

Bridging the Gap Between Customers & Brands with CX Design

Brand communications have changed greatly in the digital realm. Communicating with customers used to be a systematic process that took the form of a linear marketing funnel, but now in a digital world, customers interact with brands in a multitude of ways. Getting to the root of who your customer truly is and the process of how they interact with your brand is a great initiative for businesses, especially in times of change like these.

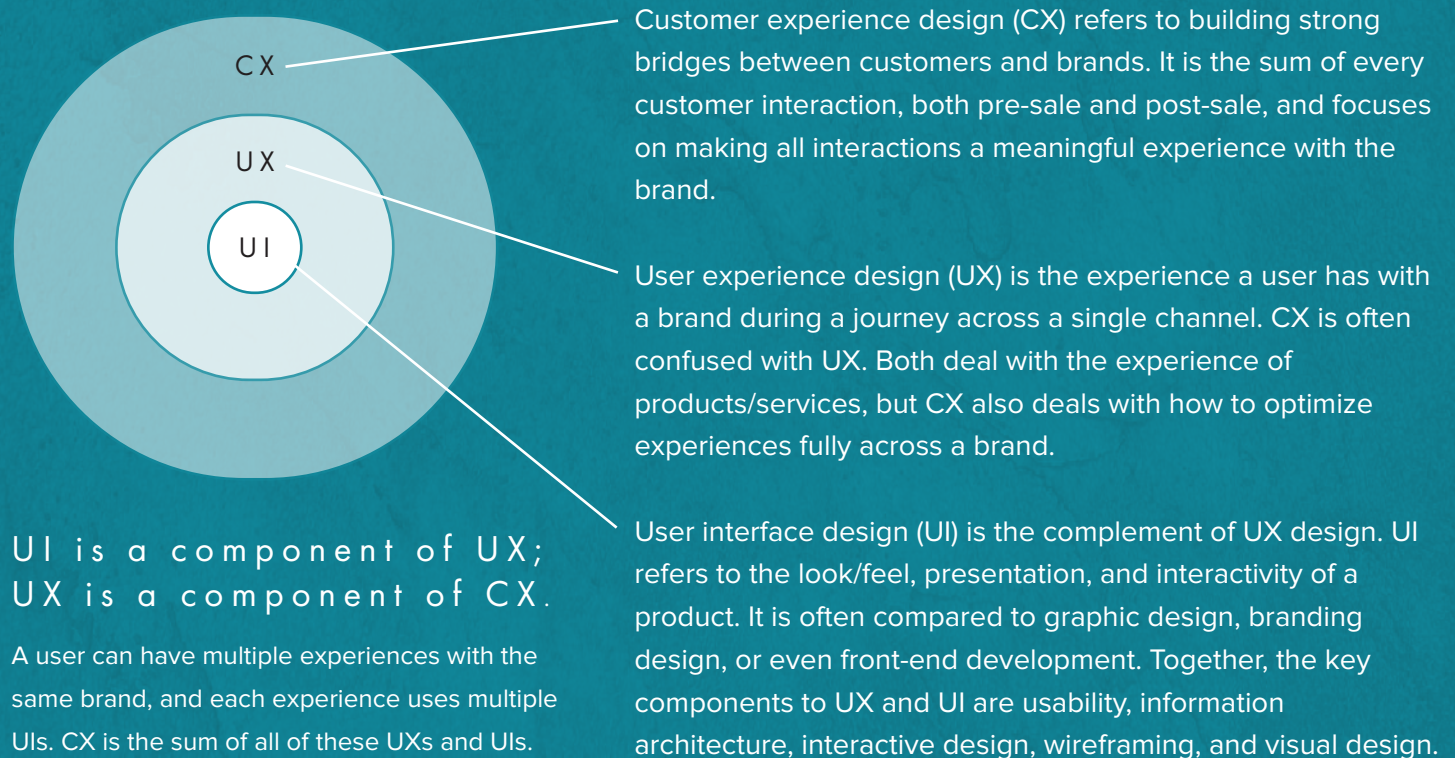
With COVID-19 and the ongoing fallout from it, businesses are being judged even more by customers for their digital presence, but regardless of where they are digitally, an empathetic, customer-centric mindset is a helpful one to adopt. That awareness can inspire organizational action to create better experiences that lead to actual business results.

