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CONTINUUM

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# Customer Experience Jenga

by Lynn Hunsaker

Do we manage customer experience strategy like playing Jenga? (Jenga® is the game with a stack of blocks where players take turns to remove one and balance it on top.)

The game is supposed to start with a robust foundation, and in the quest to rise to new heights, holes are made to re-allocate resources, weakening the structure until it topples over.

As a Forrester study<sup>1</sup> discovered: “Despite 90% of respondents saying that CX is a top strategic priority for their firm, a shocking 86% said their companies don’t actually expect to get much value from it.”

In managing customer experience (CX), new heights are attempted by betting the farm on shiny silver bullets such as artificial intelligence, digital marketing, NPS®, CRM, predictive analytics, and other customer engagement methods. These endeavors are often referred to as a customer experience management strategy, yet they are often more about what we want customers to do for us rather than how we can adapt to be organically magnetic to customers.

It’s not a full customer experience strategy if it lacks the essential building blocks that will logically win customers’ hearts for the long-term. Don’t throw the baby out with the bathwater – break away from the Jenga-like trends to establish the right building blocks.

## 1st Jenga move: Coordination gaps

From the get-go, we're cutting corners with communication gaps between managers of various customer experience processes (e.g. CRM, surveys, references, user experience, loyalty).

A ClearAction study showed that although coordination among those who manage different aspects of CX is not yet common, the companies that do coordinate formally do have stronger business results tied to CX<sup>2</sup>. In fact, correlation analyses indicate that some of the least common practices are indeed the most lucrative<sup>2</sup>.

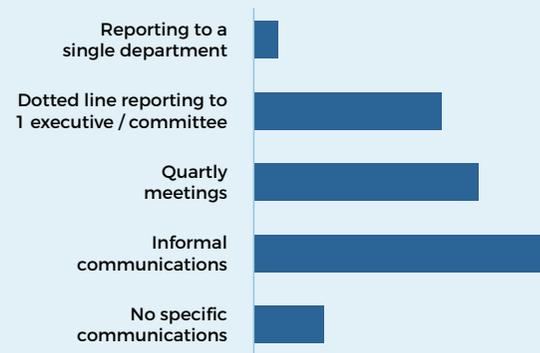
Think about it: the customer experience journey is horizontal across a company's organizations and processes. If those who manage different parts of customer experience across the company don't talk regularly with one another, how can we expect to excel? This conundrum is especially apparent in an omni-channel world (a seamless experience regardless of how customers want to interface with us). How can we expect solid relationships with customers (as implied by CRM and loyalty programs) if we aren't fully managing the holistic customer experience?

## 2nd Jenga move: Intention gaps

We start with a rickety foundation when we don't set the tone for transforming processes, policies and mindsets before collecting customer feedback or mapping customer journeys and touch-points, or beginning any other aspect of CX management.

A minority (only 5-15%) of organizations seeks to transform business-as-usual to truly customer-centric operations<sup>3</sup>. This lack of intention to mold the company's processes, policies, and mindsets

### Managers of CX efforts coordinate via:



to build-in customer experience excellence causes severe structural weaknesses in the quest to achieve financial results.

Most executives place greater emphasis on stock market pressures, industry analysts' recommendations, internal politics, and management's instincts than they place on customer inputs.<sup>2</sup> This may reflect the breadth of usable content from customer surveys relative to what's needed to inform management's decision-making.

It's not yet common practice to treat CX management as an influencer of major decisions and as a competitive differentiator, nor to deploy CX strategy company-wide<sup>2</sup>.

## 3rd Jenga move: Engagement gaps

Other critical holes that make our customer experience management a lot like a game of Jenga revolve around lack of widespread employee engagement in managing their impact on CX excellence.

There's a snowball effect from the remotest

corners of a company, as hand-offs and deliverables successively impact the internal value-building chain until customer-facing employees, and customers themselves, feel the brunt of it all. Systemic resolution of root issues to prevent recurrence for all customers is what will move the needle the most in CX business results.

Don't be duped into lipstick-on-a-pig thinking; make sure the substance (employee engagement in quality of product, service, experience) is in full swing before focusing on sizzle (customer engagement).

Cross-functional collaboration must become a way of life, breaking down silos, minimizing customer pain and employee pain, and cleverly creating value that causes customers to be naturally enthusiastic about buying again, buying more, and telling everyone they know how wonderful your company is. To do this, change management, organizational learning, quality tools (e.g. six sigma/lean, Pareto, fishbone analyses, etc.), and systems thinking are absolute musts in every CX strategy.

