

Customer Results
Results Matter



OUR 2021 CX CHALLENGES REPORT

Our 3rd annual report as we pivot from 2020 the year of COVID doom and despair to 2021 the year of optimism and recovery heading to 2022 the year of normalcy (*we hope*).



IMPROVING OUR CX CHALLENGES SURVEY AS WE ENTER 2021 - THE YEAR OF OPTIMISM & COVID RECOVERY

Finally, here we are moving from 2020 the year of despondency and despair to **2021 the year of optimism and recovery**, looking forward to 2022 the year of normalcy (*we hope*).

Focusing on experience is ever more important for organizations across the globe, commercial, nonprofit and government.

OUR SURVEY WAS IMPROVED FROM 2020 IN SEVERAL WAYS.

- » Our engaged passionate CX practitioners asked us to include some new topics, **raising our questions from 22 in 2020 to 35 in 2021** (well 32 because we made a mistake and had three duplicates . Well, no-one is perfect!).
- » Even then we still missed one we heard loud and clear from you and have queued up for our 2022 survey **“Gaining and sustaining senior leadership support”**.

» We have grown from <3,000 engaged CX community members in 2020 to **~18,400 engaged community members in 2021** and had 1167 survey participants this year, **3 times higher than 2020**, so thank you.

» And (again in response to your feedback last year) a new feature of this year’s report is we took your **top 10 challenges** and **asked our “panel of CX experts” for a few action thought starters**, so enjoy (and feel free to send us messages adding to them and maybe arguing with them).

And in closing, my favorite definition of where we are today is from one of our USA community VP’s (obviously a Wizard of Oz Fan) on Dec 1st, 2020 with the US election behind us and the COVID vaccine announcements in full swing *“We can see the Emerald City, although it is rather foggy. The yellow brick road is a little torn up, and we have heard the flying monkeys have been pumping iron In preparation for our journey, but we know we can’t stay here anymore if we want to get back to Kansas . so we are starting to work on CX again”*.

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USING THIS REPORT

If you think **your priorities are different** that is because they are. **Every situation is different.** It's why we refer to the thoughts we collected as to what to do as **"Thought Starters"** not answers. Our community uses this document as an interesting perspective of what others are thinking and hopefully an occasionally helpful discussion document.

We aren't smart enough to claim we know the definitive answer to every situation. What we do have is **lots of experience, a wicked smart community (that would be you!),** and a **perspective about what has succeeded** (and failed) in other environments and how to apply that to enhance your impact and success

Our recommendation, if anyone tells you they know the perfect answer for your situation from the outside .. run!

"One note of caution. This report prioritizes or ranks to what extent these are CX Challenges. It does not rank how important these topics are (maybe we should do that ranking later in the year).

We know there are critical items in here that most people feel they have adequately covered (or at least there are other things that are more challenging)

We listen well. Or at least we try our best

We **redesigned and simplified the scoring** to make it easier and faster especially in digital mobile (which ~70% of our participants used by the way) with 4 basic choices for each challenge.

- Unimportant – 1
- Important - 2
- Critical – 3
- N/A – 0

And to keep life simple we are publishing our challenges based on a mean **average of the rankings** (aka add up all the scores and divide by the total number of questions) with a couple of additional **honorable mentions, ranking from most critical 2.89** (see "Culture") **to 1.91** (see CX Benchmarking").

Happy reading and thank you.

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OUR KEY 2021 FINDINGS

It was another interesting year. Many challenges stayed the same but there were some **new challenges** and **differing priorities**. Seven key comments on our top 10.

1

“Developing a CX Culture and a Customer First Mindset” and “Ensure Deep Enough Customer Understanding” are our top two .. again .. although this year “CX Culture” moved to #1 and the gap was larger. A clear indication that the CX movement is growing in importance in every organization, especially with the fundamental shift in experience expectations which COVID has caused and the further shifts that will happen as we journey through COVID emergence.