The goal of customer experience design (CX) is to build strong brands that fit customer's needs. Knowing your customer is the foundation of a customer experience strategy and any successful business model. But this is easier said than done, right? Below, we will explore some helpful tools and thinking to understand how our own organizations can exceed our customers' needs across all touchpoints, with an effective CX strategy.

"In a Progress study from last summer, 74% of respondents said that their company increased efforts to support and improve their digital experiences (DX) due to Covid-19." [SOURCE](#)

What's the Deal with CX, UX, and UI?

Before diving into customer experience strategy, let's first understand what we mean when we talk about CX, UX, and UI. Across all of these disciplines is the foundation of creative problem solving to meet needs – ultimately providing meaningful and relevant experiences to users. Their foundation is human centered design (putting the needs of users first) and design thinking (a method of developing designs).



CX, UX, and UI are not new concepts. We have seen these design principles all throughout history, from ancient Chinese philosophies to ancient Greek studies in ergonomics. These practices will continue to make history in the future as the world is becoming increasingly digital and technology heads towards artificial intelligence (AI), virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR), voice technology, etc.

Walt Disney was a pioneer within the realm of CX. From his cartoon designs to his park designs, CX was always at the front of his mind because he wanted his visitors to have a sense of belonging. He accomplished this by not only meeting their needs but fulfilling their wildest dreams. Walt Disney's guiding principles for his team of engineers (called Imagineers) was “know your audience, wear your guest’s shoes, communicate with color, shape, form and texture.” These words of wisdom should guide any organization's efforts in meeting their customer’s needs.



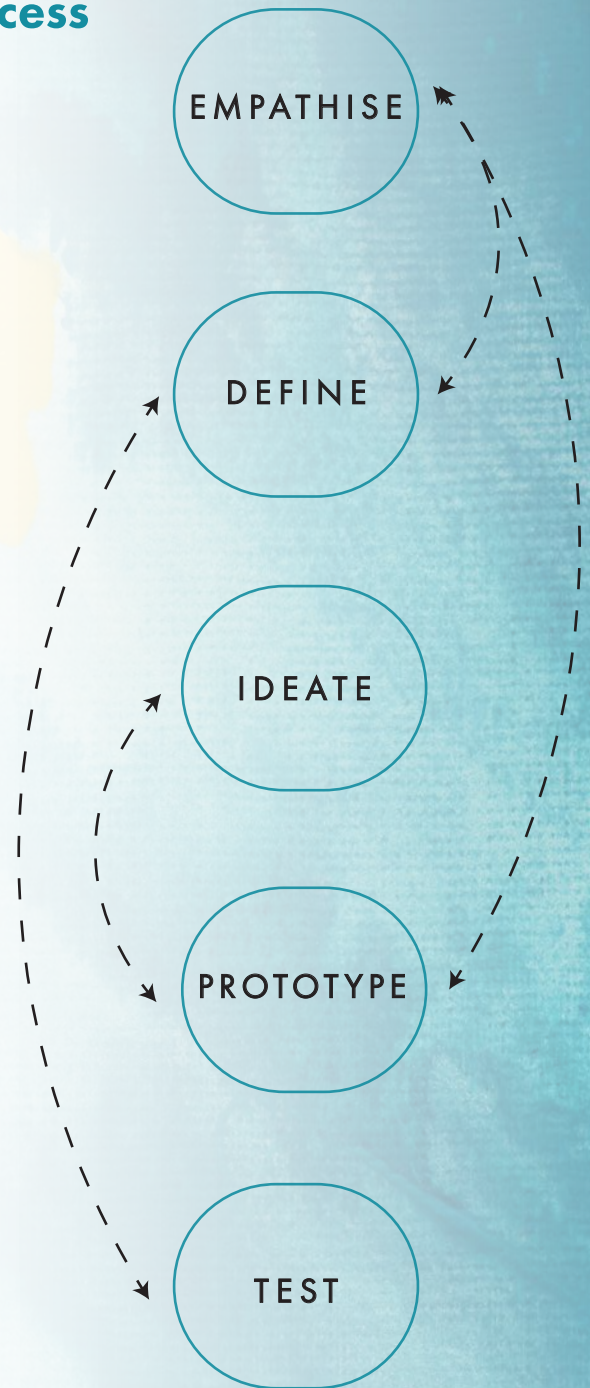
Never Forget the Design Thinking Process

At the root of a customer experience strategy is design thinking. There are five main phases to the design thinking process: empathize, define, ideate, prototype, and test. Within each of these phases, there must be constant iteration; it's a fluid process.

