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# What Can The Most Hated Industries Do To Improve Customer Sentiment?

There are three keys to perfecting an enterprise's unique recipe for a connected customer experience (CX): Connectivity, optimization, and orchestration. By establishing multiple channels of communication, seamlessly integrating those channels across business functions, and optimizing them with business intelligence and business analytics, companies lay the groundwork for delivering a highly individualized CX that satisfies customers, cements their loyalty, and drives up business.

But most companies aren't close to meeting this CX ideal. Instead of offering customers an intuitive, individualized, and efficient experience, patrons are left with service that feels disconnected, impersonal, and redundant. While all sectors face historically low levels of customer satisfaction, the problem is particularly pronounced among airlines, Internet service providers, subscription television companies, and health insurance companies. To deliver an optimized CX, leaders in these industries need to identify shortcomings in their CX approach and take step-by-step measures to improve it.

## Where the most hated industries fall short in CX

When you look at ratings among airlines, television companies, health insurers, and Internet providers, a common theme emerges: Dissatisfied customers. As findings from the American Customer Satisfaction Index illustrate, these are some of the worst industries in terms of customer happiness. For Q4 of 2015, the ACSI reported an aggregated score of 73.4 out of 100 across industries. But the numbers were markedly lower in these four industries – particularly among subscription television services and Internet service providers, which both had industry benchmarks of 63.

Though the results are interesting, most of us don't need to turn to surveys to recognize the CX issues these sectors face because we've experienced them firsthand – whether it's the Internet service provider that floods our inboxes with unwanted promotional emails, the airline that doesn't notify us about cancellations until the last minute, or the health insurer that constantly calls with details they've already texted or emailed to us.

Scenarios like these are as common as they are annoying, and they point to the central CX problem: A lack of connectedness. While many enterprises within these sectors have established multiple channels for customer interaction, far fewer have taken the necessary step of ensuring cross-channel and cross-functional visibility. By failing to integrate platforms, applications, and services in a comprehensive communication ecosystem, these industries deny their customers a seamless experience and, instead, risk burdening them with redundancy.

## Starting with “connectivity” to improve CX

While establishing multiple channels of interaction is an important move toward delivering the choices, convenience, and control customers demand, it's only one element of CX growth. Businesses that haven't connected and optimized channels using data from across their organizations will likely face dissatisfied customers whose loyalty may end up on the line – especially when it comes to the 'most hated' industries. Here are three moves organizations can make to strategically guide CX improvements:

**Evaluate where you are and where you want to be:** What does your customer journey look like today? How do you interact with customers? Do they have convenient access to the information they need in the channels they choose? And is there continuity among these channels? What points of friction do users frequently encounter, if any? These are the kinds of questions CX leaders should be asking as when starting to examine how customers experience the brand. Next, consider what the optimal journey might look and feel like from the customer's perspective. The goal with this first move is to come up with two distinct pictures: The customer journey as it stands, and the ideal version.

**Identify gaps in communication between the two:** Once you've mapped out the current customer journey and the optimal one, it's time to examine what's missing. For most companies, many gaps between the current and ideal CX stem from a lack of connectivity: Businesses introduce multiple modes of interaction (voice, mobile, social, in-store) but don't effectively connect channels, functions or data. This can lead to both operational and CX inefficiencies – like companies repeatedly reaching out with the same message in different ways, or requesting the same information multiple times, which leaves customers feeling overwhelmed and undervalued.

**Prioritize next steps based on mutual value to the brand and customers:** Recognizing that it's impossible to make every desirable improvement and there's inevitably a point of diminishing return, enterprises should focus first on CX advancements that support customer expectations and key business objectives. For companies that focus primarily on voice customer service, it might start with evaluating opportunities for automation and streamlining integration between the interactive voice response (IVR) system and contact center. Others that have mobile initiatives in flight might first focus on proactive SMS/text messaging strategies to decrease inbound care costs, increase revenue, and/or conveniently engage customers on their smartphones with highly relevant content. In any case, visibility into customer behavior across channels and functions is critical.

## **Striving to optimize CX lifecycle management**

As companies establish proactive engagement and self-service strategies and connect communication touch-points, it is important to optimize performance with business intelligence and analytics. The goal here is to start with reasonable ways to harness data and then drive incremental CX improvements. Gathering data doesn't necessitate complicated customer surveys or third-party correlations; use the information that's readily available. For example, in many cases, customers are already volunteering feedback on social media. By analyzing data around consumer preferences and past behavior, companies can understand cause/effect relationship between interactions and customer sentiment – ultimately enhancing performance of the communication ecosystem, getting predictive, and even prescribing a better CX.

In a competitive digital marketplace, cable/satellite providers, airlines, and other consumer brands have to make a concerted effort to meet the needs of an audience that expects a highly personalized, proactive, and preference-driven CX and is easily tempted to take business elsewhere if brands fall short. These days, customer loyalty hinges on a connected experience.

### **Article Source:**

Loyalty360; <http://www.loyalty360.org/loyalty-management/article/what-can-the-most-hated-industries-do-to-improve-c>

### **About West**

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*West was recognized for its innovative proactive notifications suite by Frost & Sullivan, with a North American 2015 Product Leadership Award in the Contact Center Outsourcing Industry.*

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