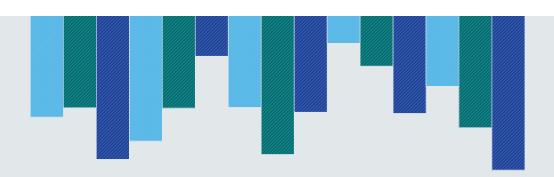


# A New Approach to Customer Data Provides a Big Payoff





#### SPONSOR PERSPECTIVE

There's no doubt the pandemic has combined with global economic trends and geopolitical forces to ramp up pressure on businesses. As demand fluctuates and supply chains break, companies are focusing on customer experience (CX) as their best chance to gain a market advantage.

Yet CX is not a simple game to play. The definition of a good experience is constantly changing thanks to new technologies and innovations. At the same time, consumers are demanding even more from businesses: personalized offers paired with next-day delivery, seamless—yet secure—buying journeys, proactive service with short time to resolution, and quality products made with sustainability in mind.

Companies in the vanguard are responding accordingly. They understand that in today's globally interconnected world, they must create value for a full range of stakeholders, from customers to shareholders. To accomplish this value creation, they're defining new strategies to get closer to consumers, address growing privacy concerns, make every customer engagement count, and seize moments of opportunity when they arise.

These CX factors are at the forefront of our minds as we seek to help our clients improve operational efficiency and drive revenue growth. The good news: the insights needed to navigate this challenging environment, deliver market-differentiating experiences, and meet growth goals are within our collective grasp. The key is to unlock the power of data to understand the products, channels, and business models that can help exceed customer expectations, allow for greater scale, lower costs, and reduce risks.

At SAP, we believe an enterprise customer data platform (CDP) can usher in a new era for data management. The foundation of this revolutionary approach is a true, consumer-driven identity, linked directly with preferences and consent data. Brands can build on this foundation by using the CDP to connect the back end of business processes with the real-time demands of customer engagement. A unified model of financial, supply chain, manufacturing, and customer data within the enterprise CDP supercharges operational planning and experience delivery. It offers a competitive edge for business leaders and technical strength for technology leaders now and in the future.

The insights in this report show the need for the enterprise CDP. They also show exciting possibilities for organizations looking to overcome today's challenges by being bold with their CX strategy. We are excited to be part of the momentum.



Ratul Shah Head of Product Marketing, Customer Data Solutions SAP

## A New Approach to Customer Data Provides a Big Payoff

Across all industries, companies are grappling with how to use new kinds of data in different ways to meet heightened customer expectations. Brand loyalty can seem like an elusive goal as customers increasingly sample new offerings and consider other options available to them in this customized digital age. "Nine out of 10 customers state that having one negative experience with a brand will make them less likely to shop with that brand in the future," says Sheryl Kingstone, research director, customer experience and commerce, at 451 Research, a New York City-based technology industry research firm, part of S&P Global Market Intelligence.

Consequently, companies are pursuing numerous data-focused initiatives to improve the customer experience (CX) while showing they appreciate that customers are in charge of their data. Forty percent are using data/analytics to gain better insights into customer behaviors and company performance, according to a 2021 survey by 451 Research. FIGURE 1 Roughly a third of companies said they are optimizing the customer journey across multiple channels, gaining a single view of the customer to develop a deeper connection with customers, and enhancing customer self-service through digital channels.

These CX initiatives occupy common ground. Organizations want to understand and improve business insights and company performance across the customer journey. In doing so, though, they face the challenges of organizing, managing, and using huge amounts of data from traditional

#### HIGHLIGHTS

Organizations want to understand and improve business insights and company performance across the customer journey. In doing so, though, they face the challenges of organizing, managing, and using huge amounts of data.

A customer experience data strategy must be directly tied to the overall business strategy, with a keen focus on understanding customers' preferences, gaining consent to use their data, and appreciating the specific needs of a customercentric digital transformation.

A centralized data model for the whole enterprise is a critical element of an infrastructure that is flexible, agile, and scalable.

and nontraditional sources, even as the rules for gathering and using data are undergoing vast changes because of new regulations and consumer pressure.

"Just a couple of years ago, there were questions about whether people would really use mobile devices—now we're buying cars through them," says David Chan, customer data platform (CDP) leader at Deloitte Digital, an experience consultancy based in New York City.