2

“Defining Great CX”- Featured for the first time (*based upon your request*) & rocketed in at #3. Which clearly justifies its inclusion. The most interesting comment we got was recognizing that yesterday's Great CX is likely not tomorrow's Great CX & how do we continuously evolve our understanding of that. And we particularly like the action thought starter concept of “great cx sketches” to help give voice to your CX aspirations. While “Developing and applying our CX Strategy & Vision & Brand alignment” fell out of our top 10 to #12 we got some pointed feedback that defining Great CX as an aspiration is often a better way to socialize CX Strategy than dry strategy statements.

3

“Prioritizing CX initiatives” – also a new inclusion request in 2021 upon request - came in at #4. We believe that it is closely linked with #5 “Ensuring CX ROI ” and #6 “Delivering Demonstrable & Measurable Experience Improvements”. All part of “how to make sure you focus on the right initiatives that deliverable measurable experience improvements against CX drivers and operational improvements against business drivers, aka clear ROI.

4

“Ensuring The Right, Meaningful CX Metrics Aligned With Operational & Financial Metrics” was again in our top tier. No surprise as we see organizations working to implement NPS or CSAT or loyalty scores across all business units and markets but in today's NPS is not enough world organizations are just beginning to align their CX metrics, operational & financial metrics like sales performance, revenue, operating costs. And aligning CX Drivers and Business Drivers to make it more predictable. The CX Tech tools are maturing to help.

5

Then a round of applause for another new entrant at #8 “Maximize CX Centric Customer Care & Customer Success”. We have long suggested that in a world where “loyalists, promoters and advocates are built upon a lifetime of interactions and 15% of those interactions are marketing, 15% are sales and 70% are Care / Support / Service / Success .. you could argue Care is a more natural owner of the CX movement than Marketing” .. there we said it .. talk to our lawyers.

6

And we are ecstatic to see #9 “Addressing Employee Experience (EX) and the Employee Voice” in its first year. This means both the Voice of the Employee (VoE) informing customer experience understanding, improvement & applying the techniques of CX to Employees to improve the Employee Experience (EX). We are confident it will be even higher in 2022 as the year of COVID recovery in 2021 ushers in a return to normalcy at work (*fingers crossed .. albeit a different normalcy than before*)

7

And rounding out our top 10 the continued challenge of “Sufficient CX Discipline & Techniques Understanding” not just for CX professionals but for stakeholders engaged in CX programs and initiatives. That means ensuring you have the right skills available (*as employees or from partners*), the right awareness training of what the techniques of the discipline are and why they are important including how peoples way of working needs to change. Which brings us right back to that Customer Centric Culture thing.

But this summary would not be complete without three honorable mentions all of which scored in our top tier of “Critical to us” .. specifically:

- » “Ensure The Right CX Talent.”
- » “Developing and applying our CX Strategy & Vision & Brand alignment.”
- » “Ensuring CX is Operationalized and Systematized Driving Continuous CX Transformation.”

And our **biggest and nicest surprises**

Impact of COVID Uncertainty and Exhaustion

- 2.11 and #29 – *no one really cares that much. Probably because we CX professionals have way too much going on*
- Job Security / Fear of Losing My Job
- #2.0 and #31 – *we are a confident lot.*

