



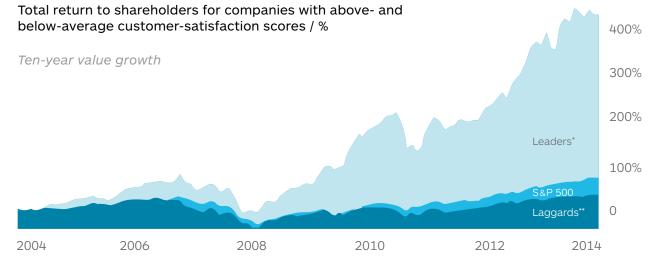


The most valuable brands of our time have built their success on excellent customer experience, from digital disruptors like Amazon and Zappos to classic global brands like Virgin and Apple.¹ That success is understandable, because brands that prioritize customer experience, or how a customer perceives all interactions with a brand, set as much as a 16% price premium on their products and services—and they also have first dibs on the 32% of consumers that walk away from a favorite brand after a single bad experience.²

But if customer experience is such a critical piece of overall success, why do as many as 49% of brands still struggle to design and deliver an excellent one?<sup>3</sup>

For most companies, the solution lies in the hands of the human resources and training and development department. Because for all that a company's success lies in how it treats its customers, it's easy to forget exactly how that experience is delivered—or *who* is delivering it. Your frontline employees are the face and voice of your company's customer experience. If you don't give them the time and resources they need to train, they won't succeed in their roles, and they won't deliver the experience your customers expect.

#### How customer satisfaction correlates to total return to shareholders



\*Companies with above-average American Customer Satisfaction Index scores within their industry

\*\*Companies with below-average ACSIndex scores within their industry

Source: McKinsey & Company



# A Culture of Learning Reinforces the Customer Experience-Employee **Experience Connection**

An excellent customer experience is a requirement for success in today's competitive business world, to the extent that 80% of companies surveyed by Gartner expect to compete mainly based on customer experience. But improving your customer experience doesn't start with your customer—it starts much deeper within your organization, with a culture of learning.

It might seem like a stretch to say that customer experience starts with training and development. But when 80% of customers would pay more for a product or service to get a superior customer experience, the connection becomes clearer. Building a culture

of learning has a positive impact on important HR metrics like retention, engagement and productivity<sup>5</sup>—three factors that, in turn, decide how your employees engage with your customers.<sup>6</sup> And because of the strong connection between your employee experience and customer experience, everything you do to improve one affects the other.

Most importantly, a culture of learning prepares your employees to address the significant changes and challenges presented by today's modern customer.



"Customers are more likely to be satisfied when new employees are confident, knowledgeable and prepared. And employees feel that way when they have training and resources. It's the difference between embracing a problem with a positive attitude and shutting down or giving a wrong answer. When employees can simply go to the help that's available on their Learning Management System, they're much more likely to be positive when engaging with the customer. Everybody wins, including the customer."

Rob Beck, Senior Learning Architect at ManTech International

#### Both Customers and Employees Have More Options Than Ever Before—a Culture of Learning Keeps Them Engaged

Your customers have more options for purchasing products and services than ever before. After just one bad experience, they can opt to try another brand or service provider—and they often do. In today's job seeker's market, the same surplus of options goes for employees, who can hop from employer to employer if they aren't having a positive experience with your company.

When you build a strong culture of learning within your organization, your employees have the resources and training they need to deliver excellent customer service with confidence. They get the development and growth opportunities they want and they pour those skills into your customer experience so that your shoppers have no reason to leave for a competitor.