And those car buyers are demanding easy and convenient services, where they can book a test-drive or lease a vehicle easily online, or schedule maintenance with the aid of personalized, artificial intelligence-powered software. Manufacturers of electric cars are selling not just a mode of transportation but also an ecosystem, which merges the data from mobility, connectivity, and entertainment systems into a seamless package. A car sale is now a sale of insurance, entertainment packages, and parking spaces. A thorough awareness of the customer's identity is the means to tie all these elements together and provide subscriptions and services to the customer.

The need for a deeper customer understanding is being driven by the need to develop deeper relationships with customers. A car is no longer a single purchase but a lifetime relationship that could involve selling subscriptions, products,

FIGURE 1

#### A Multipronged Customer Experience Strategy

Companies are taking many approaches to bolster the customer experience.

#### 40%

Using data/analytics to gain better insights into customer behaviors and company performance

22

Optimizing the customer journey across multiple channels

32

Enhancing customer self-service through digital channels

3

Gaining a single view of the customer to gain a deeper connection with customers

31

Meeting customer privacy concerns

30

Identifying moments of influence in the customer life cycle for better targeting/personalization

Source: 451 Research, 2021



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and services that allow customers to express who they are. This capability requires that data flow not only between the customer and carmaker but also among retail, travel, and hospitality companies the carmaker partners with. In addition to managing the data from those external sources, carmakers must master customer data from marketing, service, supply chains, logistics, and other touchpoints.

Enterprise resource planning (ERP) attributes that could help add depth outside of the supply chain include registration and warranty details for service use cases, product inventory details for sales use cases, and cart detail for commerce use cases. These data points can be applied to marketing use cases to support such things as channel personalization and communication preferences.

While the plethora of data has enormous value, it also brings challenges. "The explosion of channels has been a double-edged sword. Companies are collecting more data than ever before, which is giving them insights into customer behavior; but it's also like drinking through a fire hose, so they can't figure out how to organize the data in a meaningful way," Chan asserts. "If you have access to the data, but it's all jumbled up, it doesn't provide any real benefit to your organization. You need to have a strategy for not just how you access the data, but how you can collect, organize, and structure the data so it can actually be used by your teams."

As companies adapt to a digital-first world where customers are wary of how their information is used, they need to gain a deeper understanding of their customers at scale to better inform their brand strategies. With these data-driven insights, companies can develop the agility to meet evolving customer expectations, anticipate customers' needs, and differentiate themselves from competitors.

In the pursuit of generating more sales and other important business outcomes, forward-looking companies are adopting a new customer data strategy. They are embracing a centralized data model and CX tools/software that permit them to draw



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insights from customer data, from logistics to service calls, using real-time online channels to retail stores. They are also working to overcome data silos. And they are devoting resources to provide the CX that customers not only expect but demand.

"Today's customer attention span is so short that you can't rely on stale or outdated data to personalize your customer experience," says Scott Ramsey, CX digital transformation leader at Cappemini, a multinational information technology services and consulting company based in Paris. "Therefore, you have to have a customer data strategy and infrastructure that's flexible, agile, and scalable, which allows you to move at the speed of the customer." The infrastructure should take into account all the data that affects the customer experience, from in-store purchases to supply chains to back-office functions.

## **Redefining Data Strategies**

Deloitte's Chan says the definition of data strategy has splintered into two parts—one data strategy for the enterprise and one data strategy for CX.

In his view, the CX data strategy revolves around collecting, organizing, and maintaining data that is derived from "first-party data"—information that comes from a direct relationship with customers, such as purchase history and loyalty information. First-party data that customers share with the explicit intent of having companies gain a better understanding of their needs and preferences is called zero-party data.

The need for more strategic use of first- and zero-party data is being driven by new rules limiting the use of third-party data, which is data, such as income demographics, from companies that have no direct connection to the customer.

"As companies have less access to third-party data, there is just tremendous signal loss," Chan says. "They used to be able to measure certain things they can't measure anymore. Companies need to now pivot and focus on the data they do have control over."

