SUPPORT EXP

VOICE–OF–THE–CUSTOMER
JOURNEY MAPPING

How Financial Institutions Can Differentiate Through Outstanding CX

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Executive Summary:

Many financial institutions are adopting or considering customer journey mapping plans in their efforts to differentiate themselves through superior CX performance. Done properly, journey mapping can be a valuable means of removing friction from the customer experience, personalizing service and sales delivery, and improving process efficiencies. This white paper examines the purpose and methodology of journey mapping in general, then focuses on the application of journey mapping techniques to the banking sector. In addition to describing the benefits of a journey mapping plan and the challenges in implementation, the paper presents current research that illustrates the unique and essential value voice-of-the-customer feedback brings to the journey mapping process.

Key Learnings:

- A financial institution's successful differentiation as an institution worthy of loyalty is tested in every customer experience by whether the customer continues to perceive the unique value of the institution at that point in time.
- Hearing directly from customers is the best way for a financial institution to know what differentiates it in the minds of its customers and prospective customers.
- A journey map aligns an entire organization around **the customer** by encouraging employees throughout the organization to consider the customer's feelings, needs, and expectations.
- A major objective of journey mapping is identifying and closing gaps between customer expectations of the service experience and the reality the customer actually experiences.
- Even with digital transformation, the quality of a financial institution's **people** is critical to helping it stand out through the delivery of experiences that meet or exceed customer expectations, and for the building of trust-based relationships.

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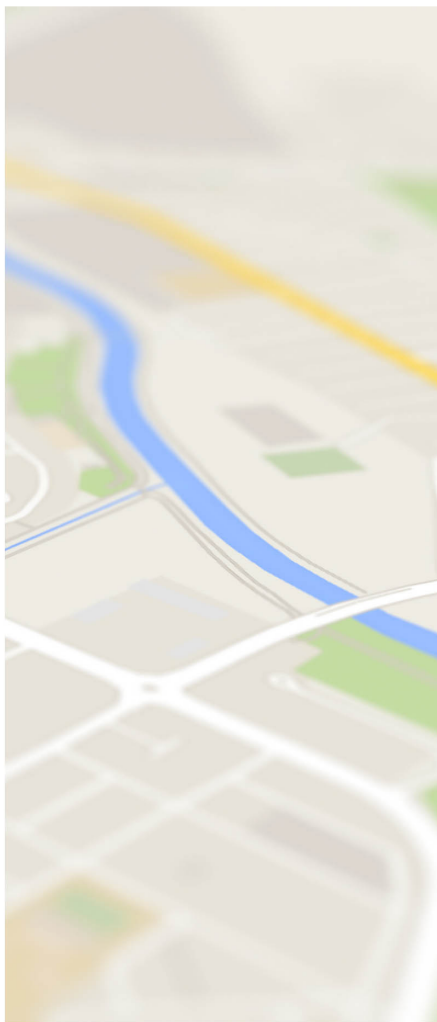
As the global financial landscape continues to evolve, financial institutions (FIs) more than ever need to take purposeful action to stand out in a homogenized market where things are increasingly more similar than different, and where technology contributes to more rapid commoditization of products and services. Research repeatedly shows that the customer experience (CX) an FI delivers is a key competitive differentiator in the fight to remain relevant and gain market share because CX is directly tied to business outcomes like loyalty, lifetime value, and revenue generation. Journey mapping is one of the hottest new tools in CX and organizational process improvement. There has never been a stronger need or desire to align process efficiency and ease of use with an outstanding CX.

According to a 2016 Forrester report, 63% of marketers currently use some sort of journey mapping. Customer journey mapping is increasingly seen as a key component of creating the personalized experience demanded by today's empowered consumer.[1] 86% of senior-level marketers say that it is absolutely critical or very important to create a cohesive customer journey.[2]

Ultimately, an FI's purpose in undertaking a journey mapping process is to help the FI live its unique and recognizable difference as a financial services provider. Properly designed and implemented, a customer journey map can be a valuable tool for realigning an FI's entire internal culture and re-engineering its processes around the customer. FIs striving to compete with larger financial institutions with more resources may be curious to discover what all the buzz is about. The intent of this white paper is to answer some fundamental questions about the nature and purpose of journey mapping for financial institutions interested in determining whether this process can benefit them. This paper asserts that optimal results of journey mapping are realized when the process is informed and infused by authentic, voice-of-the-customer feedback.