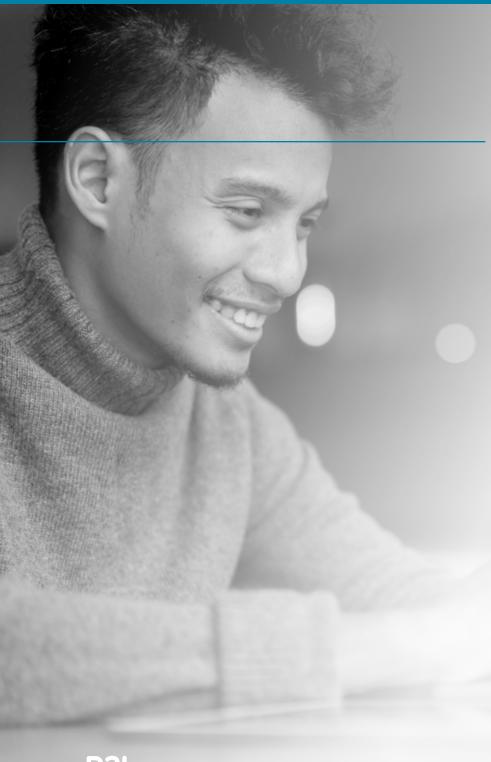


Customers' Buying Behaviors Are Changing—a Culture of Learning Prepares Employees to Support Them

Today's modern customer is increasingly independent, with access to a path to purchase via smartphones and tablets at any time of day. This means customers can educate themselves online and may only reach out when they have a question or a problem. They're engaging with your brand less frequently, putting more pressure on the experiences they do have with your team.

A vibrant culture of learning can give employees the support they need to handle complex, high-stakes inquiries with patience and professionalism, turning a stressful situation into a pleasant customer service experience.





## High Turnover Rates Paired with Slow Ramp-Up Times Sink Profitability—a Culture of Learning Brings Everyone to Peak Productivity Quickly

High turnover rates in customer service roles are nothing new. But when staff turnover is high *and* employees are slow to increase to the point of profitability, your company can get stuck in an unsustainable cycle of unprofitable employees coming in and out. And all the while, customers are receiving inconsistent service from what feels like a revolving door of new service representatives.

When you build a strong culture of learning, you capture a stronger sense of the skills, knowledge and behavior new employees come into your company with, and what they need to have to be successful. Then, instead of bombarding them with information, you can fill that gap by giving them the training experience they need when they need it.

"When an electronics distributor was struggling with onboarding and ramping up their global and remote workforce with face-to-face training, they realized their approach wasn't scalable or effective. By investing in their culture of learning and moving their onboarding process into their LMS, they were able to reduce their ramp-up time by 50%."

Kiara Graham, Learning Strategy Consultant at D2L

Source: https://www.d2l.com/customers/smith/

# Building a Culture of Learning That Improves Employee Experience and Customer Experience

Building a culture of learning within your company is no small task in a world that is constantly raising consumer and employee standards for engagement and technology. Here are five steps you can take to help build a culture of learning that improves both the employee and customer experience.

#### 1. Understand How Learning Helps Important HR Metrics

First, assure yourself and key stakeholders that building a culture of learning is just as good for employees as it is for customers. Consider that 74% of employees surveyed in a PwC study indicated they are ready to learn new skills,<sup>7</sup> but only 54% of businesses and HR leaders surveyed by Deloitte say they don't have programs for the skills of the future.<sup>8</sup> This represents a clear opportunity for your company to stand out as a partner in learning and development for prospective employees—a priority that will equally benefit your customers.

"When you invest in your employees, they become happier with their jobs, more proficient in the work that they do and more knowledgeable about serving customers," says Andra Popescu, Senior Vertical Marketing Manager at D2L. "That efficiency and sense of purpose translates directly into key HR metrics like higher engagement, lower turnover, and—increasingly—a better customer experience."



## 2. Slow Down and Take Your Time with Planning

Sensing the urgency of the connection between a culture of learning, employee experience and customer experience, many companies jump in and start making changes without a proper game plan. One of the most important things you can do is slow down and invest time in planning your strategy. Where do you want your training and development to be in a year? What are your biggest training roadblocks? Does your current technology setup accommodate the changes you want to make?

"Just as a successful company prioritizes the needs of the customer, a strong culture of learning will prioritize the needs of the employee," says Rob Beck, Senior Learning Architect at ManTech International. "You need to map out the skills and knowledge of employees throughout their career and through the course of their workday to ensure your learning products and events are relevant to what your employees are doing. A customer isn't going to buy a useless product. In the same way, an employee isn't going to be invested in learning something that's irrelevant to their performance."

