

Organisational Alignment

Aligning your organisation to deliver the customer experience

Creating and delivering a great customer experience can only be achieved by aligning the whole organisation behind the brand promise. Successful organisational alignment means that Marketing, HR and Operations must have a collective role in designing and managing a customer experience that delivers this promise. Here's a quick overview of the roles that each function can play in the process.

Marketing defines the brand promise

It identifies who your most profitable customers are and what they value. It defines a brand promise to attract them and ultimately communicates it to the marketplace. It must then work with HR and Operations to define the customer experience and how the organisation can deliver this.

HR builds the skills and knowledge

HR has one of the biggest roles to play in the process. From recruitment to retirement, each HR process either enables or inhibits the customer-focused organisation to deliver its promise. HR processes such as training, performance management and reward systems must all be aligned to the brand promise. HR helps to communicate the promise to employees and will also work with Marketing to define the skills and behaviors needed to deliver the brand. It can also help to define and track behavioral indicators in annual customer surveys.

HR can partner with Sales, Customer Service, Operations and even Finance to ensure that the end-to-end customer experience is consistent and valuable and that people understand which customer and employee behaviors are the most profitable.

Operations (or customer services) creates the right infrastructure and processes

This includes defining and removing internal obstacles that get in the way and then focusing on strengthening the organisational 'enhancers' such as communication systems and technology that enable people to deliver consistently. Operations also helps Marketing to measure the customer experience, comparing this to what is promised and then feeding this back to the front line staff.

Leaders...

are the key to making it happen. They have to be clear about the forces at work that enable employees to deliver the experience. Are people getting the support they need from management? Are there organisational issues that get in the way? How do metrics and measures that shape employee behavior affect people's interaction with customers? How consistent is delivery across all the company's operations?

Achieving the engagement of every employee and every department entails significant investment in education and training, effective teamwork, performance management, communications and technology. Focusing on a holistic approach will ensure the essential organisational alignment that delivers what customers perceive as a seamless customer experience.

Extracted from 'Managing the Customer Experience', Shaun Smith and Joe Wheeler. Chapter 5: 'Creating Triad Power'. (Published by FT Prentice Hall)