



# How Cross-Selling & Upselling Can Strengthen Relationships, Not Just Revenue

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All experience programs should be tied to at least one financial objective. This doesn't 'just' make customer experience (CX) goals easier to define—it also quantifies the value of your program to the entire enterprise. There are four economic pillars that nearly every brand considers: lowering cost to serve (easiest to measure), new customer acquisition (the loudest and most familiar goal) and retaining existing customers (a major workhorse for a strong bottom line) are the most well-known.

The fourth financial pillar, one that many customer success teams consider taboo, is the notion of cross-selling and upselling to existing customers. A fair number of the organizations I've talked to over the years get nervous about the idea of upselling because it sounds pushy—it conjures images of used car salesmen or boiler room telemarketers. What I'm here to tell you, though, is that this is far from the true nature of cross-selling and upselling. In fact, when executed well, a solid cross-sell/upsell motion can be the best means

of interacting with your customers. It creates active engagement, opportunities to share new capabilities, and strengthens relationships. It's about much more than revenue; let's get into how!

## HOW TO POSITION YOUR BRAND FOR SUCCESSFUL CROSS-SELLING

At its core, cross-selling can be quite simple, so let's briefly review how to best cultivate those opportunities before executing on them. First, I believe that a cross-selling strategy creates opportunities to identify gaps in your product and service offerings. In other words, use your CX tools to consider the 'white space' in your offering and see if your customers are noticing those gaps.

Once you have that intel, you can use it to influence the development of new features and services that your clients are sure to love. This is why it's important to be introspective when it comes to cross-selling and upselling—leveraging client insight helps them succeed, and



it helps you improve too! Gathering this feedback, especially in its unstructured form, goes a long way toward identifying precisely where your customers want you to take your product next.

As a quick side note, this sort of product innovation can be much more effective if you rope more teams into your view of the customer. Every department, even the ones away from the front line, has a perception of your customers, and uniting all of those perceptions can grant a holistic, 360-degree view that is vital to understanding not just client product needs, but who they are as people.

## HOW TO CROSS-SELL AND UPSSELL HOLISTICALLY

Now that we've gone over how your brand can best position itself for successful

cross-selling and upselling opportunities, let's go over a few quick best practices to create a strong cross-sell motion. Remember that the key here is to be mindful of what your client expects you to bring to the table, as well as that all-encompassing customer view we talked about earlier.

First, when you reach out to offer a new feature or to upsell, make sure you're reaching the right point of contact within your customer's organization. That tip may seem obvious, but remember that different departments use different aspects of your product (your CX program can help identify who to talk to). For example, your operations point of contact might not be all that interested in your new marketing research tool, but a marketing manager could be very excited about it and will be much more receptive to hearing more (as

well as appreciate that you've performed the due diligence of figuring out the right people to talk to).

That idea of due diligence also plays into why you're reaching out. To successfully cross-sell, you need to be able to quantify the business value that your offering's new feature would bring to your client. Trying to pitch a new feature solely on it being new or cool comes off as just executing a playbook, and your customer will immediately get that used car salesman vibe I mentioned earlier. Well-intentioned cross-selling means knowing not just what your new feature is designed to do, but also determining how it will make your client's business better. A proposed use case or a case study from another customer—even a competitor—works here too.

## THE SPIRIT OF PARTNERSHIP

This approach to cross-selling and upselling takes planning and thoughtfulness, but it's far, far more successful than just reactively throwing new features (or even existing features that are going unused) at your clients and hoping something sticks. This is even truer if you're dealing with an at-risk client. Nothing signals a relationship disconnect more than trying to "heal" an unhappy customer by presenting a cross-sell offer. Unfortunately, a lot of brands do and have done this for many years, which is why cross-selling and upselling are stigmatized compared to customer acquisition, retention, and lowering cost to serve.

The other, truly strategic reason that cross-selling and upselling in the spirit of partnership is the better approach is because it shows your clients you don't just want their money—you want their business to grow and succeed. It signals that you understand the value proposition they bring to the marketplace and that you stand ready to navigate the market waters with them. It lets your client know that you are committed to their success and to creatively using experience programs to identify what they can do (and what the competition cannot). **It gives your client reason to continually be excited about the next new capability you have.**

At the end of the day, no matter whether your financial goal is cross-sell/upsell or any other financial objective, the right experience program can provide intel to turn your financial goals into means of connecting with your customers. This is an incredibly powerful accomplishment for brands, because it allows them to achieve Experience Improvement (XI), strengthen their bottom line, and create human connections with customers all at once.



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