



Why Customer Effort Score Is a Powerful Metric For Product Intelligence

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Delivering on Experience Improvement (XI) is a goal that's increasingly in the hands of product leaders, who are the torch bearers of customer experience (CX) inside the apps and digital products that make up more of the customer journey. Whether a purely digital offering (software as a service, e-commerce site) or a traditional enterprise with new digital offerings (a financial institution, a car manufacturer), product experience (PX) is now a critical element of overall customer experience.

Both business customers and consumers have come to expect frictionless, simple, and intuitive experiences when using web and mobile applications. They make choices on where to take their wallets based on those digital interactions. Understanding not just the analytics behind what customers are doing in your product, but how they are feeling when using it, will unlock important intelligence that can help you improve experiences.

There are a lot of metrics floating around out there that can be used to gauge user sentiment. NPS and Product Satisfaction

(PSAT) are certainly the most widely understood. Today's conversation makes the case for Customer Effort Score (CES) as a valuable addition to your product KPIs.

WHAT IS CUSTOMER EFFORT SCORE?

As its name implies, Customer Effort Score is a measurement of how much effort a customer exerts in their interactions with your product. Traditionally, this metric has been reserved for issue resolution or contact center outreach, but recently it's proven incredibly powerful for new use cases with online services, products, and apps. Rather than focus on the ease of a customer service interaction, the question has been adapted to gather feedback about the ease of completing a task or an action in the product experience.

Customer Effort Score fits in seamlessly with product goals because user experience (UX) and user interface (UI) depend largely on ease of use.

How easy was it for you to complete this task or action?

VERY
DIFFICULT

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

VERY EASY

HOW DOES CUSTOMER EFFORT SCORE HELP?

Product teams are beginning to use CES to get feedback on how well a user interface supports feature usage, as well as to identify moments where customers begin to feel frustrated and lost. Frustration is an emotion that is closely linked not only to churn, but to a decreased rate of customer advocacy. A Customer Contact Council survey of more than 75,000 consumers found that the most important factor in customer loyalty was reducing effort, which was defined as “the work they must do to get their problem solved.”

While “frustration metrics” like rage clicks, error clicks, and form abandonment are useful to track, adding CES to the mix can shed more light on how difficult customers perceive tasks to be. And, with an open-ended followup question, they can also tell you why. Framing your product experience conversations around the ease of achieving key goals or milestones in your product or app can increase engagement, feature adoption, and retention.

This makes Customer Effort Score an ideal metric for product teams to use no matter how mature their experience initiatives or efforts may be.

AN EFFECTIVE WAY TO ENHANCE THE PRODUCT EXPERIENCE

Now that we’ve defined what CES is and its value to a product team, it’s time to get into how best to put it to work for you, your customers, and your organization. Where should you start? How can your team keep things going once they’re off the ground? And what should you be keeping an eye out for in an experience platform or vendor as their capabilities pertain to this metric?

First, take some time to consider the critical flows and touchpoints around your product; these can include key moments of truth for customers in your mobile apps, website, online product or service, and key customer communication methods like email, SMS, and online chat. Your most important KPIs should be derived from interaction points like these, and

honing in on them will also enhance your ability to respond to problems in real time.

Once you have these touchpoints nailed down, start simple. Pick the interaction most relevant to business outcomes.

For most companies, the best place to actually begin using CES is the moment a customer is onboarded. The question can be as straightforward as “how easy was it to get started?” As they say, you never get a second chance to make a first impression. In a world where 40-60 percent of software users open an app once and never log in again, anything that reduces friction during early and critical stages will have a major impact.