In this environment, organizations are trying to get a better handle on the types of data they can acquire so they can use that data to drive better business outcomes. The Toronto-based Canadian Olympic Committee (COC), a private, nonprofit organization that represents Canada at the International Olympic Committee, has seen a continual evolution of its data ecosystem of Olympic fans who are members of the organization. Such fans are prime examples of the importance of zero-party data. "If a particular user actively hands over their information, it seems like more of a human connection," says Mark Nadolny, manager, digital products and data for COC. "That's particularly important for us. Most professional sports teams have a stadium. The Olympics happens every two years at different places around the world. For us, digital is our stadium."

Originally, COC collected fairly basic information from fans, including age, gender, birthday, and location. Fans volunteered information about their favorite athletes and events. COC tried to gather information about whether members preferred the Summer or Winter Olympic Games, and whether they preferred image, text, or video, but those content options didn't prove useful.

"Using data about fans' favorite athletes and sports, we were able to create a lot of personalized content and data," Nadolny says. "We were amazed to see how often the superfans, our most engaged fans, were coming back and taking nextlevel actions."

The superfans were particularly interested in contests that COC hosted on its website and in reaching the top of the aggregated Canadian Olympic Club points leaderboard. Gathering information via contests allowed COC to advise its partners, such as Olympics sponsors, about the kinds of prizes they could offer to generate the maximum amount of traffic and media exposure.

"Fans were saving the points they accumulated in contests and waiting to use them on high-ticket items, such as a signed jacket from an Olympian," Nadolny says. "Using that data, we were able to create base-level personas and become efficient with our marketing dollars to attract more people who were similar to our superfans."

Upon further analysis, COC determined superfans were a narrow demographic, largely made up of older women who are actively engaged in online contesting. While COC continues



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to run contests, it is now shifting its promotion strategy and offering a club membership to include additional features (such as personalized content and mobile app-based coupons for COC's sponsors).

As organizations and companies evolve their data strategies, they are determining the kinds of data they need. Over the next three years, Chan believes that second-party data will rise in importance as companies look for ways to find new insights about customers in an era when customers' permission to use their data is a critical element. This classification involves a company sharing its first-party data with another company for mutual benefit, such as a consumer products company sharing information with a retailer.

Understanding the benefits, uses, availability, and nuances of different types of data is a key step in developing a modern customer data strategy. "There is an unfair connotation that all third-party data is bad and all first-party data is good," Chan says. "But that's a narrow way of thinking about data. There are some companies with really bad first-party data, such as an online form with freeform text fields that provide no validation of email addresses. On the other end of the spectrum, there are some situations where some third-party data is actually even better than some first-party data. You have to think about data like a crime scene, where you are aware of the chain of custody of evidence to determine its trustworthiness."

A CX data strategy must be directly tied to the overall business strategy, with a keen focus on understanding customers' preferences, gaining consent to use their data, and appreciating the specific needs of a customer-centric digital transformation. Customer identity management (CIM) is a critical tool to improve both customer authentication and data consent. The technology authenticates customers, so they do not need to log in each time they visit an e-commerce site or interact with a brand. CIM also allows customers to easily view and change the type of data they share, creating a frictionless omnichannel experience and building trust through transparency.

The stakes for getting the equation right are anything but small. A minimum of \$222 billion in revenue is influenced by either mitigating or failing to address points of friction along the customer journey, according to 451 Research. This amount includes sales influenced by cross-channel buying options, cart abandonment, and other items that can be

influenced by the adroit use of customer data. **FIGURE 2** "The race for relevance means organizations must measure and align future CX investments with the latest expectations around convenience, context, and control for both customers and the employees that support them on their journey," 451 Research's Kingstone says.

FIGURE 2

### The CX Multibillion-Dollar Payoff

The business outcomes from adroit use of customer data are significant.

are significant.	
\$67	Sales influenced by availability of cross-channel buying options
\$32 billion	Revenue loss due to consumers not completing a purchase due to too many steps required to find the product and/or complete a transaction in the past six months
\$24 billion	Revenue influenced by consumers purchasing an additional item they weren't expected to as a result of returning or exchanging a different item to a physical store in the past six months
\$19	Revenue loss due to consumers abandoning a purchase as a result of a retailer not offering a cross-channel buying option in the past six months
\$12	Revenue influenced by consumers making a purchase they were otherwise not intending to due to an installation plan/financing option

offered at checkout in the past six months

Revenue influenced by consumers increasing

their spend due to a cross-sell or personalized

recommendation in the past six months

Source: 451 Research, 2021

\$6

billion

## **Bringing Data and Departments Together**

Customer data is collected and used by functions throughout an organization. The problem is that each department typically houses its customer data in silos.

