Top 5 CEM Questions

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Customer Experience Management:
The Importance of Asking the Right Questions

Truly understanding Customer Experience Management (CEM) means moving beyond the level of assumptions and generalizations. Customer Experience Management isn't something you just do well; as with many other things, it's a combination of nature and nurture. Done well, it infuses the activities and tasks you do naturally with the addition of learned behaviors.

As much science as it is an artform, Customer Experience Management goes beyond customer satisfaction and customer acquisition. It manages the entire lifecycle of the customer with you, your product or service and your company.

Doing CEM well means that you must have an exceptional level of understanding of who your ideal customer is, what this customer wants, needs, and desires, and what he or she is willing to pay for. It requires connecting the business's core values, vision and mission with customer service activities and outcomes. Put this way, a focus on Customer Experience Management is still in line with the company's strategic goals.

So, where do you begin to understand your ideal customer and his or her lifecycle with you? How do you find out what the customer journey looks like? *You ask questions.*

This is where a self-assessment like The Art of Service's OSS/BSS Customer Experience Management Complete Self Assessment Guide adds value. Rather than reinventing the wheel, you can choose from 793 curated, criteria-based questions.

These questions help you with setting the strategy and execution plan for your CEM processes and procedures.
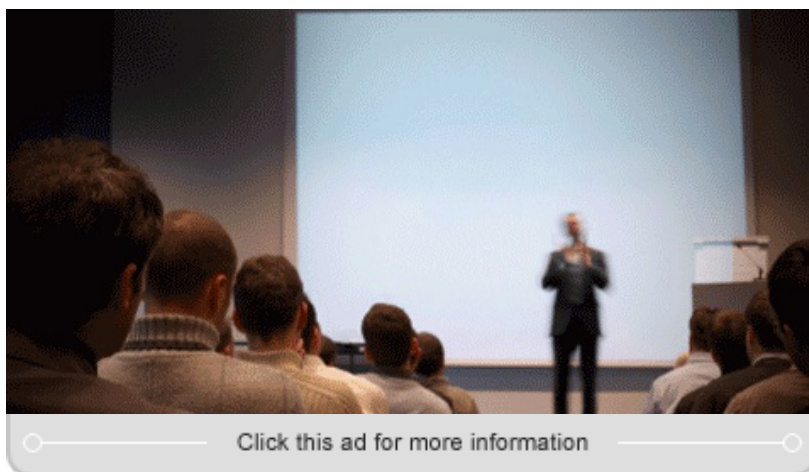
When you look at these self-assessment questions, it's important to answer them based on your own personal opinion and experience. This becomes even more important when you fill out the self-assessment with your team. Each individual will answer the questions differently, but keep in mind that the ultimate answer to each of these questions is:

'In my belief, the answer to this question is clearly defined.'

You can go even further and ask for documented evidence rather than just opinions. This will move the questionnaire into an auditing realm as you require evidence to substantiate answers.

To contextualize your CEM, it's important that before you ask your customer any questions, you answer a number of questions internally. In this article I have selected the top five questions to serve as a guide that helps you create a solid CEM strategy anchored firmly in the company's vision and mission. This approach lays the groundwork for ongoing success.

The top five questions span the whole CEM lifecycle, from the original discovery and recognizing the value of CEM, all the way though building a sustainable CEM methodology in the organization that stays valuable into the future.

Recognize the value of Customer Experience Management

A well thought-out and executed CEM strategy will help achieve a higher iifetime value for each customer, a lower cost of customer acquisition as well as higher employee retention due to clear education, training and career paths. It all starts with answering this question.

Question 1: How are the OSS BSS Customer Experience Management's objectives aligned to the organization's overall business strategy?

It should come at no surprise that the number one question to ask is: how are CEM objectives aligned with the overall business strategy? Without this alignment any resources spent on CEM could be a waste of money, time and focus.

