Trends in Integrated Customer Experiences
Research on expectations and challenges for a 360-degree customer view
INTRODUCTION

Businesses Pursue Connections and Integrations

As the Fourth Industrial Revolution continues to shake up an already competitive landscape, personalized experiences alone aren’t enough to win over customers. Seventy percent of customers now say connected experiences — such as seamless handoffs and contextualized engagement based on earlier interactions — are very important to winning their business. Business are shifting gears to unlock and connect data that provides relevant, valuable perspectives on customer needs and business opportunities.

But progress toward truly connected experiences has been slow, and customers’ elevated expectations remain largely unmet. The reality is that most IT departments are caught between pursuing digital transformation, allocating budgets and resources, and aligning their goals with those of the business.

This research brief explores:

• Why connected customer experiences are becoming a focal point for businesses
• How connected applications and data underpin connected experiences
• What technical challenges IT teams face in empowering connected experiences, and what they’re doing to overcome them

SEE PAGE 12 FOR DATA SOURCES AND METHODOLOGY.
Customers Demand Connected Experiences

Customers have high expectations of the businesses they buy from, and their perceptions are driven by a multitude of factors that, together, form their experiences. In fact, **80% of customers say the experience a company provides is as important as its products and services.**

But what do great experiences look like on the ground? In no small part, they’re driven by connections. Seventy percent of customers say connected experiences – like seamless handoffs between departments and contextualized engagement based on earlier interactions – are very important to winning their business. Case in point: Even as they navigate myriad of online and offline touchpoints, 63% expect companies to recognize them wherever they engage. Forty-nine percent of customers – including 58% of the traditionalist/baby boomer generations – go as far as saying they have no patience for disconnected experiences.

Put simply, connected experiences are essential to meeting customers’ demands for elevated experiences.

### Connected Engagement Is Table Stakes Across Touchpoints

Percentage of customers who agree with the following:

- I expect the same level of service regardless of where I engage: 80%
- Connected experiences are very important to winning my business: 70%
- I expect companies to recognize me wherever I engage: 63%
- I have no patience for disconnected experiences: 49%

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1. Salesforce Research
Connected Expectations Span the Customer Journey

Customers don’t see individual sales, marketing, and service teams. Instead, they see a single, unified brand, and expect companies to act as one. For example, over 70% of customers say salespeople’s awareness of both the marketing campaigns they’ve seen and the service interactions they’ve had are very important to winning their business.\(^1\)

This customer sentiment is reflected in their expectations for consistent, omni-channel engagement.

The average customer uses 10 different channels to communicate with companies, and 70% say that consistency across those channels is very important to winning their business.\(^1\) What customers may not recognize, however, is the complexity that goes into managing just one interaction across a single channel, let alone many interactions across multiple channels. In fact, the average digital transaction spans an incredible 35 systems.\(^7\) Regardless, anyone who has called phone support for an online transaction, or turned to social media to secure an in-store discount, knows the frustration of lost context.

Customers Expect Unified Marketing, Sales, and Service Interactions

Percentage of customers who say the following are very important to winning their business\(^1\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Customer Expectation</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Salespeople’s awareness of service interactions</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salespeople’s awareness of marketing campaigns/offers</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service agents’ awareness of sales interactions</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consistency across channels</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tailored engagement based on past interactions</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Disconnected Experiences Remain a Sticking Point

If a customer has even one seamless, connected experience, their knowledge of what’s possible – and thus their standards – are forever raised. This is true even if such experiences aren’t the norm, and the result is a customer base that expects more.

Customers express frustration with lack of connections across their journeys, from the 54% who crave more relevant marketing messages to the 63% who want easier and faster customer service.¹

A mere 16% of customers rate companies as excellent at providing consistency across channels, and only 15% say that companies are excellent at tailoring engagement based on past interactions.¹

This isn’t a trivial matter for brands; customers respond to subpar experiences by taking their business elsewhere.

Customer Journeys Remain Disconnected

Percentage of customers who agree with the following²

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Customer service isn’t as easy and fast as I’d like</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salespeople aren’t as knowledgeable as I’d like</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing messages aren’t as relevant as I’d like</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shopping isn’t as seamless as I’d like</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percentage of customers who rate companies as excellent at the following²

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Delivering connected experiences</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing consistency across channels</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tailoring engagement based on past interactions</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Business Units Struggle to Unlock Siloed Data

Achieving a more complete view of the customer that drives cohesive customer journeys is much easier said than done. In large part, this difficulty is traced to data that is siloed and locked away in multiple, disconnected systems.