Telling The CX Story

Customer journey maps combine elements of two powerful techniques – storytelling and visualization – in order to help service teams understand and address customer needs and preferences. Their effectiveness comes from their presentation of information in a way that is both memorable and comprehensive, while conveying a shared organizational mission.

At its most fundamental level, a customer journey map is a visual representation of the stages a customer passes through as he or she interacts with an FI over time – from initial contact through a completed sale and beyond. It includes every experience or touchpoint the customer has with different functional areas within the organization, through any of an expanding array of communication channels. It captures the "moments of truth," those significant stages in a transaction that leave a lasting impression on the customer. This is how the journey map "tells the story" of the customer's relationship with the FI, with the objective of allowing the FI to better understand what its customers are experiencing and feeling when they do business with it. According to a 2017 McKinsey report on sustaining the benefits of improved customer experience, "the best way to tackle customer experience is to follow it from the customer's point of view, along a journey that cuts across functions and channels."[3]

Customer journey mapping is a process improvement tool differentiated by the source and quality of the data used. A journey map provides the context within which customer data can be made actionable. A journey map that is built from a customer's point of view utilizes the customer's experience as its foundation.

Rather than anticipating the stages and steps of the journey from a systems or business process perspective, the journey is based on what the customer actually experiences...as it is being experienced. Mapping allows the FI to analyze its own brand experience from the customer's point of view, a shifting of perspective that fosters empathy for the customer. In addition to capturing positive customer interactions, effective journey maps identify areas that prompt negative customer perceptions throughout their journey – the "pain points" and areas of friction – and put these perceptions in context in relation to the customer's needs and goals. By encouraging employees throughout the FI to consider the customer's feelings, needs, and expectations, the journey map aligns the entire organization around the customer. Directly or indirectly, every functional area contributes to delivering a consistent, value-adding customer experience and building a trust-based relationship with the customer.

Because there can be as many different customer journeys as there are customers, organizations use "personas," archetypes developed to represent target customers. These personas are more detailed than generalized customer segments, having individual names and stories that reflect personal attributes and behavioral characteristics such as needs, motivations, attitudes, and pain points. In helping the organization understand how its customers interact with it throughout the entire customer journey, personas provide awareness of the many journeys customers may take, so that products, processes, channels, and personnel can be improved with the customer in mind.

Generally, journey mapping evolved relatively recently as a CX and marketing tool out of the discipline of service design, described authoritatively by banking executive G. Lynn Shostack in the early 1980s. The "service blueprints" developed by Shostack are still a common approach to visualizing the stages in a service delivery process. However, customer journey maps are characterized by their customer-centric focus. Concentrating more on the "backstage operations," service blueprints are distinctly FI-centric, rather than customer-centric. As customer experience expert Bruce Temkin notes, "Used appropriately, [customer journey] maps can shift a company's perspective from inside-out to outside-in."[4]

Focusing on the Financial Consumer

Journey mapping is an adaptable process improvement tool used by FIs seeking more comprehensive insights about what their customers really feel, perceive, and experience when they do business with the FI. Objectives of implementing a journey-mapping program include identifying and closing the gaps between customer expectations of the service experience and the reality the customer actually experiences: Does the impact of a customer's experience with a brand reinforce or contradict the brand's "promise"? Does the customer feel better or worse about the FI's brand as a result of their interaction?

Financial institutions in particular have adopted journey mapping as a methodology for measuring and managing the customer experience because the banking business has fundamentally changed, even within the last few years. With the ubiquity of digital technology, consumers now hold the power to determine the winners in the field of retail banking. Now that the Internet and mobile devices have become so integrated into consumers' lives, customer demand for fast self-service and omnichannel engagement is driven ever higher. Consumers expect financial institutions to change to meet their expectations. To stay competitive, FIs need to look at all operating processes, touchpoints, and delivery channels from a different perspective.