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YOUR TOP 10 RANKING OF CHALLENGES & ACTION THOUGHT STARTERS

CHALLENGE	SCORE (0-3)	ACTION THOUGHT STARTER	ACTION THOUGHT STARTER	ACTION THOUGHT STARTER
#1 Developing a CX Culture & Customer First Mindset	2.89	CX Communications Program including activities, successes, competitive news, etc.	Customer Centricity Training especially role based training focused on “seeing your job through the eyes of the customer” and special considerations like “digital direct and digitally enabled customer experience”	Add CX Measures to leadership and employee dashboards and scorecards. Which may or may not directly impact compensations (<i>that is a big and complex discussion</i>)
#2 Ensure Deep Enough Customer Understanding	2.73	Launch a multichannel customer intelligence strategy incrementally improving the integration of customer understanding available (including external and internal data and insights & customer prioritization)	Systematize customer research and listening	Look for higher value approaches like audience linkage maps to optimize communications effectiveness and efficiency where <i>one human = multiple personas = multiple journeys = conflicting & confusing messaging and interactions</i> and journey linkage maps that show how different persona interact to complete a journey
#3 Defining Great CX	2.73	Create (and communicate) compelling “great cx sketches” based on voice of business, voice of customer, voice of employee and voice of partner that can be held up as “north star motivating aspirations” and benchmarked against those you admire.	Collect and communicate real world “great cx anecdotes” from your customers, employees, competitors, etc.	Make “great cx” activities a standard element of the initiative charter process and an increasingly standard part of team and company meetings
#4 Prioritizing CX Initiatives	2.66	Implement a robust audience centric prioritization methodology and tools as part of your CX and enterprise program office / control towers. A prioritization capability which evolves and improves over time	Define customer experience and business drivers to assist in balancing customer needs and internal needs in prioritization decisions	Enhance cross functional stakeholder teams to engage in prioritization decisioning
#5 Ensuring CX ROI	2.59	Ensure every CX project or project with a CX element has a metrics hypothesis associated with it before you start that factors in experience, operational and financial success (and publish the results afterwards).	Demand (and track) measurable feedback for every initiative	Build CX (experience and operational) ROI into personal performance plans

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YOUR TOP 10 RANKING OF CHALLENGES & ACTION THOUGHT STARTERS

CHALLENGE	SCORE (0-3)	ACTION THOUGHT STARTER	ACTION THOUGHT STARTER	ACTION THOUGHT STARTER
#6 Delivering Demonstrable & Measurable Experience Improvements	2.59	Ensure a CX (and operational and financial) improvement case is included in the charter for every CX project and that ongoing measurement of achievement is activated	Prioritize initiatives with clear customer & operational benefits which means considering both Customer Experience Drivers and Business Drivers (and how they align .. or don't)	
#7 Ensuring The Right, Meaningful CX Metrics Aligned With Operational And Financial Metrics	2.56	Elevate your metrics framework beyond NPS and CSAT to include experience, operational and financial and even competitive measurement	Assess your current metrics system (people, process, tech, data) and current capabilities against your aspirations and best practices aligned with a case for change	Adopt an Agile Metrics approach . Do something and get better every day.
#8 Maximize CX Centric Customer Care & Customer Success	2.55	Ensure CX initiatives appropriately elevate the importance of Care and Customer Success in this "digital first but not digital only multichannel world" (i.e. CX is not just about marketing)	Ensure a framework exists to clearly balance and value marketing, sales, service, product, partners and other contributors (e.g. fulfillment, regulatory)	Leverage the systems, process excellence and customer centric people your Care organization probably already has to supercharge your CX movement
#9 Addressing Employee Experience (EX) and the Employee Voice	2.55	Identify some initial EX opportunities and apply CX/EX techniques to prove the value (e.g. post COVID-19 return to work planning)	Activate employee voice measurement and EX measurement and align with VoC measurement systems	Engage HR and talent leaders to understand how they might be motivated to adopt a different way of thinking about employee and talent management
#10 Sufficient CX Discipline & Techniques Understanding	2.59	Develop systematic skills and way of working training not just for CX practitioners but also for CX stakeholders and team members	Create a prioritized skills requirement, development and fulfilment talent plan based on key CX / EX / XM capabilities	Ensure a flexible balanced resource portfolio of employees and partners leveraging outsourced providers where appropriate

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WE LISTEN

YOUR VOICE

We got some interesting feedback from you that we thought we would share.

YOUR VOICE

I guess you hit our sweet spot - there's very little here that should be considered as not important.

Excellent survey. short yet precise. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to add my feedback. Looking forward to the report.

As CX practitioners, we may say these are all very important so I would suggest a required ranking in importance.

CX delivery - how to combine concrete results with sufficient agility and realization of the required customer-centric transformation.

Speeding insights to impact cycle time. AND Our main challenge is timely implementation

Considering VOC when designing new experiences.

