How to Speak the C-Suite's Language When it Comes to Experience Programs

Author: David Blakers, Managing Director, Asia-Pacific

Customer experience (CX)-led strategies have never been more front of mind in the boardroom. Leading brands across various industries have a corporate-level CX strategy of some kind, which confirms how important the experience program discipline has become in recent decades. I'm willing to bet that even if your organisation doesn't currently have an experience program, you at least have a notion of what this science is and what these programs can do for the brands that run them.

I've worked with companies the world over on customer experience, and I've noticed that, while many organisations have CX programs, only a handful of senior leaders across brands are actually committed to improving experiences and aligning business goals around Experience Improvement (XI). How can this be? Intuitively, delivering a more consistent customer experience aligned to your customer promise makes sense, so why is CX appreciation so inconsistent among leadership?

I believe that this inconsistency comes down to two main factors: leadership failing to understand CX programs' potential impact, and CX advocates failing to effectively communicate value and ROI to the C-suite. My challenge for you today is to read on even if you think you've cracked your C-suite's code, because what you see here today may still surprise you.

WHAT THE BOARDROOM LOVES

The boardroom loves numbers, which makes them an ideal starting point when making a business case for a CX program. In a global study we conducted among 10,000 CX professionals, my team found that CX leaders are 93 percent more profitable and enjoy 89 percent higher customer retention levels than their non-CX-savvy peers. CX leaders also tend to have a much higher NPS score. Numbers like these will catch your C-suite's attention.

In addition to numbers, I want to briefly touch on some of the more aspirational traits I've seen CX leaders exhibit. Brands that are CX leaders have:

1. *Clarity on their customer proposition and key personas*

2.   *Alignment between corporate goals and CX programs*

3.   *A well-understood value/ behavior framework*

4.   *An ROI framework that quantifies CX initiatives' impact*

5.   *A widely adopted intelligence-to-action capability.*

As you can see, values like these can completely transform any organisation. They're important for improving experiences, yes, but they can also instill a healthier culture, encourage employees to take more pride in their work, and ultimately turn your brand into a marketplace leader. Bringing these traits to your next C-suite presentation will help your brand's leadership see all of that quickly.
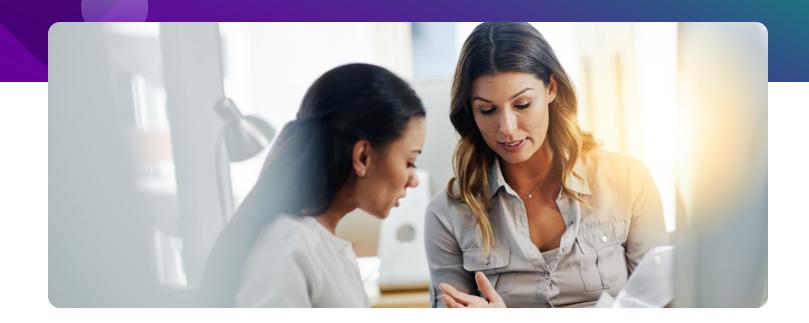
THOUGHTFUL & DELIBERATE COMMUNICATIONS

Numbers and aspirational traits are effective for pitching your C-suite on customer experience, but the next step toward influencing and affecting approval from leadership is to adopt a thoughtful and deliberate approach to your C-suite communications. Successfully speaking the boardroom's language means finding the right balance of reporting frequency, content formatting, and cross-functional teammates who share your commitment to Experience Improvement.

Additionally, it's imperative that you understand each executive team member's thinking style. For example, some leaders will be more quantitative and focused on numbers while others may be more qualitative. There are countless methodologies and frameworks that can help you understand thinking preferences, and none of them are one size fits all. Understanding these preferences is challenging, of course, but they have an influence on virtually everything your brand engages in (communication, decision making, problem solving, and managing styles, among others). Know how these preferences impact your organisation, and you'll know how to make your executive leadership team (ELT) understand CX programs' benefits.

Communicating CX programs' value well requires understanding more thinking preferences than 'just' your leaders'. You

must also understand your own thinking style and those of your teammates. Looking inward and being aware of your team's way of communicating and learning will ensure that you use the right mix of qualitative and quantitative insights when communicating your CX strategy, which can help you prioritise investment efforts and, ultimately, affect meaningful change across your entire organisation.

DITCH THE MONTHLY SCORECARDS

My final piece of advice for successfully influencing your C-suite is to ditch the monthly scorecards—or, at least, to not use them as the main means of demonstrating CX improvement progress with your executive leadership team. The element that binds your analysis and value proposition together far more effectively than scorecards is customer stories. Everyone loves a good story, and presenting your customer experience opportunity areas in that form will allow your C-suite to see your program in a human light. Numbers and metrics are important too, of course, but leaders who are truly invested in their brand's vision will respond very well to seeing how that vision plays out in connective, human narratives.

As it often goes with anything customer experience, getting all the pieces together is the bulk of the battle. So it goes with pitching your executive leaders; you need numbers, aspirational goals, an understanding of everyone's thinking styles, and effective storytelling to bring it all together. However, if you follow this blueprint, it won't 'just' get you CX sponsorship—it will influence stakeholders and get you the program support you need to meaningfully improve experiences, create a customer-centric culture, and become a venerated leader within your marketplace.

#ownthemomentsthatmatter

Visit us at inmoment.com