



Practical guide: Create a customer experience programme

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What a customer experience programme is

A customer experience programme is a managed set of changes to the moments where a customer deals with your business, each with an owner, a baseline and a review date. The word programme carries the weight. Anything without those three things is a set of good intentions.

Forrester measured 469 brands across 12 industries and 13 countries in 2025, asking more than 275,000 customers. 21% of brands got worse over the year, 6% improved and 73% stood still. Standing still is the normal position, and improving is rare enough to be a competitive position on its own.

What it is not

It is not a survey programme. A score nobody acts on costs money every month and changes nothing. The measurement is the smallest part of the work.

It is not a training day. Forrester puts the multi-year decline down to four causes: weaker employee experience, less attention paid to customers, technology projects that did not work, and economic conditions. Three of those four are decisions taken inside the business, above the people serving customers.



What a poor experience costs a business

McKinsey puts the commercial case in one line: replacing the value of one lost customer can take three new ones. The same work found that companies leading on customer experience grew revenue at more than double the rate of the laggards between 2016 and 2021. Four reasons this belongs on the agenda of a business with fewer than a hundred staff.

The arithmetic favours keeping customers

Winning three new customers costs three times the marketing, three times the sales time and three times the onboarding. Keeping the one you had costs a phone call and a fix.

Standing still moves you backwards

73% of the brands Forrester measured did not change. Customer expectations did. The comparison a customer makes is with the best experience they had that week, in any category.

It is the cheapest growth available

Most of the fixes are process and authority rather than spending. Faster first response, one person who owns a complaint, a clearer confirmation email. Very little of it needs a budget line.

It gives the board something to act on

Three numbers reviewed monthly, each with a named owner, turn a subject that usually produces opinions into a subject that produces decisions.



Map the experience before you change it

Every business has the same five stages, whatever it sells. Write the moments that sit inside each one, name who owns them, and say what the customer is trying to do.

Find	How they first hear of you and check you
Decide	Enquiry, quote, questions, comparison
Buy	Order, payment, confirmation, delivery
Use	Service, support, problems, repairs
Return	Renewal, repeat purchase, recommendation

Then score every moment on three questions. Is it easy. Does it work. Does it feel right. Three marks out of five each, so fifteen for a moment that could not be better.

The three moments that decide it

Most businesses have twenty or thirty moments and three of them carry the outcome.

The first reply. How long a new enquiry waits, and whether the answer is useful. This is the moment most small businesses lose on and the cheapest to fix.

The moment something goes wrong. A customer whose problem is solved quickly is more loyal than one who never had a problem. A customer passed between three people is gone.

The renewal or repeat. Whether anyone contacts them before they have to decide, or the business waits and hopes.



Three numbers to run it on

A programme needs one number for the relationship, one for the transaction and one for what customers actually did. More than three and the monthly review becomes a reading exercise.

Relationship	Would they recommend you. Asked once or twice a year
Transaction	How easy was that. Asked straight after the moment
Behaviour	Repeat rate, losses and share of spend, from your own records

The behaviour number is the one that settles arguments, because it comes from your accounts rather than from what somebody said in a survey.

The trap to avoid

Qualtrics XM Institute ran its 2025 study on the return from customer experience across 23,730 consumers in 20 industries. Studies of that size tell you the relationship between satisfaction and spending holds. They cannot tell you which moment in your own business is broken.

Ask fewer questions, act on all of them, and remove any question you have never once changed anything because of.

Replacing the value of one lost customer can take three new ones.



Actions to build the programme

01

Map the five stages with your own people

Half a day, with the people who answer the phone and handle the complaints. They already know where it breaks.

Write every moment down. Expect twenty to thirty for a small business.

02

Score every moment out of fifteen

Easy, works, feels right. Five marks each. Use the worksheet on page 9 and score out loud so the disagreements come out.

Anything under nine is a candidate. Anything under six with high volume goes first.

03

Choose three moments

Three, chosen for volume and for how much they cost you when they go wrong. Write down the ones you are leaving for later and why.

A programme with thirty fixes is a wish list. Three get done.

04

Name an owner and record the baseline

One person per moment, with the authority to change it. Write down what it looks like today: hours, complaints, losses, whatever the moment produces.

Put a review date against each one before anybody starts.

Actions to build the programme

05

Fix the failure moment first

Take the moment where something goes wrong before you take anything else. It carries the most emotion, the most talking about you, and usually the least cost to put right.

Set a target for how long a customer waits and who owns it end to end.

06

Give the frontline the authority

Name a value up to which anyone serving a customer can solve a problem without asking. AED 500 or £100 is enough in most small businesses.

Most bad experiences are a person who wanted to help and was not allowed to.

07

Go back to the customer who told you

Anyone who scores you badly gets a call within two working days from a person, not an automated message.

This one step does more for the relationship number than any other on the list, and it is free.