"Sales and service knows a little bit about the customer, e-commerce knows about the transaction history, and other departments have their piece of the data, but all of these pieces are disjointed," Capgemini's Ramsey says.

The consequences of these disjointed operations are severe. "If the service department is having a problem with a product, you don't want the advertising department to jump-start sales for the product when you are trying to fix the problem," says Karl D. Schubert, associate director and professor of practice for the data science program at the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville, Ark. "If cost reductions and improvements are on the way for a product, you want that to be included in your marketing and strategies to incentivize the sales force. You may want to get service and support spun up, as well. There are all kinds of reasons you want your departments to have access to the same data."

In explaining the importance of a coordinated data approach, Schubert points to research a student of his conducted on the idiosyncrasies of seasonality in retailing. At different times of the year, a supermarket chain might run low on a protein, like chicken. If the chain can anticipate these periods, it can inventory alternative protein sources a week or two in advance that appeal to different age groups and other demographics. For organizations to anticipate something like this, they would have to determine the cause of the shortage, such as customer buying behavior or supply chain issues. By knowing the preferences of a customer segment, the chains are able to shift demand to alternative sources of protein while they adjust their operations.

"Different parts of the organization are going to look at different slices of the data in different contexts. If the various departments begin to collaborate, they can bounce ideas off each other," Schubert says. "If there was an oversupply, was there a holiday where people weren't eating a certain kind of meat?" Such issues, which may seem obvious in hindsight, can be obscured in the day-to-day complexity of doing business.

Kingstone explains the many aspects of discovering and applying these insights in a rapidly changing business landscape. "Customer insight is critical to unlocking business value very differently than we've had in the past for more data-driven experiences," she says. "Experiences must be in real time, so there's a timeliness issue. My research indicates that 96% of companies state that new data sources must be used to augment customer insights. Companies must use new approaches, like understanding the role that data plays in conversational experiences for both employees and customers. And then companies are trying to create much more democratization of the data because businesses



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are requesting easier-to-use applications around customer insights and analytics."

To Kingstone's point, customer insights grow in value with the addition of new data sources. Consequently, a key question for companies is what new data sources can best increase the value of customer insights. The well-traveled ground of front-office engagement data, such as commerce, loyalty, messaging, or advertising interactions, can only go so far. To make customer insights more impactful, brands should also turn to back-office-system data. Enterprise-level data from financial ledger systems and the supply chain allows brands to round out their customer profiles. As a result of having more pieces of information about customers, brands can gain a deeper understanding of customers and fully leverage machine learning to drive actionable intelligence at scale.

Customer relationship management (CRM) systems have traditionally been used to gather a limited amount of customer data, such as contact history and sales information. "Marketers have been understandably frustrated by the limitations of legacy CRM systems, which were so rigid and limited," says Liz Miller, vice president and principal analyst at Constellation Research, a technology research and advisory company in Palo Alto, Calif.

An important step in building an insights-driven company is developing a centralized data model, which allows data to be collected in one place so it can be easily shared and used by people throughout the organization. A March 2022



"The companies that use a CDP are seeing significant increases in customer satisfaction and customer lifetime value compared to companies that aren't using a CDP to unify and activate their data," says Scott Ramsey, CX digital transformation leader at Capgemini.

survey by Harvard Business Review Analytic Services of 188 members from the *Harvard Business Review* audience found that 79% of companies are in the process of implementing a centralized data model, have already done so, or are planning to implement one. Typically, a centralized data model depends on a customer data platform, which aggregates and organizes customer data across all channels and customer touchpoints.

A CDP allows data management capabilities of back-end systems such as ERP, supply chain, and inventory management to be structurally intertwined with the systems that deliver engagement (such as marketing, commerce, and service). Insights, after all, come from many places. Product returns can reveal product glitches. Calls to customer service might be traceable to supply chain issues. However, uncovering these insights often means solving a huge puzzle. And that can only be done if the CDP is gathering information from the entire diverse array of customer data, providing a view of front-office, back-office, and experience data in a concise manner.

