

10 Questions to Ask Your CX Vendor

News flash: your experience with your customer experience vendor shouldn't be mediocre. If you're working with a leading CX provider, you should have more than a platform; you should have a partner that is completely focused on and invested in propelling your program—and your business—into the future. That being said, it can be hard for CX pros to identify which vendor will be the best long-term partner for them.

Ask your vendor these 10 questions to determine if you have a simple platform or a dedicated partner:

1. What percentage of your total customer base relies on you for enterprise CX programs?

When you're looking for a partner in business, you want them to be an expert in their field. This holds true for customer experience, yet some major companies only dedicate a small percentage of their resources to CX expertise. For example, some major companies claim to specialize in CX, but really the vast majority of their business is devoted to market research. For great customer experience, pick a vendor that is 100% dedicated and will not be distracted by other ventures.

2. What percentage of those customers have been with you for over three years?

Some vendors will tout big numbers of clients, but the information that really matters is how long those clients have been with the company. With a strong partner, you get what you were promised and clients are more likely to stick with them longer. Get past the smoke and mirrors and find the right vendor by asking about client longevity.

3. How many of those customers exceed 1 million interactions with you?

If you're an enterprise, you want to differentiate those who say they can handle a large program with over a million responses and those who are just running a small research survey at a big company. So how do you tell? Some companies will charge extra with "custom pricing" for responses over 1 million, which highlights their high cost of business and limited experience. You want a partner who doesn't blink at 1 million.

4. Who specifically will provide implementation and strategic consulting services?

Continuing the point from the previous question, it's one thing to claim to be collaborative, but another to have a blueprint for partnership. Ask who specifically will be helping you implement your technology and help you map out your CX strategy to pick out the vendors who walk the walk, not just talk the talk.

5. How often will those resources be available to us? At what rates?

Strategy sessions and check-ins are vital to a healthy partnership with your CX vendor. Though they're vital, many vendors charge extra for the bare minimum amount of sessions. It's best to clarify that these partnership best practices are included in your contract, rather than an add on that will cost you more than a pretty penny.

6. Will we be charged for survey responses? Why?

Some major vendors in the CX industry do not charge you as you'd expect. They don't charge you based on the number of surveys you send or other elements, but by the number of survey responses you get. If you're thinking this seems backwards you'd be right, especially seeing as the number of survey responses you'll get is difficult to estimate going into a contract.

7. What happens if we over or underestimate responses? Refund? Audit?

When you sign a contract with a vendor who charges based off the number of survey responses, there is a high probability that you will overestimate and therefore pay more money for services you don't need. However, these

companies do not offer any refunds; in fact they charge steeply if you overestimate. Weed these vendors out to make sure you aren't backed into a very expensive corner.

8. Are we subject to any parent company's policies and contracts?

This question is especially relevant due to recent acquisitions across the CX landscape. Now more than ever, it's important to know if you're partnering with just the technology vendor or if you're signing something that makes you beholden to a parent company's interests and policies. Ask this question to clarify if your vendor is working for you or for their parent company.

9. Can we review the 24-month product roadmap?

Crafting a roadmap for your initiatives is necessary to not only get the quick wins you need, but to set long term goals. However, not even CX professionals can see the future. There will be unexpected events that may necessitate adjustments to your roadmap, yet some vendors don't allow tweaks to the plan. Clarify this with your vendor to make sure your program is future-proofed.

10. Which customers can we speak with to verify your responses?

Strong partners create strong advocates. It's as simple as that. Ask prospective vendors if you can speak to current customers and the best of them will refer you to an advocate that will be more than happy to tell you about their experience.