08

Review monthly, cut a question

One hour a month, three numbers, three owners, what changed and what happens next. Put it in the same meeting as the sales figures.

Every quarter, remove one question you have never acted on. The survey gets shorter and the response rate rises.

A worked example

A made-up furniture retailer in the UAE. Four showrooms, an online shop, 60 staff, and a delivery and assembly service. The figures are invented. The pattern is common in any business that sells something and then has to deliver it.

What the map showed

27 moments across the five stages. The lowest scores were all in Buy and Use, and none of them were in the showroom, which is where the business had spent its money.

Delivery slot confirmation	4
Damaged item reported	5
Assembly appointment changed	6
Online enquiry first reply	7
Showroom welcome	13

The three chosen

Damaged item reported, delivery slot confirmation, and the online first reply. Everything else was written down and left.

What was done, and what changed

Baseline: a damage report took 9 days to resolve and passed through 4 people. Delivery slots were confirmed by one text message with no way to reply.

Authority: showroom and delivery staff given AED 500 to settle a problem without asking anyone.

One owner: a single named person handled every damage report from the call to the replacement.

After 90 days: damage resolution down from 9 days to 2. Repeat purchase within 12 months up from 11% to 17% among customers who had reported a problem, which was higher than among customers who never had one.

Cost: no new software, and about AED 9,000 in settlements over the quarter.



The one-page experience map

List the moments inside each stage. Score each one out of five for easy, works and feels right. Add across for the total out of fifteen.

STAGE	MOMENT	OWNER	EASY	WORKS	FEELS	TOTAL
Find						
Decide						
Buy						
Use						
Return						

THE THREE MOMENTS WE ARE FIXING, AND THE OWNER OF EACH

LEFT FOR LATER, AND WHY

OUR THREE NUMBERS, TODAY'S BASELINE AND THE REVIEW DATE

Mistakes to avoid and sources to read

Six mistakes I see most often

- ☐ Buying survey software before mapping a single moment.
- ☐ Measuring a score for two years and changing nothing because of it.
- ☐ Spending on the part customers already rate highly, usually the showroom or the website.
- ☐ Asking people to care about customers while refusing them the authority to help one.
- ☐ Running the programme from marketing, when most of the broken moments sit in operations.
- ☐ Choosing thirty fixes, so none of them has an owner who can be held to it.

A note on the evidence

The Forrester index covers larger brands in 13 countries, so the absolute scores mean little to a business with 60 staff. The direction of travel is the useful part. The McKinsey figures come from work published in 2023 covering 2016 to 2021, so treat them as the shape of the argument rather than a current benchmark.

Sources

Forrester, 2025 Global Customer Experience Index rankings, 24 June 2025, covering 469 brands, 12 industries and 13 countries, with more than 275,000 customers surveyed. McKinsey, Experience-led growth: a new way to create value, 23 March 2023. Qualtrics XM Institute, ROI of Customer Experience 2025, covering 23,730 consumers across 20 industries. All checked 22 August 2026.

Related reading

On ataylorcmo.com, under Insights: customer retention, and building customer loyalty. Related guides in this series: Keep your customers, retention and loyalty, and Measure your marketing, at ataylorcmo.com/guides.



Conclusion

Half a day mapping the five stages, a score out of fifteen for every moment, three moments chosen with an owner and a baseline, and one hour a month to review three numbers. That is the programme.

73% of the brands Forrester measured did not move in a year. The work that separates a business from that group is mostly process and authority, and it is available to a company of any size.

Next step

I offer a 30 minute discovery call at no charge. Bring the last three complaints you received and I will map where they came from.

Book at ataylorcmo.com, or write to adam@ataylorcmo.com.



Adam Taylor

MSc, FCIM, CDMP. A marketing leader with more than 20 years of international experience driving growth, market expansion and competitive positioning across luxury retail, real estate, free zones, automotive and mega-events.

I work as a fractional chief marketing officer for owners, executives and boards in the UAE, the UK and internationally. My career includes Group Head of Marketing at Emaar, Director of Events and Entertainment at Expo 2020 Dubai, and marketing leadership of a UAE free zone, with more than 5,000 events and activations delivered for premium brands.

Credentials

MSc Marketing. Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Marketing. Certified Digital Marketing Professional.

Experience

More than 20 years across the UAE, the wider Middle East, the UK and global markets.

Specialisms

Marketing strategy, brand positioning, UAE market entry, growth and marketing return on investment, events and experiential, and board governance.

Brands and organisations

Emaar · Expo 2020 Dubai · The Dubai Mall · IFZA · Al Tayar Motors · Ferrari · Gucci · Harvey Nichols · Bloomingdale's · Dolce and Gabbana

Contact

If you have a question about this guide, or want a second opinion on where your customer experience is losing you money, write or call. I reply within one working day.



adam@ataylorcmo.com



ataylorcmo.com



linkedin.com/in/adam-taylor-msc



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