"Creating a centralized data model and activating it across the enterprise is fundamental to achieving those insights," Ramsey says. "The companies that use a CDP are seeing significant increases in customer satisfaction and customer lifetime value compared to companies that aren't using a CDP to unify and activate their data."

Or, as Rick Reppe, vice president of digital for the Acquis Consulting Group, a consultancy in Minneapolis, puts it: "A centralized data model is everything. Without that, you have a bunch of different insight platforms that are generating insights about the same customer, but the insights are never pulled together to produce maximum value."

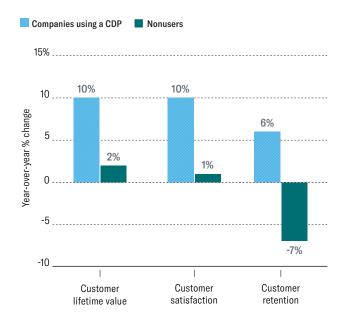
An October 2020 Aberdeen Research survey of 405 organizations showed that those using a CDP significantly outperform those who aren't using the technology. For example, companies using a CDP have a year-over-year improvement of 10% in both customer lifetime value and customer satisfaction. Companies that don't use a CDP only see a 2% and 1% increase, respectively, in these two areas. **FIGURE 3** 

A September 2020 study from Aberdeen Research provided further testimony to the benefits of CDPs. Companies that used the technology saw a 5.7 times annual increase in average customer spend, a 4.9 times increase in annual growth in upsell and cross-sell revenue, and a 2.9 times greater year-over-year growth in annual company revenue.

FIGURE 3

#### **Centralized Data Models Produce Results**

Companies using a customer data platform (CDP) are leaping ahead of competitors.



Source: Aberdeen Research, October 2020

### **Building Out Technical Resources**

Data silos are a huge obstacle to organizational efficiency, effectiveness, and scalability. A centralized data model for the whole enterprise is a critical element of an infrastructure that is flexible, agile, and scalable.

"From a behavioral economics perspective, people in different departments want to create their own technology infrastructure," says Ari Lightman, professor of digital media and marketing at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh. "They're competing for budget, and they're competing for people. They want to design applications that meet the needs of their specific department, but the applications might not meet the overall strategic needs of the organization. You must build an infrastructure that creates agility and speed across

the entire organization, not just the individual fiefdoms." Companies must ask themselves if they know how their customers prefer how their information is used. For instance, do the companies use that information in other areas of their business, and what outcomes could they drive as a result?

The Harvard Business Review Analytic Services survey indicated that companies are focused on building out a flexible, agile, scalable infrastructure that supports a heightened customer experience. In the next 12 to 18 months, 60% of respondents say their companies will boost spending on customer data/analytics insights. Investment will also increase in marketing (45%), customer service operations (40%), data warehouse/infrastructure (40%), and other areas to enhance CX.

"Customers' preferences have always changed and evolved rapidly; now there's technology that drives that change and enables change at a scale and at a speed that we haven't seen before," Reppe of the Acquis Consulting Group says. "To succeed in this environment, you have to have an organizational culture and operating models that reflect that change."

## **Shifting to the Customer Journey**

Adopting a centralized data model and implementing a robust infrastructure allow companies to address inconsistencies by shifting their data strategy from specific channels to the customer journey.

This approach coincides with the multi-step manner in which consumers interact with a company. Reactivating a former customer who stopped buying 18 months ago could involve a multi-step process of emails, texts, and social media ad networks, which requires interoperability among the advertising, marketing, and customer care departments.

Technology is only one component of addressing this shift. Metrics and cultures are other challenges that companies must confront in adopting a customer-journey approach. "The hardest part is getting teams to agree to shift to journeys, versus their traditional channels-based KPIs," Chan explains. "If a social team's bonuses are based on getting a lot of impressions, they don't care if their posts lead to a page with no relevance and that creates a lot of hard bounces. The website team might get dinged for that, but the social team will get a high five. If they work together, they can create a post that leads to people signing up for an account, which is the actual business goal."

A coordinated approach between functions can bring discipline to CX efforts, which is now often absent. Companies that are doing this well are dismantling silos, analyzing how processes can impede or improve information sharing, implementing technology that improves communication and collaboration, and making customer centricity a critical element of employee training.



"From a behavioral economics perspective, people in different departments want to create their own technology infrastructure," says Ari Lightman, professor of digital media and marketing at Carnegie Mellon University.

