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# Your Customer Journey Is The Real Product

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*Guy Nirpaz is founder of leading customer success platform, [Totango](#). He authored [Farm Don't Hunt](#)—The definitive guide to customer success.*



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In today’s cloud-centric, subscription-based economy, customers can easily walk away, which means businesses can’t afford to solely

focus on acquisition to drive predictable growth. Revenue retention requires a focus on delivering continuous value at each stage of the customer journey—a journey that starts well before that customer label is earned. Companies that have figured this out have proven that customer trust and loyalty are best earned up front, and then every day after that first purchase. Starting the journey at the earliest moment possible, these brands retain and expand customer relationships by providing a holistic customer experience through every touchpoint.

In the era of digital-first shopping, the most successful companies master this by drawing the shortest line between customers and the value they seek. For example, Canva's easy-to-use freemiums helped deliver design features from day one and paid off for the startup, which is now valued at **\$26 billion** (paywall).

Since founding my company in 2010 to help companies leverage the wealth of data at our fingertips and sharing my vision in my 2016 book, "Farm Don't Hunt: The Definitive Guide to Customer Success," I have come to understand that your customer journey is how your customers holistically experience your brand, your product and your company. That's why—as Canva and many other well-known, newsmaking brands exemplify—that journey is your most important product.

## Take the fast lane to value.

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As the self-proclaimed “Happiest Place on Earth,” Disneyland starts its customer journey online with virtual tours of everything—hotels, retail, rides, dining and finally, booking. On the website, the customer is allowed to choose their own adventure but is also gently guided through the ideal planning process based on data from feedback, searches, clicks and best practices. Disneyland sells a

feeling, which they make sure to digitally deliver *before* the customer buys.

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Take a page out of their book and front-load excitement and some fun into your tech-touch experiences before the customer purchases a thing. By building that value into the journey as soon as possible, organizations can enjoy recurring revenue in its highest form—customer loyalty and trust that is handed down through generations and many journeys to come.

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## Delight consumers at every stage.

Apple is another brand that front-loads the customer journey by treating the in-store experience as its own product. While the core collection of Apple hardware remains fairly static, Apple constantly evolves its customer journey to keep up with the competition and

the market. The entire Apple brand experience is treated as a product that receives regular updates, starting with its stores.

To perform as great companies do, make sure you are constantly iterating, problem-solving and delighting your customers at every stage of their journey, be it through an update to your product line or something new altogether.

## Unify for better outcomes.

Too often, there is little to no internal coordination or shared knowledge beyond the hand-off when it comes to selling software as a service (SaaS). Compounding the problem, companies that use different tools at each phase of the journey end up with gaps and overlaps in the customer lifecycle. With no single entity responsible for shepherding the customer journey, this model can lead to wasted efforts and purposeless customer communications.

Instead, consider a customer success (CS) operating model in which CS takes the lead on outcome-driven experiences throughout the entire customer journey and unites cross-functional partners around that common goal. With the customer at the center, the entire company works in concert to optimize the value of the real product—the customer journey. This model puts the focus on delivering value through each stage of the customer lifecycle.

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For companies whose operations depend upon multiple disparate data systems, monolithic technology platforms and competitive team dynamics, this adjustment can seem like a very heavy lift. For others, taking the leap to a cyclical, retention-focused business model may seem too risky. However, clinging to the status quo holds companies back from focusing on delivering value throughout

each step of the journey in order to retain customers by winning those individual moments along the way.

Embracing a customer-centric operating model means putting the right processes, people and technology in place—but there is no magic button. The biggest mistake you can make is believing your CS practice can be built in a day. Instead, start small by identifying one area of friction in your customer journey and collaborating to design and launch a quick, easy fix. Then measure and continue iterating that fix until you deliver the desired impact. Even as you're improving that solution, you can identify and tackle the next problem area so that you scale your CS practice organically.

## **Build together, block by block.**

Composable technology is the secret to designing a superior customer journey. When the customer journey is built with reusable building blocks, those units are easily arranged to produce specific paths, workflows and outcomes. From there, each route is easily replicated and customized for different audiences. When CS operates with a composable platform that offers a 360-degree, multidimensional view of each customer, cross-functional teams can collaborate using a single source of truth.

Instead of a big bang install that takes months, composable technology enables a more modular, flexible approach so you can quickly get started and adapt as your needs shift. First integrating the data you need now and then, over time, add additional data sources or systems you use to get a more holistic understanding of your customer portfolio. Rather than tackling an entire customer journey across all phases of the lifecycle, focus on onboarding or another stage where you can help your customers achieve their outcomes. Perhaps most importantly, composable tech gives teams

visibility into customer health, inviting shared participation across multiple functions.

When the customer journey is treated as a product over which everyone in your organization has agency, priorities shift naturally from reactive to proactive. With the customer at the center of all outcome-driven impactful engagements, moments that matter unfold, valuable trust is earned and recurring revenue is maintained and multiplied.

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