

CASE STUDY

Creating a Concise Feedback System to Improve Global Customer Experience

The Challenge

The British Council, established in 1934 and incorporated by Royal Charter in 1940, is registered as a charity in England, Wales and Scotland. The British Council is the UK's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. One of its key objectives is to position the UK as the key destination for language learning, education and culture on the global stage. To achieve their aims, the British Council employs over 7000 staff in approximately 110 countries worldwide. Despite its strong reputation and international reach, the British Council is exposed to the inconsistent funding inherent to non-profit organisations.

As recently as 2014, the British Council was financially and influentially robust. In the year spanning 2016-17, the British Council's programmes reached a total audience of almost 700 million people worldwide and engaged directly with 50 million. In the same time period, the British Council had a total income of approximately £900 million, of which nearly £750 million came from fees and income from the services side of the business, such as English teaching and exams administration.

The Ultimate Objective of the Revised Customer Experience Programme is to:

- Create a customer-centric business model
- Increase customer advocacy, retention and loyalty through more consistent delivery on promises and improved CX
- Make it as easy as possible for customers to do business with the British Council
- Increase conversion of pre-sale enquiries into registrations through more effective sales teams and processes
- Improve return on investment of customer service through improved processes and more efficient use of resources

Additional funding came through a grant from the UK government, from the management of client-funded contracts, and funding from a wide range of public and private sector partners. By 2020, the British Council's English and Exams business unit alone aims to increase its contribution to over £1.2 billion of earned income in total, by increasing the number its surplus year-on-year.

Whereas in the past, the government funds could be allocated as required, the funding landscape has changed drastically in recent years. The direct grant funding from the Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) is now restricted to only identified official development assistance (ODA). Furthermore, the purchasing power of the grant is up to 20 percent less than it was in 2016 and inflation in some key countries is accelerating. To counterbalance the funding deficit in the non-funded regions and to make the most of the available funds, the British Council needs to shift its focus on delivering impact and effectiveness on their priority areas, particularly exams and teaching, as well as on activities that drive their mission and present value for money. This shift requires the putting of their stakeholders at the heart of everything they do.

In addition, the global spread of the British Council requires them to be agile across different environments of operation in terms of socio-economical, cultural and political situations. As a result, they have struggled

with fragmented and inconsistent approaches to attracting and communicating with customers, as well as achieving consistent quality service delivery.

In order to overcome these obstacles, the British Council joined with InMoment (formerly MaritzCX) and Frost & Sullivan to tackle the four identified key areas of the business that needed innovation in order to improve the customer experience:

- **Operational Efficiency:** Understanding their customers' views, preferences, demands, and perceptions about the British Council's services in order to improve CX
- **Cultural Adaptability:** Changing the mind-set to increase the adaptability and flexibility of the workforce, as well as professionalising and standardising their approaches, to ensure all staff are part of the delivery solution
- **Commercial Effectiveness:** Aiming to improve the rate of return on all commercial operations, particularly exams and English teaching as well as standardising and simplifying structures and processes that can be replicated all around the world
- **Innovating Around the Customer:** Providing new ways of communicating, participating, and even revitalising digital commerce with Generation Y to expand the current choice of communication channels the British Council has to offer

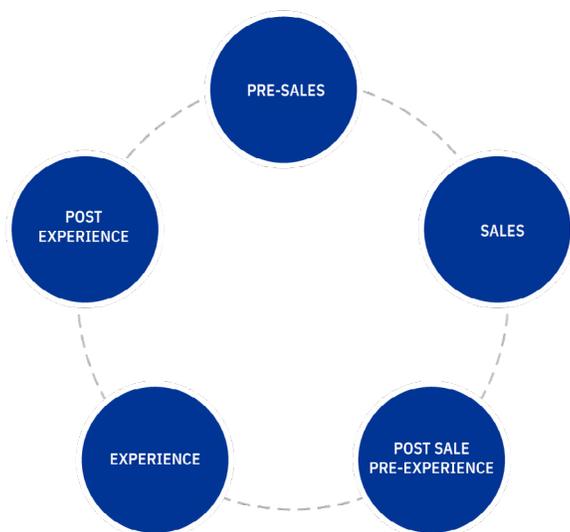


Gaining a Clear & Unbiased Customer Point of View

In order to implement changes across the four targeted aspects of their organisation, the British Council required clear, unbiased evidence of customer demands and preferences as well as an understanding of their experiences—satisfaction levels and sentiments—along the customer journey.

For the pilot, the British Council started to review their operations in almost 115 countries—gathering feedback from customers and potential customers based at the five identified stages of the Customer Journey.

To ensure the success of the CX programme, it was important to consider scalability, enabling the British Council to include every customer touchpoint that matters into the programme—now and anytime in the future as such touchpoints evolve.



Leverage Smart Measurement and Language

The British Council sends out three distinct global surveys—the Customer Effort Survey, which is continuous and provides a live feedback channel. Customers can give feedback after each interaction when they choose to and regarding any subject matter. The second is the Teaching Centre Customer Feedback Survey, which is sent out at the end of the teaching course, and third is the Post Exam Survey, after an exam was taken. Previously, the British Council experienced survey fatigue with less than ten percent responding to the Teaching Centre Feedback Surveys. In addition, the data obtained was often not linked to their business needs.

An initial step was to revise the surveys to only include questions that are tied to objectives and provide new data that was not tracked in any other source. Creating questionnaires that include performance metrics, such as drivers of loyalty and satisfaction, indicate performance levels and give frontline staff direction for steps to take in order to improve low scores. Another significant change was the move from a varied international paper-based into online-based surveys. Advantages of this change include standardised surveys and results, better global survey management, quick overview of results, improved benchmarking, and reduced time use of local employees to run and manually enter the survey results online.