In addition, having departments work more closely together off common data sets can help build out the business case for CX efforts.

"The IT folks have never gotten to do anything without a tangible concrete business case associated with doing it," Reppe says. "Yet folks that work in the experience space, they can do that all the time. As a result, their business cases are being put together by IT people who are at least one degree removed from the value. Business-wise, that is a horrific idea."

Reppe points to Disney USA, Harley-Davidson, and Whole Foods as companies that are shaking up this paradigm. "Operationally, behind the customer-facing initiatives, each of those companies has accepted that experience has value, the value can be expressed, and they have developed specific criteria about what the value drivers of experience are," he says.

Harley-Davidson, for example, collects data from Harley fans who attend sponsored events and organized conventions. It uses the information to fine-tune products and find high-value customers. Meanwhile, Whole Foods has been a pioneer in category management, optimizing its product assortments at the store level to increase individual customers' purchases. The retailer has also made savvy use of loyalty program members, who spend 50% more than people who are not enrolled in the program.

Disney runs a massive data and analytics program. Using data captured by internet of things cameras and sensors, as well as wristbands that guests wear, Disney can predict guests' preferred dining times and where they will spend their trip. With such information, Disney can reduce waiting times for rides and suggest itineraries for guests. The organization says it has used analytics to achieve a 20% improvement in how it manages its labor.

Critically, each of those companies uses a distinct approach to determining this value. "I haven't come across a standard



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methodology," Reppe says. Companies, then, must see experience as valuable and determine what that value means in their unique situation. Experts share some best practices for using customer data in ways that can build trust:

- Know each customer's identity. Permission-based marketing is not just a clever marketing term. A modern CDP depends on identity management.
- Get customer consent. Empower the customer by giving them control over what information they share, such as by using CIM.
- Reduce friction. Use social login and passwordless authentication to allow customers to register and check out as seamlessly as possible.
- **Be transparent.** Be open about the data that is being collected and shared.
- **Prioritize relevance.** Leverage the centralized data model to send customers timely and relevant messages based on their preferences.
- Offer communication options. Communicate with customers using the channels they prefer rather than assume that email is always the best choice for certain situations.

## **Conclusion**

Companies need to reimagine how they use customer data in order to respond to the many forces that are remaking their relationships with their customers.

Regulated industries like health care, which seemed to be inoculated against disruption, have received a massive wake-up call over the past couple of years. Health care companies have found that digital initiatives that once made patients wary—from telemedicine to digital vaccine cards to new diagnostic procedures—are now differentiators. Across many industries, companies are realizing that their customers are evaluating them in new ways, as well.

"There might be no difference between two ski jackets that two companies sell," says Lightman of Carnegie Mellon University. "So what the clothing brand stands for might make all the difference in the world to the customer. Does the clothing brand present itself as an ethical business partner? What are the service components the brand offers beyond the product itself? Does the brand have someone you can talk to who can advise you on how to get the best value from the product?" All these questions in some way relate to how a company collects, manages, and uses customer data.

To succeed in the future, companies should adopt a disruptive mindset based on data-driven decision making. "Companies that are getting customer data management right are investing in omnichannel customer experience strategies and building a trusted relationship with the customer," Ramsey says. "Companies that are behind the eight ball are still relying largely on third-party data and outmoded practices."

Companies should empower employees to act with a customer-first mindset, using parameters based on the insights derived from customer data. "A lot of times when we think about culture, we focus on a subset of the culture, but not the complete culture," Reppe says. "A company might say it's okay if employees wear jeans and have tattoos. But you also need to let that person with the tattoos and the jeans, within a defined set of parameters, be able to decide how a digital product manifests to the user. As long as that employee conforms to those parameters, you should get off their back and let them do their job in the way they think is best."

Customers, now more than ever, are looking for a deep connection with the brands they do business with. To build that connection, companies must take a deeper look at how they use ERP and CRM systems, leveraging data so they communicate with customers in an intimate way that encourages them to take the next best action—leading to better experiences for the customer and better business outcomes.

Data is becoming the means of emotional connection between the brand and the customer. "We are in the 'feelings economy," Ramsey says. "Brand loyalty used to be generated by providing the right product at the right price. Those elements are still important, but brand loyalty is also derived from how doing business with you makes your customers feel."



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