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The traditional banking model centered around the FI's needs and convenience: service delivery was based on what technology was available to the FI, what its resources allowed, and what its employees were trained to deliver. Today, consumers are driving the experience and steering a new banking model.

Customer journey mapping helps FIs look at customer touchpoints from new and different perspectives. It ideally supplies, first, an understanding of what the consumer is expecting from his or her interactions with the FI. Then, it reveals what that consumer is thinking and feeling throughout the process to make sure the FI is meeting those expectations. If the experience is falling short of the expectation, customer journey mapping pinpoints the touchpoints where those shortcomings give rise to customer friction.

As under the traditional banking culture, the objective is still to build customer loyalty and enhance the relationship with the customer by focusing on what the customer is experiencing. Now, however, there is a different way of looking at how to close the gap between expectations and reality. The traditional approach to building customer relationships was mostly reactive, e.g., "get them in the door" and build the relationship from there with sales and marketing strategies; loyalty was built and strengthened on the back end of the relationship. Now, the focus is on building loyalty on the front end, from the first moment of consideration by the consumer. It is imperative for the FI to deliver on its brand promise from the consumer's first moment of awareness that he or she has a need for a product or service the FI can supply. With the power of first impressions more critical than ever, journey mapping can prepare an FI to proactively address and fulfill a potential customer's expectations.

Taking the Deep Data Dive

When it comes down to the actual task of journey mapping, the process is necessarily immersive. An FI can't just dip its metaphorical toe in the water; it needs to take a deep dive into the data with a variety of approaches. While quantifiable metrics and benchmarkable scores are useful, the best way to assess customers' engagement is to ask them for their perspective and feedback, expressed in their own words. Capturing this qualitative input reveals what the customer is feeling about a particular transaction. Just because the customer completed the transaction doesn't mean he or she didn't have negative feelings about it. Any frustration that arises during the experience makes the customer less inclined to want to undertake the transaction again, much less talk to others about the FI in a positive way.

Customer feedback also reveals what the customer is thinking about the FI, including such telling questions as "Why do I have to repeat myself?", "Why does this have to be so hard?", and "Why am I the one doing all the work?" These pain points emerge where the customer feels that he or she has to exert a disproportionate or unanticipated amount of effort, compared with their other experiences – those with both the FI itself and with other businesses. Customer feedback makes the FI aware of the customer's overall feeling at the end of and throughout the transaction, comparing the customer's "level of happiness" at the end of the interaction with his or her feeling toward the FI when the transaction started. Finally, if the experience falls short of expectations, customer feedback reveals the reasons for such shortcomings. When it is captured immediately, feedback allows FIs to respond quickly and purposefully to intercept potential issues, particularly those that may lead to customer attrition.

Certainly, big data technology, in the form of analytical software and CRM platforms, plays a role in gathering the critical information needed to chart a journey map. This kind of data reveals the behavior of an FI's customers throughout their journeys with the FI. But it is also critical to use authentic voice-of-the-customer feedback to inform journey mapping with the valuable, actionable insights that can be found nowhere else. This kind of information is necessary to determine customers' current state with regard to how they experienced the FI, and how they might act as a result. Hearing directly from your customers is the best way to know what makes you different and what keeps you different in the minds of your customers and prospective customers.

CX consultant and expert Jim Tincher aptly points out that "you can't have a customer journey map without involving customers!...[A] map created by employees is a 'Hypothesis Map,' and nothing more. We find that Hypothesis Maps typically cover 70-80% of information about the journey. But that remaining 20-30% is typically the most crucial information, typically explaining why a company is failing to engage customers."[5]

Customers want their experiences with their FI, as with any other brand, to be seamless, frictionless, and holistic. They expect the FI to know and remember, across multiple touchpoints, who they are and what they're looking for, so that the relevant information is available without the necessity to repeat or clarify their needs. A journey map helps reveal disconnects or tensions among self-contained silos in the business. Benefits of creating the map include:

- helping the FI see where and when its customers interact with it
- focusing on particular customer needs at different stages of their journey
- identifying whether the customer journey is sequenced in a logical order
- giving an outside perspective on how customers feel about specific processes
- showing gaps between the desired customer experience and the one received
- highlighting process improvement and organizational development priorities
- allowing FIs to optimize effectiveness by prioritizing efforts and resources
- enabling the FI to anticipate additional and future customer needs

For all the analytics and statistics behind the process, a large component of journey mapping is art, rather than science. The temptation, when studying customers' interactions, is to define and construct precise, accurate journeys. To a certain extent, a disciplined mapping methodology is required to produce actionable insights. What has to be kept in mind, however, is that customer journeys are complicated by human emotions evoked during the customer's experience with the FI.

People Are Key

People, Channel, Process, and Product are the four primary "feedback drivers," the various ways that customers experience a banking institution. They are the "panes of the window" through which the customer views the institution, and they encompass all touchpoints along the customer journey. In Support EXP's analysis of credit union client survey data, the highest scoring feedback driver in terms of Net Promoter Score® is People, above 70% for all six years of data examined.

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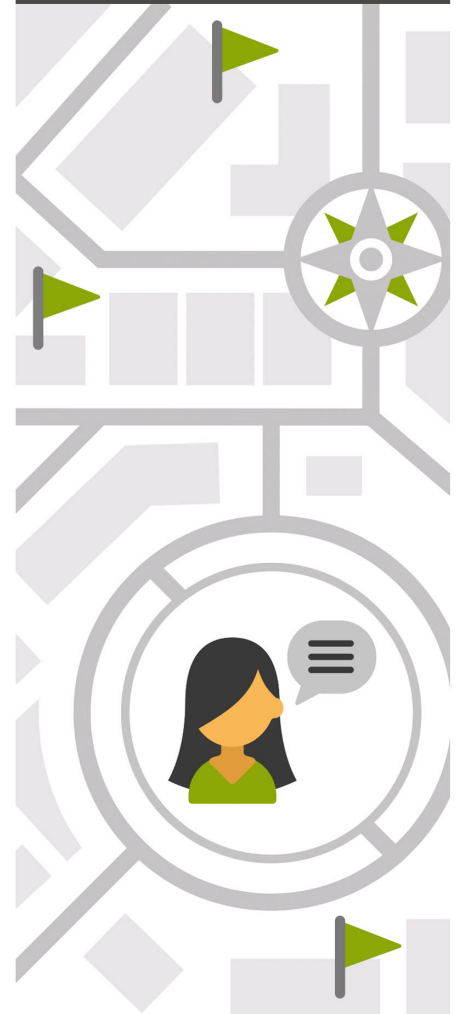
"How does an FI know what its customers are feeling during and after a service experience? If an FI doesn't know the emotions created by its customer interactions, it can't know how to improve them. Journey mapping is the best way to discover underlying attitudes that dictate the decisions customers make each day: how, when, and even whether to continue doing business with an FI."

The consistency of these results, along with analysis of the member survey comments supporting them, suggests that People are key to any focused effort – such as customer journey mapping – to improve Channels, Processes, or Products.

Support EXP research data also shows that leading financial institutions in terms of indicators of customer or member satisfaction leverage the People dimension to drive incremental and positive change across the Product, Process, and Channel dimensions. For example, survey feedback analysis reveals that credit union members want the following as part of their digital experiences:

- **Easier and Up-To-Date Digital Processes** – Specifically, online payments and transfers. They also want features and tools that are accessible to them from their digital devices.

- **Informative Employees** – When the digital processes are difficult or customers are experiencing friction, they want people who can support them fully. They want step-by-step instructions and their digital problems resolved. If it is not possible to resolve the issue immediately, they want clear explanations and other options from the representative with whom they make contact.

- **Personal Communication** – When customers are applying online for products or making payments online, they want communication on the status of these processes. When issues arise, they want the consideration of being contacted and informed of the issues.

