

Building Your Brand: 5 Steps to Building a Strong Brand & an Optimized Customer Experience

Customers experience your brand in numerous ways: products, packaging, price, marketing, sales personnel, etc. Each of these contacts or touchpoints molds the customer's impression of the brand. Some of these touchpoints are obvious, like product performance, and 1-on-1 customer interactions. Other touchpoints like the product manual, monthly statements or post-sales support, may be subtler in their brand affects.

Your brand image creates expectations. It defines who you are, how you operate, and how you're different from your competitors. In essence, your brand image is a promise – a promise that must be kept.

If the brand is a promise you make, then the customer experience is the fulfillment of that promise. The customer experience can't be left to chance. It should be **actively** designed and controlled in a manner that enhances your brand image. It must consistently reinforce the brand promise across every customer touchpoint or the value of the brand itself is at risk.

Here are 5 easy steps to building a strong brand and an optimized customer experience:

1. Identify Your Reasons-to-Believe

Your brand promise is irrelevant if your customers do not believe it. Therefore, your promise must be supported by reasons-to-believe. This will automatically add substance to the promise and define specific expectations for the customer.

For example, an automobile manufacturer promises potential customers that Car XYZ is an “intelligent choice for serious drivers.” What makes it an intelligent choice? Why should the customer **believe** this promise?

To address this question effectively, the manufacturer could frame its promise with two reasons-to-believe...**sporty performance** and **safety**. These two reasons in essence define “intelligent choice” and clearly set customer expectations. They also give the company specific direction for designing the customer experience through tangible customer touchpoints like vehicle design features, advertising campaigns, dealer sales approaches, and customer service activities.

2. Identify Customer Touchpoints

Each individual step in your business process contains a number of touchpoints when the customer comes in contact with your brand. Your ultimate goal is to have each touchpoint reinforce and fulfill your marketplace promise.

Walk through your commercial processes. How do you generate customer demand? How are products sold? How do your customers use your products? How do you provide after-sales support?

This comprehensive trace of your marketing, selling, and servicing processes allows you to create a simple touchpoint map that defines your customers' experiences with your brand.

3. Determine the Most Influential Touchpoints

All touchpoints are not created equal. Some will naturally play a larger role in determining your company's overall customer experience. For example, if your product is ice cream, taste is typically more important than package design. Both are touchpoints, but each has a different affect on our customers' experiences as a whole.

To determine the touchpoints driving your customers' overall experience, your organization can use a wide array of techniques ranging from quantitative research to institutional knowledge. The methods you use will depend on the complexity of your products, commercial processes, and your existing knowledge base.

4. Design the Optimal Experience

Once you have completed the above 3 steps to building a strong brand, you should be able to design your optimal customer experience.

Here's how:

Determine how to express each reason-to-believe at each key touchpoint. For example, how can you reinforce sporty performance (a reason-to-believe) in product design, at the dealership, and in marketing campaigns (the influential touchpoints)?

5. Align the organization to consistently deliver the optimal experience

A holistic approach to aligning your organization to consistently deliver the optimal experience is essential. Identify the people, processes, and tools that drive each key touchpoint.

Look beyond employees that have direct contact with your customers. The impacts of behind-the-scenes employees are less obvious but no less important. Similarly, the impact of workflow processes and tools (i.e. technology systems) on the customer experience may be less intuitive but crucial to consistent delivery.

Identify which activities don't align with your envisioned customer experience. Determine how to address them so that these components can be brought into alignment.

The Final Word

Every product or service you bring to market yields a customer experience. Is it the experience you intend? Does that experience fulfill the promise you've made to the marketplace?

By identifying the people, processes, and tools that drive your customer experience, you can actively design and control your own, unique, optimized experience. The brand promise you make to the marketplace will be kept day in and day out across every key customer touchpoint.

About the Author

Pioneering Marketing Strategist, Scott Glatstein, President of [IMPERATIVES, LLC](#) can help you turn your market opportunities into record-breaking profits by optimizing your customer

experience. For a FREE Special Report that will help you match your customer experience to your brand promise, go to <http://www.imperativesllc.com/publications.html>.