FYI I said CX team is not critical but important as I'm CXO (4k company employees) and don't have a CX team, just a lot of dotted-lines to people who drive change.

Access to accurate data from disparate sources to make informed decisions.

Ensuring CX has adequate representation to drive change at the executive level

OUR THOUGHTS

Thank you. Of course we didn't come up with the list, you, our community did.

OK .. that's two of the compliments .. now moving onto the substance.

I somewhat agree. That is what we did in 2020 but we were told it was too arduous, especially on a phone. Let is know if you have any bright ideas.

Brilliant, kind of like operationalization and some others we will enhance in our 2022 list.

As above, there is something here for our 2022 survey. Agility and predictable ROI are everything as of course is balancing timely and speed..

We intended that in a couple of VOC related challenges, but we will think about calling it our in our 2022 survey. *In the meantime you might be interested in our ["238 questions across 12 capability areas to help build, assess and maximize VOC, EFM, EX, XM Roi"](#)*

Certainly not unusual and even when a company has a CX team it is often 3 or 4 people for a 4000 person organization.

This is embedded in our customer intelligence challenge but more from us later this year.

Yup, see our notes on gaining & sustaining executive attention, more later this year and a big call out for next year's survey.

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YOUR VOICE

OUR THOUGHTS

Resourcing and collaborating on CX initiatives across LoBs and functional units. And it is important to tear down silo thinking as well as corporate structures.

Another big thank you, and a common challenge we see in our clients and we will have this as a candidate for next year.

Governing CX

Well, we had it on our list for this year & somehow it got voted off the island. Which is odd given how important it is & how much work we do in this area. So, it is back on the list for 2022 with a little emphasis.

How can we make it all less complicated and more human?

Oh boy. I think we must separate these. More human, absolutely. Less complicated, we can certainly simplify it & make the CX (and EX and XM) disciplines easier to consume but I think doing this well is complicated so maybe a disservice to excessively hide that. One of my favorite sayings is *"what is hard is hard & what is complicated is complicated, there is no way around it & pretending it is otherwise is foolish."* But just because it is hard & complicated doesn't mean it isn't straightforward.

I wonder if your survey results might get thrown off by not enough granularity of response - aka, a number scale. But thanks for letting me participate!

Agreed. But we tread a fine line between too much and too little complexity.

I would be interested in seeing results on the key metric or blend of metrics surveyed, e.g. NPS only, CSAT only, CES only, NPS & CSAT, NPS & CES, etc.

We have lots of information on this if you want to contact us separately.

I'd suggest considering the following for the next survey: "Need for Executive leadership / C-Suite buy-in for customer-centric culture, CX & CS concepts, and initiatives

Absolutely, Got it on our list for 2022.

My company and I are just embarking on Customer Experience and all it entails. I've had no formal training or experience other than the Customer Service training I've received and given to others.

Good news. You are not alone. Even better news is there is more and more information available for free (*or almost free*) on the internet, let us know if you want some direction. Maybe you should start by joining [CXPA](#) (*the hub of the CX professional movement worldwide*).

Being a "newbie" I don't understand a lot of the terms and methodologies. So, my biggest challenge is defining what is critical for our organization at this point and staying focused on that.

A deep subject so contact us and we would love to chat with you further about this or even put you in touch with other newbies or recent newbies in our community.

We are great at finding insights, but implementing new solutions is painful.

You are not alone. Mostly we find this comes down to prioritization, having a clear & compelling business case and ensuring you engage key stakeholders at every step of the way

Also, a little more direction to get started would have been good. I answered based on priorities currently seeing, not what I want to see but it was hard to tell specifically what you all are asking.

Our intent is what you are currently seeing rather than what you want to so this is perfect.

Building business case and ROI crucial! Once that's in place other things will fall into place.