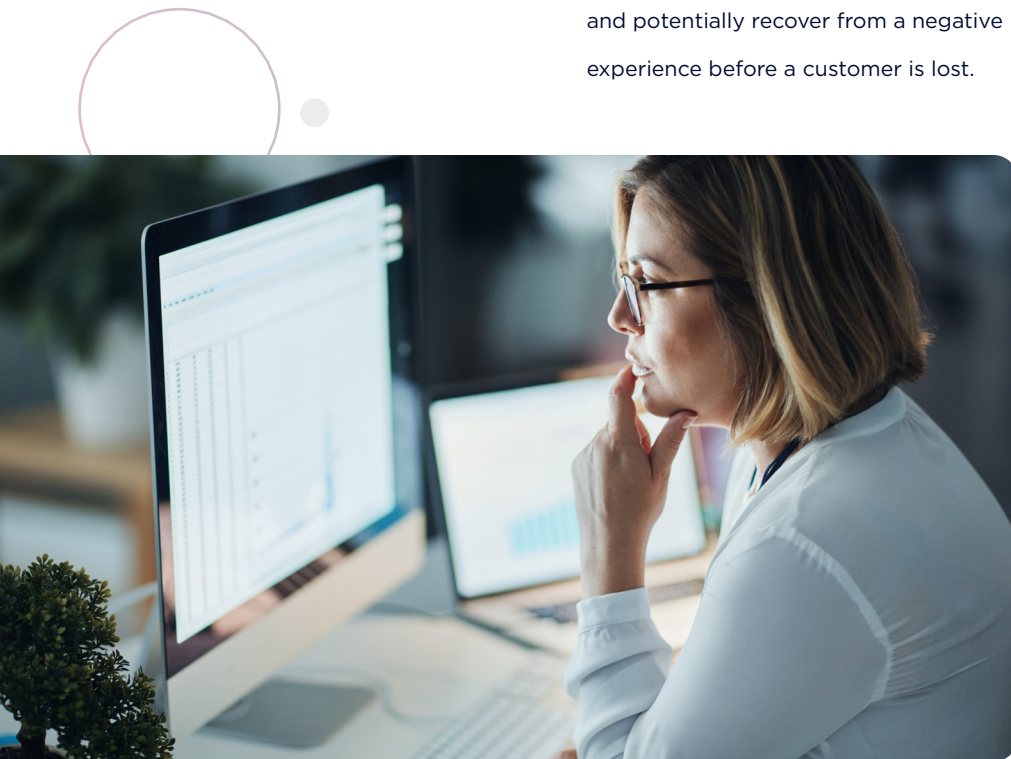
Implementing CES post-onboarding also gives you an opportunity to respond to and potentially recover from a negative experience before a customer is lost.

If onboarding is not a defined phase in your user’s journey, begin with a product interaction that is key to ongoing product success (or that helps a customer achieve an important goal). In all cases, supplement this direct feedback data with other metadata to provide additional context around things like usage and customer profile. The beauty of CES is that when used in a digital interaction, it becomes immediately actionable for a product team. Best-practice survey approaches are highly targeted, lightweight, and directly present in the product or app experience. The result is feedback that is fresh and contextual.

Modern product teams should then democratize that feedback to internal teams in real time. This approach brings instant, broad visibility to customer challenges with the product. It also encourages team engagement and urgency around solution prioritization, design iterations, and user-driven product roadmap choices. And of course, tracking the actual CES score as a KPI provides a valuable progress benchmark for improving each measured touchpoint over time.

USING CES TO BECOME A PRODUCT POWERHOUSE

CES is an effective tool for evaluating customer effort... but capturing the metric alone is insufficient for catalyzing the transformative change that your brand



and its products need in order to stay competitive. There's another layer to the world of CES that underlies everything we've talked about so far, and it's the notion of not 'just' gathering CES data, but how best to tap into it. In other words, metrics alone are not enough to affect change. It's how you use your CES data that will determine your product experience success.

Product teams should be in the driver's seat here. While it's possible for marketing or success teams to incorporate product-related questions into a longer relationship survey, this usually results in stale data that often gets passed along too late. It's far better to rely on a CES initiative (spearheaded by product teams) that can ensure tight feedback loops and instant data analysis. It's imperative that you own that experience.

Additionally, it's important for in-app survey implementation to be a breeze. As a product leader, you don't want to have to involve your developers every time you'd like to a/b test a new microsurvey or adjust a trigger. Intelligent feedback software will also ensure that your end users are

protected from being over-surveyed—an important consideration for keeping your UX clean and for preventing survey fatigue.

That's the approach I challenge you to adopt instead of the status quo: using a platform that can easily and immediately deploy CES, isolate actionable intelligence, and give your teams the versatility and autonomy they need to make a difference for your customers. Reacting quickly and innovating around product feedback is critical, and giving your company the ability to respond to frustrations, challenges, and questions in real time will create bold, human connections with your customers.

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