

Lead the Market

TOTAL CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE DESIGN AND BUSINESS TRANSFORMATION



About the Author

Garrett Colburn
Marketing and Brand Strategist

Garrett Colburn works across nearly every project at LEVEL, solving complex business challenges by identifying insights about consumer needs or behaviors and mapping solutions to the touchpoints a customer has with the brand. With project experience ranging from travel marketing to enterprise business strategy, Garrett has a bird’s-eye view into today’s marketing and business challenges and is an advocate for using Total Customer Experience Design to develop simple, actionable and innovative solutions.

About LEVEL

LEVEL delivers integrated marketing and product development for global brands. Through the interplay of branded content, technology platforms and connected devices, we design a total user experience that amplifies the relationship between brand and consumer. Our methodology is proven; our behavior is adaptive.

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Introduction

Leading the market isn't just about getting to market first. Simple products lead. Products built "just for me" lead. Leading products deliver the wow factor, the light-bulb moment and revolutionary complementary features. Products that enhance people's lives lead.

Brands are a series of consumer behaviors. Consumer experiences across first seeing a TV ad, going in to Best Buy to interact with your product, reading reviews online, purchasing it, opening the package, starting it up and using it, all represent interactions that define your brand.

What Differentiates One Brand, Product Or Experience From Another?

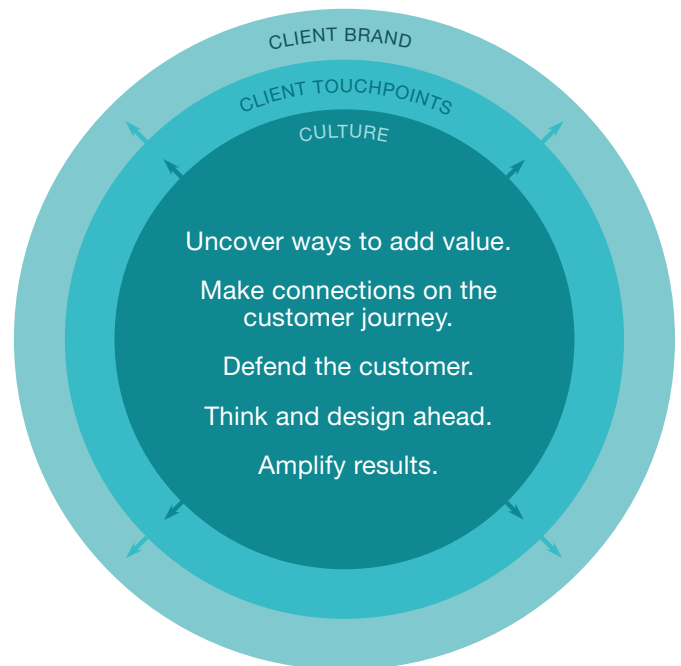
The ecosystem surrounding product success changes as quickly as consumer behaviors do. New technology capabilities, the convergence of previously non-competitive industries, demographic changes and uncontrollable market factors all influence industry progression. In all this, the brands who build transformational cultures are the ones who can adapt, lead, amaze their audience and inspire them to buy.

A transformational culture is closer to the customer, maintains a view across industry verticals and can act internally to drive the creation of innovative product experiences that span departments. It is not limited to launching products that are "similar" or "slightly better" than the category leaders. It does not cling to legacy successes, draw out old business models or favor the easiest solution.

Transformational cultures foster differentiating product experiences and brands.

How Can You Create A Culture Of Innovation That Consistently Succeeds In Launching Successful Products?

Cultural change should be anchored around the customer. Every decision made at the corporate level can ultimately influence the experience between the customer and a product or service. At LEVEL, we design products and experiences following the principles of Total Customer Experience (TCE) Design. At its core, TCE Design is a way of thinking that can be applied to everything from engineering to design to marketing. It's about considering all other touchpoints a customer might have already had or might have in the future as you develop each individual product experience. Brands that can make the customer's experience a part of their culture have the ability to improve each individual touchpoint and create a total customer experience that transforms their brand.



“If Total Customer Experience Design is infused throughout an organization’s culture, exceptional customer-centric brand experiences are inevitable.”

To start infusing these principles within your organization, inspire your employees to step back and do the following:

Find Ways To Create Value For The Customer.

During each interaction, a need is being met. Perhaps customers are looking for information, trying to set up their product or need support. Understanding these needs, identifying needs that are not being met and finding simple or unexpected ways to solve them helps exceed expectations and add real value. Start by breaking down the touchpoints that exist along the customer's product journey and brainstorm with your team the possible needs customers are looking to meet at each point.

Look At Behaviors Outside Your Business Or Industry.

Inspiration and deep insights can come from observations about how consumers are spending their time and what other businesses they are flocking towards. Give your staff the time and guidance to look across industry verticals. Learn about customer experience from services industries like hotels or cruise lines. Ask travel marketers how they develop loyalty programs. See how consumers interact on their personal blogs or across Facebook. The takeaways from outside industries give fresh perspective to your challenges and will allow you to approach touchpoints like your customer service line or eCommerce process in new ways.

Forget About What Exists.

It's often challenging to find ways to evolve products or predict future market direction when we get bogged down in what competitors are doing or in internal corporate politics. For a moment, put aside the barriers of time pressures and cost, and ground yourself in the customer. Go to work with them for a day. Find out what their challenges are today and what they will be tomorrow. Take the product or prototype to your audience and talk candidly with them about it. There is a place for market analysis, forecasting, representative user surveys, competitive analysis and the like. However, there is a greater need for unrestricted ideation and real conversations with the people who may ultimately buy the product. You can't develop a customer experience

without knowing what that customer experiences. Once you know, work with them to create a new solution that overcomes the internal and external barriers you set aside.

Simplify.

Complexity is never a differentiator. Whether your team is working on product development or product marketing, encourage them to filter their decisions through the question, "Will consumers intuitively understand this?". Looking at successful products like Apple's iPhone or services like ATT's U-Verse, simplicity is at the root of their success.

Think Ahead For The Customer.

Understanding your customer's probable next move gives a foundation for backtracking and building products or experiences that will delight customers. If a site visitor researched a product online and searched for the nearest retail store, they're probably looking to visit the store. What kind of information can you give them to help ensure they'll go to the store soon? How can you make that store experience better? Perhaps an application that detects the products the visitor was interested in on the website could be used in the store to help locate the brand, model number and location of the product.

Most Importantly, Design Together.

The enormous number of moving parts in any corporation is a formidable barrier to an exceptional customer experience. Break down the barriers of physical space by creating project teams that span developers, engineers, strategists, marketers, managers and designers. Regularly meet to align major decisions about a product's features, positioning, look and feel, support strategy, content strategy and the like. A culture of innovation cannot sustain itself unless the infrastructure allows it to. Managers and employees should be encouraged to talk outside their department. Most importantly, leaders need to have the vision and oversight to ask big questions like "How will this product design change impact the way users interact with the interface?"

Key Takeaway

The consumer electronics landscape is continually evolving, making product success difficult to predict or imitate. Create an innovative culture that knows how to look forward and pull together the pieces that make up an exceptional total customer experience and lead the market through any changes.