We start with the business objectives to identify if a defined CEM process has value to the business or not. If CEM is not the proper priority at this stage of the business maturity and growth journey, you're better off finding out sooner rather than later.

In fast-growing industries like communication and networking, it is also important to understand which objectives are supported by CEM as this helps to focus CEM activities and specify boundaries for deliverables and projects.

Define what CEM means for you and your organization

Question 2: What sources do we use to gather information for a Customer Experience Management study?

Before you spend resources on customer feedback and a Customer Experience Management study, you should consider where you are going to find this information and how you are going to gather this data.

Please note that there is a difference between data and information. The above question asks specifically about information gathering. From experience, I will add that you're most likely collecting raw data, which then has to be collated, curated and turned into information you can use for your next step in the process.

Gathering raw data can be automated through AI, event logs, system logs and network tools. Turning all this data into logical information most likely requires human intervention.

Measure and analyze results from your customer feedback

Once you know the sources you are going to use to collect the data and information, the next important question to answer is:

Question 3: Accurate, user-centric customer experience metrics are the basis of successful CEM implementation, but what exactly should be measured?

Just because we *can* measure doesn't mean we *should* measure something. Many organizations make the mistake of going too granular and detailed in what they want to measure. The end result is an overly complicated process faltering under the heavy burden of reports and administration. As a result, you won't embrace the process and realize the full benefits of CEM.

Companies in the technology, IT and communication space are most prone to encounter this pitfall.

Time and time again, I've seen employees in IT organizations become frustrated with the sheer amount of paperwork and reports that need to be prepared on a weekly and monthly basis. Many of these reports don't add any value to the overall customer experience and actually detract from it. Frustration rises among employees.

The purpose of asking the measurement question is to stop and consider purpose. Did you make a conscious decision about the metric you need to track? Do these metrics help you reach your overall CEM goals and objectives? Do you need them to be lead indicators or lag indicators?

And lastly, what do you need to measure to come up with these metrics?

Improve the CEM implementation

Question 4: How do the Customer Experience Management results compare with the performance of your competitors and other organizations with similar offerings?

As soon as you start executing your CEM strategy, it's important to think about ways to continually improve the results but also the processes used within CEM. Because CEM is all about the Customer Experience, you are ultimately trying to create brand advocates and loyal customers.

This is where benchmarking becomes important. Not only do you need to look internally for improvements, you should also know how you compare to the rest of the industry and your competitors. After all, if your customer doesn't fully enjoy the overall experience, he or she will go elsewhere. What do you need to do to keep your customers loyal to your brand but at the same time stay within the company's goals and (financial) objectives?

You can only ask this question after you've identified the answers to question 3 (metrics and what to measure) to avoid comparing apples to oranges. When you're benchmarking, make sure you compare the right data.

Sustain CEM in the organization and plan for the future

Finally top question number five is all about future-proofing your CEM processes.

Question 5: What are the top 3 things at the forefront of our OSS BSS Customer Experience Management agendas for the next 3 years?

Your company will have a long-term strategic plan that is split up into a 3-5 year plan, annual strategic plan all the way down to quarterly, monthly and weekly goals.

Where does CEM fit into this overall business strategy? And do we have clarity on the top three things that we want to work on strategically to help support the business objectives?

Answering these five questions will help you create a solid start to your CEM efforts. It by no provides means a complete picture, but at least you'll know that all your CEM activities will be done in line with the company's strategic goals and objectives. And you will have a clear understanding of what CEM means to you in the context of the business. You'll also know what is important to your customers so you can utilize the most effective resources to gather this data to analyze and turn into manageable metrics which can be looped back toward the overall strategic goal. This in itself will help you understand how to build a perpetual system of ongoing improvement to keep your customers loyal and attached to your brand moving into an uncertain and unknown future.

For all these questions the same principle applies: if you don't know the answer yet, it's not necessarily a bad thing. At least you are consciously aware of this fact and can work on finding the answers that help improve the results your business gains from CEM.