## 3. Identify the Most Important Customer Engagement Moments

A key part of planning your strategy is focusing your training and skills-mapping on the highest-ROI touchpoints between your employees and your customers. That is, what are the top 5-10% interactions between customers and employees that will deliver the biggest ROI first? For example, 82% of consumers in the U.S. will want more human interaction in the future, which means soft skills like communication, positive attitude and problem solving are more vital than ever for customer-facing employees. However, the final results depend entirely on your unique company.

"The best way to identify customer touch points goes back to customer journey mapping," says Popescu. "From a tactical perspective, try to understand what your customers experience with your products and services and compare it to what you want it to be. Work backwards to answer the question, 'If this is what I want

my experience to be like with my customer, then what do I need to have in place for my people in order to deliver it?' Identify specific milestones where you can focus your efforts and help customers have a positive experience at the point of contact."

### **4. Develop Employee Marketing for New Training**

Effective, targeted training won't help your employees grow their skills if they don't know the opportunities exist. As you roll out new training and development, build interest and engagement by marketing new developments.

"You can make excellent learning programs available to your employees, but if you don't make them aware of the offering, they won't take you up on it," says Beck. "Learning events need to be advertised and marketed to employees just like a company's products and services need to be advertised and marketed to their customers. Before you release any learning product, create a marketing plan with powerful messaging, images and video clips to ensure that employees are aware of its existence and get them excited about it."





### **5. Build Processes to Sustain the Learning**

The typical onboarding experience pumps information at new employees like water through a fire hose, all the while expecting them to be able to remember and perfectly apply everything they've learned right away. In order for your employees to feel supported and to come out of training more productive, you must carve out time on a regular basis to allow people to integrate some of the skills—or the knowledge that they've been gathering—and practice those skills you want them to portray at a specific point of interaction over a sustained period of time.

"Don't assume your processes for sustaining learning need to be complex or labor intensive," says Graham. "Something as simple as sending employees an article, podcast or YouTube video around conflict resolution two weeks after their program can be an effective reminder and reinforcement of their training"

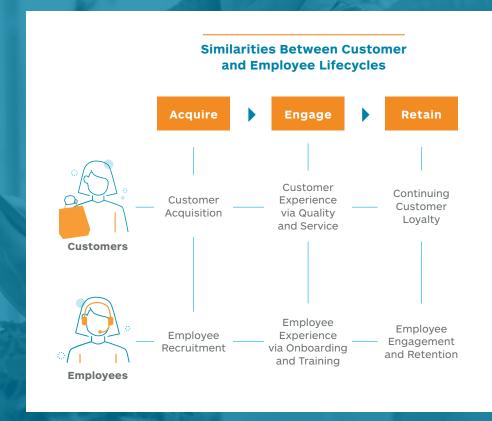
## Acquisition, Engagement and Retention for Employees—and Customers

It's no coincidence that employee experience and customer experience impact each other, Rob Beck, Senior Learning Architect at ManTech International, explained Just consider the similarities between the customer and employee lifecycles. Both groups experience the acquisition, engagement and retention phases of the relationship with your company, and both groups have expectations for what that experience will look like.

The way employees and customers relate to your company through the different phases of the customer and employee lifecycle play an essential role in the success of your organization. One supports the other, and it takes an intentional and effective employee experience to support the kind of positive customer experience you want to deliver.

"Your employees are the face of your brand," says Popescu.

"Every time they interact with someone, they represent your organization's values and missions—most of all with your customers. When you start thinking about delivering a customer experience, you have to put the people that are actually in charge of those interactions first."



# Meeting the High Standards of Customers and Employees with a Culture of Learning

When you invest in improving your workforce, it raises the bar for your employees and customers alike. If you want to deliver an excellent customer experience, turn your attention to building a culture of learning—enhancing the employee experience that naturally influences your customer experience. After all, better learning solutions build employee skills, driving higher retention rates, engagement and productivity, all achievements that directly improve the quality of your overall customer experience.



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