For example, a mere 23% of marketing leaders are extremely satisfied with their teams’ abilities to leverage data from different sources. In fact, difficulty leveraging data from different sources and creating a single, shared view of the customer only rank below budgetary constraints when it comes to top marketing challenges.²

But marketers aren’t the only ones grappling with subpar connections. Less than half of sales teams say they have fully integrated systems – such as the mobile apps they use to connect with customers on the go and with their CRM systems.³ Only 36% of service teams have connected their disparate systems of record and engagement that, when combined, provide a contextualized view of customer needs.⁴

Integrated Systems Remain Elusive

- **22%** of **marketing teams** say their tech stack is extremely effective at delivering a cohesive view of customer data²
- **49%** of **sales teams** say they have fully integrated systems³
- **36%** of **service teams** have connected their systems of record with systems of engagement⁴

Top 3 Challenges Marketers Face in Creating Connected Customer Experiences:²

1. Budgetary constraints
2. Difficulty leveraging data from different sources
3. Creating a single, shared view of the customer

Salesforce Research
App Proliferation and Legacy Systems Prevent IT from Bridging the Connectivity Gap

As business units layer on more and more software to meet their respective needs, the average enterprise is weighed down by 1,020 individual applications. This complexity, coupled with customer and business demand for connectivity, has propelled systems integration into the top three IT challenges.

IT leaders cite a variety of challenges in their quest to connect data and systems. Their top inhibitors include hard-to-integrate legacy systems, lack of visibility into where data is stored, and of course security and privacy concerns.

An average of only 29% of applications are currently integrated, and only 39% of IT leaders say they provide a completely connected user experience across channels.

Top three challenges for meeting IT's strategic objectives

- Innovating for the business: 54%
- Speed at which IT can complete projects: 54%
- Systems integration: 53%

* Includes responses of critical challenge and major challenge

IT Leaders’ Top Inhibitors to Integrating Data Sources

1. Security and privacy concerns
2. Hard-to-integrate legacy systems
3. Lack of visibility into where data is stored
4. Lack of expertise in legacy systems
5. Lack of IT governance over data sources
6. Lack of clarity around business requirements
7. Lack of an ideal place to unify data

Salesforce Research
Stopgap Strategies and Skill Deficits Create IT Headaches

Desperate to meet demands, many IT teams have turned to a patchwork of point-to-point connections between individual applications. But this fragmented approach causes headaches of its own. In fact, 89% of IT leaders say integration challenges slow or hinder their digital transformation initiatives, and 22% of the average IT budget is now spent on integration. While many teams are ramping up API strategies to enable more comprehensive, scalable integrations, a large share of IT organizations lack the critical expertise needed to execute. Nearly half (45%) of IT leaders report a skill gap at their organizations when it comes to APIs and system integration, and an additional 35% expect this skill gap at their organizations within two years.

Haphazard Connectivity Strategies Cause New Pain Points

22% of the average IT budget is spent connecting different technologies.

89% of IT leaders say integration challenges slow or hinder their digital transformation.

81% of IT leaders say point-to-point integration has created some of the biggest IT headaches they’ve seen.

45% of IT leaders say they have an API or system integration skill gap. An additional 35% anticipate this gap within two years.

Salesforce Research
92% of IT leaders say creating a connected user experience for employees and customers is a priority.\textsuperscript{5}

IT Prioritizes a Unified Customer View

Haphazard approaches to unifying customer data may have hit a breaking point; 92% of IT leaders say creating a connected user experience for employees and customers is a priority. What’s more, at least 79% agree that point-to-point integration must die within the next five years if organizations are to reduce costs, deliver on business needs faster, remain competitive, innovate faster, and extract more value from data.\textsuperscript{6}

Top-performing IT teams stand apart from their underperforming competition by viewing integration initiatives in a particular light: providing a unified view of data sources for the business users striving to meet unprecedented customer demands; high-performing IT leaders are 1.7x more likely than underperformers to consider this a high priority.\textsuperscript{5}

IT Leaders’ Most Important Initiatives for Achieving Business Goals\textsuperscript{6}

1. Modernizing legacy systems
2. Integrating SaaS apps
3. Investing in mobile apps

IT Leaders Who Consider Unified Data Sources for Business Users a High Priority\textsuperscript{5}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High performers</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate performers</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Underperformers</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Path to Connected Experiences

Start with the Customer Journey
First, build a comprehensive roster of customer touchpoints. Then, take stock of their downstream impacts on the customer experience. Consider if and how links between these touchpoints – or visibility of them to business units – can create a more connected experience.

Mind the (Data) Gap
If the use cases identified during customer journey mapping are missing critical context, determine which data connections would be valuable. Then, identify which data is stored in which systems, and how they should interact.

Integrate with Customer Trust at Heart
As concerns around data privacy and misuse grow in tandem with standards for connected experiences, IT and business units alike are increasingly challenged to meet two critically important, but seemingly contradictory, imperatives. Yet, connectivity, security, and privacy are not mutually exclusive, and thoughtful protocols and processes go a long way to both delight and respect customers.
Data Sources and Research Methodology

• All data is based on double-blind surveys of global respondents. All respondents are third-party panelists.

• Detailed respondent demographics, segmentation definitions, and methodology information can be found in the sources listed on the right-hand side of the page.

• Data from the survey may not have been published in the report cited.

Sources:

Related Resources

Learn how a new approach to modularizing a customer view to accommodate changes, trends, market shifts, and other factors can deliver the right experience at the right time.

Read about how to use APIs to make sure customers have the same experience — no matter which channel they use.

See the technology shifts that are creating unprecedented requirements for connectivity. MuleSoft’s unique approach to meeting them, and the impact this is creating for customers across the world.

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