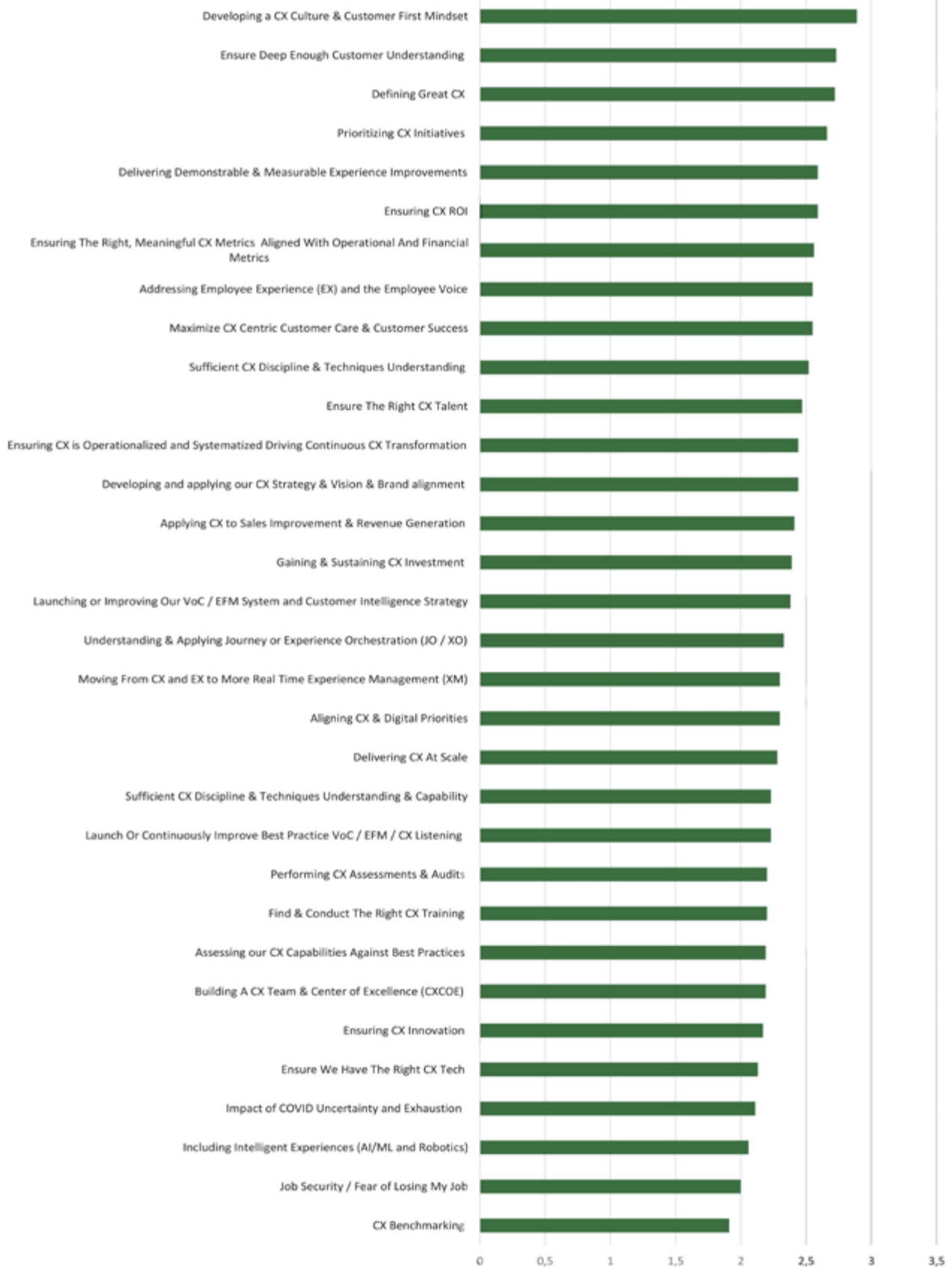
Yup, CX ROI. We can help you with that or we recommend you take a look at the work that the wonderful Maxie Schmidt & team is doing at [Forrester Research](#)

Also, being future fit after COVID.

