



**Rhonda Sheets**  
2021

## Preserving the Human Connection in a Digital World

As banking's digital future continues to take shape, leaders of financial institutions are building their strategies with less uncertainty and more resolve to succeed in a world of digital-led consumer experiences.

With all of the celebration of digital as the driver of operational efficiency, it's easy to forget the human element. The biggest challenge may be one of customer experience: what [Deloitte](#) describes as "preserving the human connection" in the face of digital acceleration. For financial institutions, keeping pace with digital acceleration means personalizing the digital experience in a way that differentiates them from the competition.

Financial institutions that don't really know what the customer experience is like in their digital channels risk losing their brand reputation, and perhaps customers as well. Without customer feedback, financial institutions lack insight into what they need to prioritize and change to meet their customers' expectations.

For example, if your objective is to provide digital services customers will continue to use, you need to ensure you offer the features your members want and expect. Then you have to make sure their experiences in these channels are seamless, predictable and free of friction. Sometimes, this investigation leads to unexpected but welcome outcomes: In one research project to discover what customers wanted in their digital banking, respondents actually said, "I didn't know you offered that option - how do I sign up?"

Your customers need to know there are people behind those channels, who can give them reliable answers in a genuinely friendly voice when they need help. There's no substitute for the human connection - if you're just replacing the human with the digital or no-touch experience, you're just moving toward commoditization. Anyone with sufficient resources can supply a digital channel. What makes yours unique? That is the question that must be answered. If you've presented your customer experience as a defining strength of your brand, how is that coming through in your customers' digital-led experiences?

Here are three steps to keeping that human connection in the digital experience:

**Know your customers' expectations:** They are changing (and increasing) all the time. And customer tolerance for frustration is fluctuating. Where you might previously have received the benefit of the doubt when it came to poor service, customers are increasingly unwilling to accept the pandemic as an excuse. How are you adapting to meet those dynamic and ever-changing customer expectations?

**Recognize your customers every step of the way:** Personalization at every level of a digital-led experience creates a stronger connection with customers even without face-to-face interaction. However they engage with you, if you're not there for your customers when they need you - providing the same care and attention across all channels - the opportunity to deepen the relationship and build loyalty is lost.

**Upskill your frontline teams for digital connection:** The skills employees need to keep pace with digital transformation involve more than technical know-how. Although a working knowledge of automated processes and functionality is increasingly essential, that is not enough. Organizations need employees who can also display "soft skills" like initiative, creativity, curiosity, and - perhaps above all - empathy. Customers still value the "high touch" with their "high tech." Know where your employees' skills gaps are when it comes to providing service in your customers' digitally initiated experiences. Then repurpose and retrain your employees to preserve that human touch.

**What kind of CX intel is needed to drive these actions?** The most effective CX analytics provide insights that show not just where you are, but the correct path forward based on identified priorities. Imagine the edge it would give you to be able to validate your planned strategy before throwing yourself onto the path that seems right to take. Executives are hardly starved for data and analytics these days, but insights from that data that lead to predictable and powerful outcomes remain in surprisingly short supply.

Through rigorous process methodology, in-depth data analysis, and high-level commitment, financial institutions can identify and prioritize tasks for improving their customers' digital experiences. At the same time, they can promote operational efficiencies in digital processes without sacrificing the best-in-class service customers expect.

You can wait for complete certainty. But you can take action with greater confidence and improve your odds of success by being armed with intel that gives you a clear line of sight from the problem to the facts to predictable outcomes.

*Rhonda Sheets is president and CEO of [Support EXP](#).*

1.937.535.1396 | [supportexp.com](#)

**>>> Click to Discover More <<<**