The surveys are now constantly developed to remain interesting by either adaptation of questionnaires or developing wave-based focus analysis by rotating a block of questions each wave to provide additional in-depth data analysis.

SURVEY STRUCTURE VISION

PRE-SALES

- Surveys triggered at close of call/email interaction
- Research with customer panels—targeted at British Council customer segments
- Web journeys—digital
- Linked to CRM/Master Data Repository

POST-SALES

- Surveys triggered at close of a course/ after an exam is taken
- Online customer feedback survey platform
- Customer panels/focus groups/ deep-dive follow up
- Linked to CRM/Master Data Repository

LIVE FEEDBACK CHANNEL

- Give feedback when you want
- Open verbatim comment + simple quantitative measure
- Social listening
- To be linked to Master Data Repository/CRM

Reaching a Wider Audience

The new CX system increases the opportunities for customers to give feedback during their pre- and post-sales journeys with the British Council as well as opportunities to give feedback when they choose to and respond to targeted surveys. It allows the survey to be deployed anywhere—Facebook, Twitter, Email, Mobile, Intercept/Popup and Poll—enabling customers to give feedback in solicited and unsolicited forms at any time they choose. For instance, the Live Feedback Channel Survey is promoted by QR codes that can be scanned via mobile devices. Furthermore, all of the surveys were translated into 50 languages. All of the surveys are managed on the platform, a SaaS based solution. The platform utilises big data architecture, making the platform more flexible allowing for faster response times and easier customisations.

“With the support of InMoment’s team and their platform, we were able to set up a comprehensive yet easy to use survey and reporting tool. In a matter of seconds, the tool derives the characteristics associated with customer satisfaction and product quality, enabling us to identify areas for organisational improvements and as a result CX improvements.”

**PETE HOGG, DIRECTOR CUSTOMER MANAGEMENT,
THE BRITISH COUNCIL**



without any external support in analysis and project management. The platform provides intuitive drag and drop tools for the creation of new dashboards or online reports. With that, it has become incredibly easy for every person and location to focus on the CX information and customer analytics they care about most.

Due to the flexibility of the reporting tool, the British Council was able to tailor each user's view of data, dashboards, and reports based on their employee roles, organised by region, target audience, product sector or any survey criteria, ensuring that survey results can be fully understood, and multi-level analysis conducted. At the same time, push reports are shared with the relevant teams as well as throughout the organisation.

The platform also facilitates reporting on identified KPIs and key value to understand the impact chains and correlation between the different factors, as well as translating those KPIs into insights and recommendations to create and improve consistent global commercial strategies.

These two aspects—clear customer voice and data—are invaluable tools to support ambitious growth plans and at the same enable positive change, setting unified expectations of frontline employees worldwide

Reporting and Dashboards

In order for the British Council to understand how to successfully build a complete view of the stakeholders that interact with the Council and the use of its services for all local teaching centres, it was essential to improve the customer's access to information and insights to build consistent CX development and action plans.

The platform collects omni-channel customer information from feedback and other data sources, analysing complex data in near real time, turning it into a cohesive view of the customer experience, translating it into actionable insights, and making it available to everyone in the organisation by being accessible easily online 24/7. The platform allows the British Council to run surveys as a self-service software,

Modern Technology Facilitating the Input from Multiple Data Sources

To achieve a single point of view, it required expertise to integrate data into a diverse IT infrastructure and flexible software to consolidate various data sets from different sources, as well as an in-depth expertise of CX management—a combination that InMoment and Frost & Sullivan jointly provide. Both have worked with the British Council since 2013 on building a feedback system and data management respectively.

Closing the Loop at Local Level

Speed is key. Hence another essential step to move from a one-way reactive to a two-way pro-active communication approach between the British Council and its stakeholder was to link the surveys to an alert system to allow direct and faster responses, facilitating customer recovery and dialogue. Action and escalation alerts are automatically triggered in real-time by monitoring survey responses for pre-set rules that identify at-risk or high-potential customers. Real-time alerts enable the British Council's employees to act in response to individual customers within 24-48 hours of receiving feedback, compressing the time drastically from days and even weeks. By giving local teaching centres access to the system offers flexibility and increases the CX culture adoption. The new alert function empowers the British Council to implement effective, integrated closed-loop initiatives, increasing the internal value of their CX programme.

Delivering Key Insights

The over-arching idea is to establish the link between customer experiences, as measured in the survey, with business outcomes, expressed as customer behaviours and reflected in their customer database. This type of upstream linkage analyses can help to isolate what processes, policies, and employees and external stakeholder groups influence what customers experience with British Council.

The introduction of the new results and evidence driven platform has become an effective decision-making

tool, which provides the British Council with a means of measuring and adapting their impact consistently.

Pete Hogg, Director of Customer management at The British Council stated, "With the support of the team and the platform, we were able to set up a comprehensive yet easy to use survey and reporting tool. In a matter of seconds, the tool derives the characteristics associated with customer satisfaction and product quality, enabling us to identify areas for organisational improvements and as a result CX improvements. Internal and external stakeholders can intuitively filter within the dashboards for their relevant areas of interest and act accordingly. Being clear about the impact we achieve in each region, we are able to fulfil our aim to act with the customer in mind, providing a consistent customer experience everywhere and creating a cost effective and efficient organisation."

Being able to gain clear customer insights and turning it into immediate actionable insights, the British Council is now able to optimise their CX strategy, increase customer retention and conversion, maximise lifetime value and decrease abandonment. In addition, giving the local teams flexibility to respond individually to each customer and customer prospect promotes a more customer-focused culture.

With these findings the British Council has been able to close the gaps between the brand promise and their customers' experience. Achieving these significant impacts will have a substantial positive effect upon how the British Council improves and grows its revenue potential and net profitable income.

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