Even in an era of digital transformation and omnichannel communication, great people and the easy accessibility of those people are critical for helping an institution stand out through the delivery of experiences that meet or exceed customer expectations, and for the building of trust-based relationships.

An organization's people are instrumental in establishing trust with customers; however, trust has a much more difficult time developing at the customer level without the use of real-time, Voice-of-the-Customer feedback for detecting and dealing with issues quickly, all across the institution. Such feedback informs the customer journey mapping process – and because the information is directly from the customer, rather than merely about the customer, journey mapping becomes a qualitatively more authentic reflection of what the customer is thinking and feeling as a result of the experience.

Ongoing Actionability

All of the Voice-of-the-Customer feedback collected, like any consumer data, will be useless unless it is made actionable by the FI. Like any organization seeking to realign itself around its customers, the FI must be willing to change based on customer feedback. Often, the unwillingness to change is a function of organizational "sophistication" and inertial commitment to an obsolete business model. An institution relying on a rationale of "we've always done it this way" is courting irrelevance with its calcified approach to customer service. Every FI should be asking itself: Who are we now, and what kind of organization do we want to become? Business models and processes that were acceptable in the past may not be acceptable to your customers in the not-too-distant future.

Journey mapping should be used to drive the strategic planning process, with the goal being a crystal-clear recognition by customers of the FI's difference.

To this end, a focus on the customer needs to be engrained through the FI, with a shared awareness that the organization is not going to be optimally successful without it. A 1-3 year vision or value proposition is a good starting point, prompted by the questions: Why would somebody choose us? and How are we going to deliver on that? Then, just as importantly, results of actions taken in response to customer feedback cannot be assumed. They need to be actively tracked, measured, and assessed. To ensure realization of results, the FI needs to continually ask customers for their feedback, as it is the quickest path to identifying bottlenecks and friction points along the customer journey.

Collaboration And Success

7 17 Credit Union in Warren, Ohio, collaborated with Support EXP to gather direct member feedback through which 7 17 used journey mapping to improve its member experience with its auto loan application process. The partners identified all of the touchpoints involved in a successful application process, from referral of an opportunity to closing of the loan, and determined how all of the touchpoints worked together. The goal was to make transitions smooth and seamless for members as they move through the process. A similar approach was applied to internal "customers," employees who depended on other employees to accomplish their shared purpose of serving the members.

In implementing this journey map, 7 17 relied on voice-of-the-member feedback captured by **Support EXP's Insight Builder survey-based solution** to identify friction points in the loan application process. Then it looked for ways to make the loan application process more cohesive and frictionless. During the internal phase, each team member was able to learn from the voice-of-the-member and voice-of-the-employee in order to create insight and awareness as to the existing obstacles (friction or disconnects) along the path of the journey, and to streamline and adjust those processes accordingly.

Kathy Cumberworth, vice president/corporate sales manager at 7 17, says that journey mapping has, "a huge impact on our organization and culture. It helps us fix the disconnects, create structure, and give order to things." The Member Journey Mapping process initiative is now in its second phase at 7 17, with journey mapping design being used to improve the credit union's consumer loan processes.

In the end, an FI's successful differentiation as an institution worthy of loyalty is tested at every channel in every experience, by whether the customer continues to perceive the unique value of the FI at that point in time. The reality is that organizational change is a holistic, continuous process. It can't be "one and done," like an annual customer satisfaction survey, or extrapolated from a few reported customer experiences. Data from all of the FI's touchpoints needs to be brought together to paint a bigger picture of what the customer is experiencing.

Through customer journey mapping and the voice-of-the-customer feedback generated through it, an FI gets to know its customers better so it can consistently deliver experiences that meet or exceed its customers' expectations – thereby building customer loyalty and differentiating the FI from the crowd of financial service providers clamoring for those customers' business. With its potential impact on customer loyalty, journey mapping is a useful tool to help FIs evolve from a transactional CX approach to one that focuses on long-term relationships with customers built on reliability, consistency, and trust.