Research has shown that design-led companies outperform those who don't incorporate design thinking into their business strategy. Organizations that regularly follow design thinking practices see **56% higher returns and 33% higher revenues**. Additionally, Adobe found that design-led companies reported a **41% greater market share** as a reflection of design thinking practices, and 50% said that design thinking results in more satisfied and loyal customers.

If the above statistics aren't reason enough to make you rethink your organizational problem-solving foundations, design thinking has also been found to improve corporate culture. **71% of companies** say that design thinking has improved the working culture at their organizations.

Design thinking can apply to any kind of problem solving, but this problem-solving technique is extremely helpful when identifying customer pain points and business solutions to meet their needs. This thinking, grounded first in empathy, is critical for success with the following tools.



"78% of companies that prioritize design have a defined process for coming up with new digital customer experience (CX) ideas."

SOURCE



Design thinking brainstorming sessions, as pictured here with a sticky note board, are a great way to start! When there are no bad ideas at the beginning, your team will have countless creative solutions to launch from in creating a strategic plan!

CX TOOLS:

1

Customer
Persona

2

Journey
Map

3

Service
Blueprint

TOOL #1:

Customer Persona

Personas, fictionalized customer profiles, are a great way for teams to relate to customers. The more a business can define their customer persona, the better they can empathetically engage and vice versa. Personas help teams step into their customer's shoes to think about their concerns, hobbies, confusions, major pain points and more. So, if your team has not mapped out a persona, this is your encouragement to create one today. Personas are a great launching point for your organization to also create our next tool: a journey map.



TOOL #2: Journey Map

One of the most useful tools for a successful customer experience strategy is a journey map. Journey maps help businesses understand their customer's actual journey, not the one that they think is happening. A journey map can be incredibly valuable in defining goals for your organization.

Journey maps can be organized into five stages (awareness, consideration, acquisition, service, and loyalty). However, it is the steps, touchpoints, and departments that fall under these stages that makes the difference between a customer gained, retained, or lost. Every organization has a different approach but needs to spend time breaking down a specific set of steps that is tailored to their customers and their own business goals. Knowing which departments should be part of each stage and which touchpoints will be most effective in meeting a customer where they are, will pay off in the long run. A journey map is never “complete.” It’s a rapidly evolving tool.

Though each organization's customer journey map is unique; generally, some helpful steps to incorporate in any customer journey are to add elements of personalization, create automated contact forms, and answer as many concerns in advance. The goal is to add elements of ease for customers, so that we can help customers along their journey more efficiently and seamlessly. All of these things will help to optimize a customer experience – hopefully solving their problems more effectively and finding people in their journey at the right time.

Stages	Awareness	Consideration	Acquisition	Service	Loyalty
Steps					
Touchpoints					
Department					





TOOL #3:

Service Blueprints

A service blueprint is a diagram that displays what people, processes, systems, and communications are directly tied to touchpoints in a specific customer journey. Service blueprinting is the primary mapping tool for planning and organizing a businesses' resources. This approach is especially ideal for experiences that involve multiple touchpoints or coordination of multiple departments. It helps lay out all direct and indirect services to deliver the best experience for both employees and customers, and it is basically a part two to a customer journey map.

A customer journey map focuses on actions, feelings, thoughts, and needs from a customer's point of view, but a service blueprint considers the inside-out requirements to complement the customer perspective. Service blueprints map out customers' future experiences as well as the backend systems and processes to create great experiences. When mapping out the frontstage actions, customer journey maps are useful, and when mapping out backstage actions, look to the support processes within your organization that happen behind the scenes, whether that be technological or organizational systems.

