zühlke
empowering ideas

Three steps to removing friction from customer journeys

25 June 2019 | **Digital Transformation** | **Neil Moorcroft**
Reading time: 3 minutes

Today's busy customers value speed and convenience above almost everything else. When making a purchase, they don't expect to have to jump through hoops or navigate obstacles. They don't want to repeat the details of their query or issue to multiple customer service staff.

They simply want their transactions to be low-effort and uncomplicated.

In short, modern customers don't have time for friction – and when they encounter it, they'll often abandon a purchase and shop elsewhere instead.

Smart companies know this, and in response, they're working hard to make their customer journeys as friction-free as possible. The standard here is set, of course, by digital pioneers. Think, for example, of the immediacy of Amazon's one-click ordering, the convenience of Uber's ride-hailing service, or the speed with which commuters can access public transport networks using Apple Pay on their smartphones.

Increasingly, customers expect the same kind of effortless experience in all of their daily B2C and B2B transactions, with all manner of providers, both at home and at work. But they don't always find it: in a mid-2018 survey of customer experience (CX) leaders, conducted by IT market research firm Gartner, while almost half (48%) said that their CX projects exceeded management expectations, fewer than one-quarter (22%) claimed they exceeded customer expectations.

So how can companies best meet modern customer expectations for friction-free journeys? At Zuhlke, this is a major focus of our Digital Services Innovation (DSI) solution, based on the understanding that, in order to remain relevant, build loyalty and encourage repeat business, companies must reduce time and effort for customers. We help them:

1. Understand the customer and map out their journey

Smart companies put themselves in the customer's shoes, in order to understand who they are and the journeys they take to make a transaction. In this way, they gain new insights into where customers might encounter friction. This can be a challenge, given the number of touchpoints and channels often involved. According to analysts at Forrester, 95% of

consumers use three or more channels in a single customer service interaction, and 62% use multiple devices. In order to establish a clearer view of customer journeys and all the different routes they can take, as well as pinpoint the best opportunities for streamlining them, companies must perform thorough analysis of customer and business data.

2. Build integrated journeys on firm foundations

Make no mistake: building friction-free customer journeys isn't simply a case of placing a shiny new digital layer on top of existing processes. It requires deep engineering expertise and lean, agile approaches to software development in order to rethink processes and workflows and integrate touchpoints and channels for an end-to-end, seamless experience. This involves highly skilled, cross-functional teams, working to integrate digital products with back-end systems, deliver rock-solid cybersecurity, ensure optimal systems performance and take advantage of external application programming interfaces from the wider partner ecosystem.

3. Continue to refine the user experience (UX)

Continual testing once digital products are in production offers endless opportunities to keep removing sources of friction for customers. When new software is released, customer journeys are monitored closely, so that audience responses can be measured and any issues that they encounter are tackled promptly. Analytics might be used to identify regular drop-out points, for example, and A/B testing may be a useful way to experiment with faster, smoother routes for customers to take in pursuit of their end goal.

In summary, friction occurs when a customer finds themselves in some way impeded from achieving their goal: making a purchase, reporting an issue, upgrading a service, and so on. For smart companies, the work of identifying and eliminating sources of friction never ends – it's a constant battle. But it's a battle worth waging, because making improvements in customer speed and convenience is a major factor in modern digital-business success.