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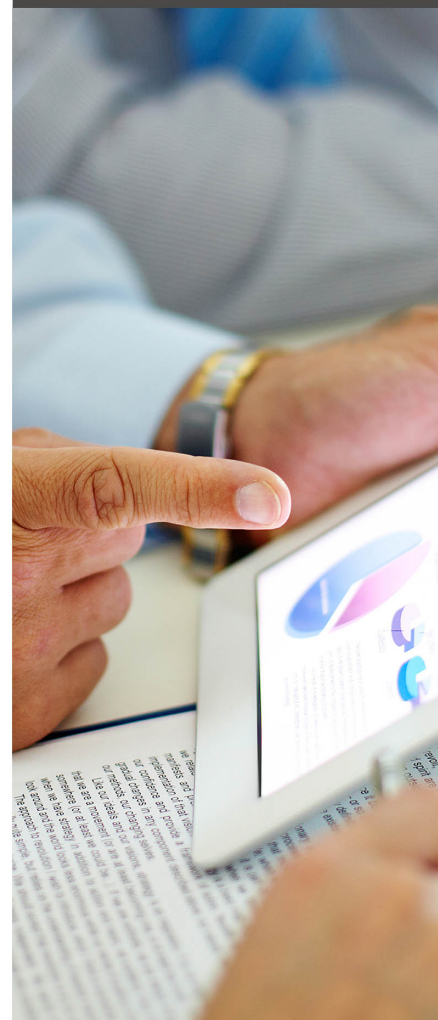
The ROI of journey mapping is realized when all FI employees understand how to align their daily activities to meet or exceed customer expectations, and have the autonomy to modify their behaviors to serve that focus. Studies such as that conducted by McKinsey & Company show that measuring satisfaction on customer journeys is 30 percent more predictive of overall customer satisfaction than measuring happiness for each individual interaction. In addition, maximizing satisfaction with customer journeys has the potential not only to increase customer satisfaction by 20 percent but also to increase revenue by up to 15 percent while lowering the cost of serving customers by as much as 20 percent.[6] Analysis by business management consultant KPMG Nunwood reinforces the proposition that commercial benefits accrue when an organization invests in a competitively superior customer experience.[7]

By analyzing customer journeys, companies can pinpoint the operational improvements that will have the biggest effect on customer experience. With customer journeys becoming a significant component of organizational design, it has become much easier to relate costs to experience. The top companies are improving their customers' experience and designing unnecessary friction out of the customer journey, including process redundancies and time-consuming or expensive activities that fail to add meaning to the customer relationship.

The popularity of customer journey maps in the financial services community is acknowledgement that, today, FIs have to look differently at themselves, at how they deliver, and at how they position themselves in the market to both current and prospective customers. A good journey map captures more than touchpoints – it shows how the customer is thinking and feeling at each touchpoint. The feedback captured in this process, operationalized through actionable analytics, is imperative for FIs that aspire to live their unique and recognizable difference by realigning the entire organization – including their people and processes – around their customers' feelings and perspectives.

Notes:

[1] "Brief: The Top Five Reasons Why Customer Journey Mapping Efforts Fail." Forrester 2016.

[2] "2015 State of B2B Marketing." Salesforce.com, Inc.

[3] Chheda, Shital, et al. "Putting Customer Experience at the Heart of Next-Generation Operating Models." McKinsey & Company, March 2017.

[4] Temkin, Bruce. "It's All About Your Customer's Journey." Customer Experience Matters blog, March 4, 2010.

[5] Tincher, Jim. "Four Common Journey Mapping Mistakes." Heart of the Customer blog, December 4, 2017.

[6] Pulido, Alfonso, et al. "The Three Cs of Customer Satisfaction: Consistency, Consistency, Consistency." McKinsey & Company, March 2014.

[7] "Customer Journey Mapping: Unlocking the Financial Benefits of Customer Experience Management." KPMG Nunwood blog, 2017.

For over two decades, we have researched and innovated to help financial institutions deliver a differentiating customer experience by optimizing their CX performance. Our data-driven, comprehensive survey and mystery shop solutions; insight-rich actionable analytics; targeted CX research and expert guidance all work together to accelerate you toward your success.