors of Custommerce. The participants were from various companies - ADP India, EICL, Indian Overseas Bank, Klüber Lubrication, L&T Finance, L&T General Insurance, Servion Global Solutions, Thomas Assessments, Titan, Toyota Kirloskar, TVS Automobile Solution, Tube Investments of India, Univercell and Y- Cash Software Solutions. A short summary of the presentations by the faculty is reproduced below.

Ramesh Venkateswaran: Ramesh introduced the topic of Customer Experience Management (CEM) by highlighting that when a sale or service delivery takes place it is between two people, though machines and technology may facilitate the process. He emphasized that CEM should cover the entire gamut of pre-sale, during-sale and post-sale. The word 'sale' includes 'service' / 'consumption' in the case of service products like banking, telecom, hotels and airlines. Each of these stages offer companies scope to differentiate their product / service delivery and build competitive advantage. He set the context by identifying the four components of purchase when a customer buys a product or service, namely, (1) Core product / service, (2) Augmented product / service – additional services like registration for cars, (3) Service environment – they influence the perceptions about the product and (4) Service experience during the transaction. He quoted from various studies to get across the points along with lot of real life examples. To highlight the importance of CEM, he reiterated "Product quality is necessary but not a sufficient condition for success; if there is no product quality, failure is guaranteed; success is not guaranteed unless the customer experience is good." He gave the example of companies like Apple which wish to have a greater control of the delivery chain to enhance the customer experience. He explained the problems arising from the four gaps, namely, (a) Gaps in understanding customer expectations, (b) Gaps in setting service standards, (c) Gaps in service delivery and (d) Gaps in communicating internally and externally (Gaps Model postulated by Dr. Parasuraman).

C. K. Sharma: CK covered about issues relating to benchmarking and measuring customer experience – what needs to be measured, how it needs to be measured, how it can be measured and the pitfalls while undertaking this exercise. Customers' brand experience is a critical input to satisfaction and loyalty. The customer experiences the brand through multiple channels and at different stages of the buying process, and hence care needs to be taken while undertaking a measurement exercise. He also touched up on researchers dilemmas like customer's brand or broader market, continuous or event based, sample size, third party or in-house, etc. CK made an in-depth presentation on CINDEX – an independent study by Custommerce to benchmark Customer Experience across 8 verticals, namely, airlines, bank cards, lifestyle retail, two-wheelers, GSM mobile Handsets, GSM prepaid mobile Services, GSM postpaid mobile services and savings bank accounts. He explained that the index was based on five parameters, namely, Satisfaction, Loyalty, Advocacy, Value for Money and Expectation. The various ways the results can be interpreted using CINDEX, DS – Delight Score, TQ – Top Quartile and BQ – Bottom Quartile. He also explained how CINDEX can be used by different levels of the management by using demographic variables like age, size of town, zones, etc. He took a live example of a vertical and explained the various scores and how companies can use them. It is also useful to benchmark across verticals as customers are doing this all the time by demanding the level of service offered in one industry, say hospitality and expecting it in another industry like Telecom or banking.

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Ramanujam Sridhar: Sridhar talked about branding issues and opportunities for companies to enhance the value of the brand by delivering a great customer experience. He explained about the tangible and intangible attributes of the brand and the opportunities it throws up, since lot of decisions are emotional decisions though they may look rational choices. He gave various definitions of 'branding'. Since branding is about knowing customer expectations and exceeding them, it requires that companies try and understand what those customer expectations are. He also explained the concept of "the lifetime value of the customer" and illustrated it with examples. He emphasized the need to manage the image of the brand as portrayed in the media. This has become all the more important since today's customer has the power of broadcasting using the social media which has a very wide reach. This requires that the companies constantly monitor the social media buzz to understand customer woes and address them. If done well it can work to a great advantage to a company. Large companies do not have a choice but to monitor this space.

Shankaran Nair G.: Shankaran covered the Technology Module where he talked about issues surrounding technology selection and deployment. Should decisions in the selection process be 'technology-led' or 'use-led'? He emphasized the need to be 'use-led' as this leads to greater chance of success of the project. To illustrate the point he gave the example of the Obama care launch in the US and how the website was plagued with many difficulties as the technology team did not size and design appropriately for the big day. He used this example to illustrate the need for organizations of any size to design technology in line with the need and that scale of technology deployment has very little to do with success. He further worked on developing a model for technology adoption in an organization with the participants. The model explained the challenges faced by an organization and how it could be addressed. The final framework took into account 'brand strategy' all the way through to the 'measurement process'. The challenges and considerations of each stage were also discussed.

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Custommerce Service Excellence Foundation is a not-for-profit organization striving to create a customer experience driven, globally competitive Indian economy.

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Send your feedback to Biron D'Souza (Email: biron@custommerce.org, Ph:+91-44-61084280).