## C5 + I2 + E2 overcomes Jenga



To avoid a rickety foundation, make sure you have a complete customer experience strategy in-play from the outset of your game and ongoing:

### With the right inputs – C5:

1. Customer-focused corporate strategy (e.g. nothing at odds with customers' priorities)
2. Customer-centricity in your structure and rituals (e.g. reviews, planning, budgeting)
3. Customer voice (e.g. surveys, user groups, customer-initiated contact)
4. Customer intelligence (e.g. connecting the dots between data sources)

5. Customer lifetime value (e.g. cumulative profitability of customer segments)

### Followed by the right actions – I2:

1. Improvement of CX for the whole customer base (e.g. prevent recurrence of an issue)
2. Innovation of CX in any part of the end-to-end customer life cycle

### Accompanied by appropriate energy – E2:

1. Engaging employees and executives internally in I2
2. Engaging customers, suppliers and alliance partners externally

Don't be deluded about a loose confederation of tactics posing as a robust strategy. Overcome piecemeal strategy if you expect to achieve meaningful differences in financial performance. Put safeguards in place to protect against times when push comes to shove, when many of these pieces are vulnerable to scrapping or skimping,

weakening your strategy's capability to produce sustainable results. Guard your Jenga tower like you would any other major asset in your company: don't allow raiding, corner-cutting, or bad-mouthing. Give it all you've got if you want significant sustained results.

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## Practical tools to overcome Jenga

ClearAction Value Exchange is full of pragmatic solutions to overcome Jenga-like coordination gaps, intention gaps, and engagement gaps. Through online and in-person experiences, the ClearAction Value Exchange empowers marketing and customer experience teams to customize new perspectives to their work in half-hour bites for same-day implementation.

### Coordination gaps

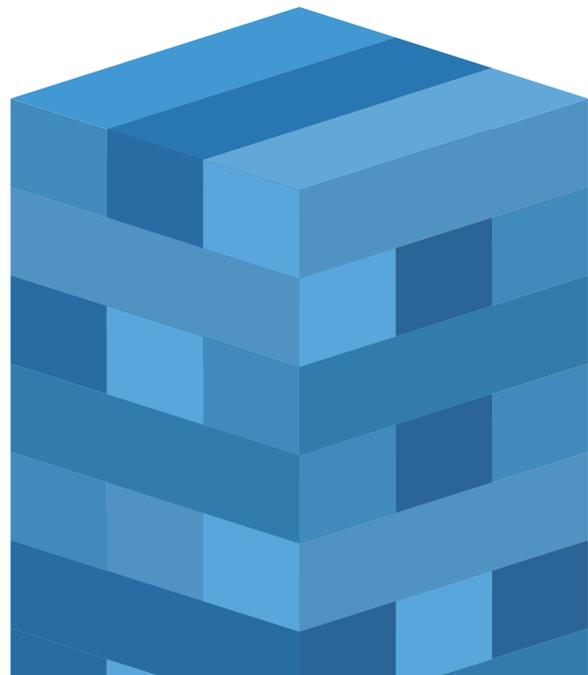
Learn how to consider interdependencies in your work – who depends on your work outputs, and vice versa. Gain insights for designing your efforts to be inclusive, coordinated and collaborative with your stakeholders. Find out how to connect and course-correct with those whose agendas or styles are different from yours. Bridge existing silos in data, systems, channels, organizations, vision, assumptions, motives, goals, metrics, and handoffs. And bridge those silos from the get-go in making assignments and starting initiatives.

### Intention gaps

Discover how to connect what you do to what's important to your top executives, and how to demonstrate the value you're generating. Explore ways to build shared vision among your leaders and across your stakeholders, internal and external. Find out how to focus attention on what will make a difference for customers, thereby making a difference for employees and shareholders alike. Learn how to balance urgent versus mission-critical demands, strategic versus tactical efforts, and flexibility versus discipline in executing plans.

### Engagement gaps

Adopt methods to engage customers on their terms. Practice building trust internally and externally. Differentiate the value you provide. Ensure your brand promise matches what is being delivered. Tap into the natural motives of internal and external stakeholders. Influence your peers and other organizations internally to align with customers and evolving market needs. Make it naturally appealing for others to collaborate with you enthusiastically.



ClearAction Value Exchange conquers Jenga-like tendencies by providing an array of experiential capability-builders specially designed for customer experience and marketing professionals and those they work closely with, at every level of seniority, from novice to expert. It was designed by listening closely to people like you describe their challenges with Jenga-like dynamics at-play in their daily work and careers.

Leapfrog the norms and differentiate your management of customer experience by overcoming these gaps. The Jenga game is like an inverted organizational pyramid, with top management, organizational structure and policies in the foundation, and customer-facing resources at the top. Invest in the foundation to reduce the need for precious customer-facing resources dedicated to fix-it demands, and to redirect them to higher value efforts for customers.

As you strive to rise to new heights, strengthen your foundation's robustness to empower customers and everyone who serves them. Empowered customers spend more, spread more positive word-of-mouth, and stick with your company for the long-term. ●

<sup>1</sup> State of Customer Experience report, Forrester, 2013.

<sup>2</sup> Business-to-Business Customer Experience Management Best Practices Study, 2011.

<sup>3</sup> State of Voice of the Customer Programs, Temkin Group, 2010-2016.

ClearAction Continuum centers your business on customers. Build organic revenue and profit growth by being customer-centered in everything your business does. [Contact@ClearAction.com](mailto:Contact@ClearAction.com)  
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