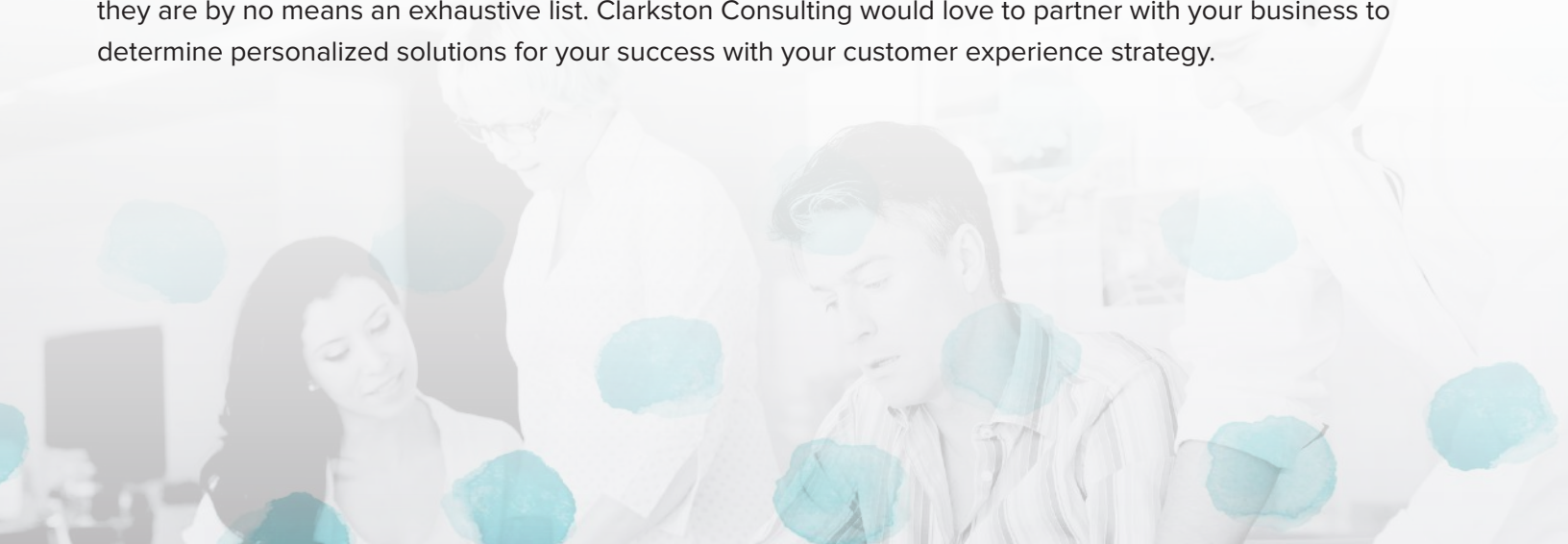


Going Forward with CX Design

It is now more important than ever to utilize customer experience design principles in order to understand how to reach customers uniquely, ultimately meeting them where they are. A true customer experience strategy defines actionable plans to deliver a positive experience across all customer interactions. There's no flawless formula for reacting to customer needs, but leveraging tools like these are great ways to create empathy, reduce effort, and improve brand relationships with customers.

Once your team has produced a customer persona, journey map, and service blueprint that works for your organization, it's important to continue improving them and sharing them with company stakeholders, managers, operations, IT, etc so that everyone is aligned on an ultimate customer experience goal. They can even be used to help employees understand how their role fits into the bigger picture – from training new employees to creating cross-functional teams. These tools are more than just documents outlining interactions, they can create solutions and ultimately fix long standing pain points for your customers and team.

These tools can range from a simple spreadsheet to complex software, depending on your organization's needs, but the important thing to stress is that whatever you use, these are tools with a greater goal: improving customer's experiences. While personas, customer journey maps, and service blueprints are great tools for CX, they are by no means an exhaustive list. Clarkston Consulting would love to partner with your business to determine personalized solutions for your success with your customer experience strategy.



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For more information about how we can help your company, [please contact us](#).