Interesting that "COVID exhaustion scored so low". We were expecting much higher, but we certainly heard loud and clear that figuring out what post COVID Great CX will be and how to get there is a major obsession. Maybe "post COVID future fit" is the title of our 2022 survey.

DEFINITIONS AND SCORES OF OUR 33 CX CHALLENGES

THE COMPLETE CX CHALLENGES ARE RANKED BELOW WITH THEIR DEFINITIONS (WHICH WERE INCLUDED IN THE SURVEY TOOL)



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DEFINITIONS AND SCORES OF OUR 33 CX CHALLENGES

SCORE	CX CHALLENGE	DEFINITION
2.89	Developing a CX Culture & Customer First Mindset	» How do I create a customer first, CX oriented culture for everyone within and all the partners involved in our business
2.73	Ensure Deep Enough Customer Understanding	» How do I ensure our Customer understanding continuously evolves including more and better customer research via surveys, focus groups or online communities, leveraging Voice of Customer, Voice of Analytics, Voice of Partner & Voice of Employee and increase the use of Customer Understanding tools like personas, audiences & Customer Intelligence strategies
2.72	Defining Great CX	» Defining and gaining organizational consensus around what "Great CX" looks and feels like for us compared to others and then how do we get there
2.66	Prioritizing CX Initiatives	» Of the thousand things we could do how well do we prioritize our CX investments and actions to support customer priorities and business priorities, deliver ongoing support for our CX program and ensure our CX initiatives are correctly prioritized against other business initiatives.
2.59	Ensuring CX ROI	» Clearly calculating and focusing on CX return on investment (CX ROI) including how do I capture it and measure it?
2.59	Delivering Demonstrable & Measurable Experience Improvements	» How do I define and activate enough impactful experience improvements
2.56	Ensuring The Right, Meaningful CX Metrics Aligned With Operational And Financial Metrics	» Ensure we have the right, meaningful metrics to measure effectiveness, ease and emotional resonance of experiences, their impact on operational and financial performance, gaining and sustaining executive support, incorporating Voice of Customer (VoC), Voice of Employee (VoE), Voice of Analytics (VoA) and Voice of Partner (VoP)
2.55	Maximize CX Centric Customer Care & Customer Success	» How to ensure our Customer Support and Success functions continuously become more customer first & empathetic, and our Care and Customer Support functions are considered a larger part of our CX program
2.55	Addressing Employee Experience (EX) and the Employee Voice	» Supporting the application of CX techniques to Employee Experiences and adding the Voice of the Employee to your experience driven business approach.
2.52	Sufficient CX Discipline & Techniques Understanding	» Ensuring you have a deep, broad and evolving understanding the techniques, approaches and tools of CX, what is the benefit, what is CX Operating Model (CXOM) and why is it important?
2.47	Ensure The Right CX Talent	» How do I find, secure, educate and develop our CX Talent whether contractor resources or employees ?
2.44	Developing and applying our CX Strategy & Vision & Brand alignment	» How do I define or improve my CX Strategy, Vision and Guiding Principles, ensuring they are aligned with our Brand Strategy and our CX activities align with all of them

