B2B Customer Experience in India – Practices, Opportunities & Challenges

By Nilakantasrinivasan (Neil) & Meet Sagar – Canopus Business Management Group

Our research is to understand the best practices amongst the enterprises across various sectors in Indian region when it comes to Customer Experience Transformation. Customer Experience as a concept is which is generally not given the required attention is B2B sector. With increase in the competition in the market customer experience is one of the major thing which defines the performance of the organization.

"We believe that customer service shouldn't be just a department, it should be the entire company."- Tony Hsieh, CEO OF Zappos

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Traditionally, winning in the B2B arena has been a matter of being in the right markets, offering superior products and services, or being the lowest-cost producer. As these advantages have come under threat from increasing global competition, many players have invested in functional excellence.

We reached out the B2B companies across sectors in India to learn how important is Customer Experience (CX) and what are the current practices.

Industry-leading B2B companies increasingly respond to intensifying global competition by putting customer-centricity and experience at the heart of their strategy. This often leads to changes in the business model: Monsanto, for example, is transforming itself with an online platform from a supplier of seed and crop-protection products to a productivity partner, providing advice on subjects ranging from product selection to sowing and harvest timing.[1]In the industrial-equipment sector, Atlas Copco is on a similar journey, with a platform supporting customers in the selection, purchase, operation, and maintenance of their equipment.

Since B2B Companies Are Not Directly In Touch With Customers Is Customer Experience An Organizational Priority?

Across various sectors roughly more than 90% of the respondents agreed that the customer experience is the priority for their organization. This focus on the customers' needs is a positive feature. This has implications for the use of techniques and tools such as customer journey analysis and value stream mapping. The problem faced by the organization in current scenario is they are focusing on what is important to the business alone, what is important to the customer (and also its employees) becomes secondary. How organizations choose to combine technology investment with employee experience and expertise in these areas can be a defining factor in the results of service improvement initiatives.

Focus And Strategy For Customer Experience

Organizations around the country, everyone on the frontline is working to please customer according to their interpretation but not really with a common goal of how to do it.

Being a B2B organization most of the respondents believed that it is difficult to have a permanent structure to look at customer experience. Constant search for the best way to renew the surveys—shortened versus what was done at the beginning—but, at least, now it measures organization's progress on the different transformations that were started. Also they believed that perseverance is important.

What is the structure of ownership of Customer Experience?

Looking at the current scenario, most companies by today have a **separate team** to improvise customer experience & to deal with the customer. While some of the companies fail to allocate the required resources at the larger scale and continue to function through **cross-functional steering committee**.

How Do Organizations Compute Customer Experience?

We tried to understand if there is consistency of measurement across sectors. The results concluded that in B2B sector around 40% of the organizations used Net promoter score (NPS) and believed good customer experience occurs when you exceed customer expectations in a palpable way. NPS was followed by Customer Satisfaction (CSAT) at 25%.

Service level measurement and monitoring was considered by most of the organizations as the deciding factor when it comes to Customer Experience.

However many organizations consider customer experience in terms of complaints and queries raised by the customer to reduce the repetitive interaction. These measures can be helpful in ironing out core experience issues, but wouldn't support in creating a fulfilling and enhanced experience for B2B customers.

On the other hand, Customer Churn, which is considered as a proof of the pudding metric in consumer facing sectors was not considered as one of the important factors when it came to B2B companies.

Traits of CX Metrics

Practices for Customer Experience	
Consistent	Company wouldn't want everyone to have different measurements for "sales" or "profitability," after all. Using consistent metrics helps build a clear vocabulary, enabling more productive discussions.
Impactful	CX metrics are meaningless unless they lead to action. Your metrics must be relevant enough to drive decisions—ones you then carry out.
Integrated	Companies make trade-offs all the time. Sometimes short-term goals like current-quarter sales win out; other times companies invest in their future. Companies must integrate CX metrics into those business discussions.
Continuous	Reviewing CX metrics annually turns the data into a backward-looking scorecard. Instead, use the metrics as an ongoing tool for running—not just measuring—the business.

CX METRIC PITFALLS
Not getting enamored by any single metric. **There's no such thing as an ultimate metric. Successful companies use a portfolio of metrics and succeed or fail based on what they do with the metrics.**
Avoiding to creating complex CX metrics. **Metric used should be easy to understand. If a metric is a convoluted combination of multiple items, then it will be hard for people to understand what it means, and even harder for them to recognize how it can affect them.**
Not to tie too much to compensation. **The focus on a number creates unintended consequences, such as "gaming" the feedback system.**
To avoid letting CX efforts become isolated from the business. **While it may be interesting to have a separate CX dashboard, this type of activity reinforces the split between CX and other operations.**
Never lose site of the real goal—improving. **The goal isn't to build an ROI case or prove that CX investments are valuable; it's to help the organization achieve its mission. Make sure your work with CX metrics is ultimately focused on improving your business.**

Use Of Analytics To Take Decisions Related To Customer Experience

Surprisingly analytics is not used to its full potential when it comes to taking the decisions regarding Customer Experience. Predictive analytics was not discovered in the areas of Customer Satisfaction and Customer Churn. For around 60% of the organizations analytics was restricted to establish metrics and performance levels using data.

Challenges Faced By B2B Organizations When It Comes To Customer Experience

Value Creation : One of the biggest challenges when it comes to Customer Experience was the competition-pricing combination. But now most of the organizations have realized price cannot replace quality or the pain your customers go through. They actually exist to fulfill a purpose – value creation for their client and client's client. The better able they are to fulfill that purpose, the more money they will make.

Customer Journey : Another major challenge for B2B customer-experience efforts is the fact that **customer journeys** are simply more complex than those for retail customers. B2B companies often have more offerings and services than B2C companies. The offerings are also highly tailored to individual customer needs and often consist of different products and services bundled together. In our experience, most B2B companies have far more critical customer journeys on which to focus than the few that many B2C players average. B2B journeys also tend to be long, complex, and quite technical, and consist of a continuous interaction of services and sales touch points. Journey experience and operations are often fragmented by account and location, involving multiple teams in different departments.

Projects Which Can Be Taken Upon To Better Customer Experience

75% of the respondents confirmed that they were not able to implement the structured framework to identify, manage, review and sustain key customer experience initiatives. Hence is this the biggest area of improvement or **starting point** for a B2B organization planning to commence CX journey.

Using technology, data, and predictive analytics will help in creating guided, informed and efficient interactions that are mutually beneficial to prospects and vendors. It has become evident that analytics can be of great use to better the response to the methods implemented to measure Customer experience.

Also the digitalization has greatly influenced the market and there is a constant rise of expectations when it comes to digitalization. Thus even in B2B sector in spite of no direct consumer interaction are exploring self service avenues through :

- A mobile responsive site.
- Content delivered through an app
- A consistent experience through all channels

Conclusion

For many sectors in India, acquiring new customers has been the way to grow but the problem faced by the organization in current scenario is they are focusing on what is important to the business alone, what is important to the customer (and also its employees) becomes secondary. We are living in an 'experience economy' and that's true for B2B sectors too. Hence B2B organizations have to put their act together in transforming People, Process and Technology to build lasting experiences, that will ultimately relating lasting relationships with clients.

As the pace of innovation continues to accelerate, companies will put more emphasis on the experiences they deliver to customers to create a competitive advantage.