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DEFINITIONS AND SCORES OF OUR 33 CX CHALLENGES

SCORE	CX CHALLENGE	DEFINITION
2.44	Ensuring CX is Operationalized and Systematized Driving Continuous CX Transformation	» How do I turn CX Strategy and CX Design into CX Delivery that continuously transforms our business including potentially operating a CX Transformation Program Office (CXTPMO)
2.41	Applying CX to Sales Improvement & Revenue Generation	» How to ensure that we apply CX techniques to the all-important Sales Improvement & Revenue Generation through Seller Journeys especially as global economic recovery pivots organizations from survival to growth
2.39	Gaining & Sustaining CX Investment	» How do I gain the right level of financial and resource investment for our CX activities especially with so many competing priorities?
2.38	Launching or Improving Our VoC / EFM System and Customer Intelligence Strategy	» How to launch or improve (inc creating a business case and funding for) our Listen, Analyze, Act VoC / EFM system including a clear strategy for how we ensure we are moving towards a multichannel Customer Intelligence System.
2.33	Understanding & Applying Journey or Experience Orchestration (JO / XO)	» Understanding what Journey and Experience Orchestration (JO and XO) are, their value, platform providers and leaders and starting to apply these new and transformative techniques
2.30	Aligning CX & Digital Priorities	» With Digital Transformation consuming an ever larger percentage of executive attention(and budgets) how to ensure Digital First CX is a key part of our CX message but that Digital understands Customer Success is 'Digital First But Not Digital Only Multichannel'
2.30	Moving From CX and EX to More Real Time Experience Management (XM)	» Moving from CX techniques and occasionally EX techniques focused on project based improvements to an integrated multi audience and more real time, active Experience Management (XM) capability
2.28	Delivering CX At Scale	» How do we design and deliver CX at Scale including understanding what is different about CX at Scale vs CX as generally understood
2.23	Launch Or Continuously Improve Best Practice VoC / EFM / CX Listening	» How do I ensure I have a high impact listening system of surveys, digital collection, social media listening and Voice of Analytics from my digital platforms and even environmental sensing plus collecting other Voices like Employee, Partner and sometimes Regulators
2.23	Sufficient CX Discipline & Techniques Understanding & Capability	» Ensuring you have a deep, broad and evolving understanding and capabilities in the techniques, approaches and tools of CX and their benefit, from journeys to persona to CX Operating Models (CXOM), CX Metrics etc?
2.20	Find & Conduct The Right CX Training	» How do I find, build, customize and conduct the right training to ensure we gain a better understanding of and better apply CX techniques and Customer Centricity to create a more Customer First culture?
2.20	Performing CX Assessments & Audits	» How do I ensure we conduct periodic assessments and audits of our CX activities to ensure that we are on the right track applying benchmarks and best practices?

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DEFINITIONS AND SCORES OF OUR 33 CX CHALLENGES

SCORE	CX CHALLENGE	DEFINITION
2.19	Building A CX Team & Center of Excellence (CXCOE)	» Deciding if we need an enterprise CX team, a divisional CX team or a CX Center of Excellence (CXCOE), what does it look like, what does it do and who should be in it ?
2.19	Assessing our CX Capabilities Against Best Practices	» How to assess our CX Capabilities against best practices to create or update a roadmap to continuously evolve and improve our capabilities and plan prioritizing the most impactful investment areas
2.17	Ensuring CX Innovation	» How to I understand CX possibilities and maintain a continuous CX innovation posture as AI, VR/AR, ML, CVA and business innovations increase their impact on us, and our competitors and disruptors continue to impact us and our customers.
2.13	Ensure We Have The Right CX Tech	» How do I ensure we have the right Design, Delivery and Measurement & Improvement CX Tech, that we understand the available tools and best practices, that we gain the ROI on the tools we invest in, especially with so many vendors calling
2.11	Impact of COVID Uncertainty and Exhaustion	» Challenges in agreeing priorities, gaining and sustaining resource and financial investments and understanding needs because of the lack of clarity on the road to COVID recovery and sheer organizational and individual exhaustion.
2.06	Including Intelligent Experiences (AI/ ML and Robotics)	» Increasingly applying artificial intelligence, machine learning, chatbot, robotics and other and other capabilities of intelligent experiences to CX, EX and XM
2.00	Job Security / Fear of Losing My Job	» Concerns about job security constrain my ability to initiate projects, challenge others and take risks
1.91	CX Benchmarking	» How to benchmark our capabilities and performance against our competitors and against other CX leaders





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"It starts with our name 'Customer Results', Customer focused and Results obsessed with a heavy focus on prescriptive, data and analytics driven approaches, what we call CX Science. You can trust us to help you design, deliver and improve today's most impactful 'Digital First But Not Digital Only Multichannel Customer Experiences' ".

Our mission at Customer Results is simple, to help you understand and apply CX (and Digital) approaches, techniques and tools to maximize your customer driven business results and CX ROI. While helping you build your own CX capabilities and skills to enable you to be self sufficient.

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