



# Seven Smart Questions Clients Ask About Customer Experience Design



At StoryMiners we're privileged to work with a group of exceptionally smart, insightful clients who are constantly alert to new opportunities to grow their businesses. They ask tough, challenging questions – the type that every company deserves to have answered to their satisfaction. We think you'll find their questions, and their answers, enlightening. But no compilation of questions, no matter how comprehensive, fits every situation. If you have a question that isn't addressed here, we'd like to hear about it. Contact us at [8thquestion@storyminers.com](mailto:8thquestion@storyminers.com).

### How come I'm hearing so much about Customer Experience Design now? Is this just the newest marketing fad?

There's certainly nothing new about focusing on the customer experience to differentiate a business. Over the past decades, brands have rocketed to iconic status by doing just that. Think Starbucks, Neiman Marcus, Southwest Airlines.

The difference today is that empowered consumers are increasingly flexing their muscles, threatening more and more brands with rapid commoditization. As corporate leaders consider their options, they realize that virtually any product or service enhancements they make can readily be matched or bettered by competitors – and that competing on price is often a fast path to disaster. The only differentiated 'space' businesses can truly own is the experience they deliver to customers. But great customer experiences don't just happen. They occur when all functions of the operation are designed to align with one another to achieve the outcomes customers seek. Recognizing this, companies have turned to Customer Experience Design.

## What are the real benefits of Customer Experience Design?

### Is it all about making customers feel better or is there an actual ROI?

At StoryMiners we believe that there's no more positive and long lasting ROI than a body of raving customers telling their friends about your business. Good experiences breed good stories. And good stories – from the mouths of your customers – to their friends and colleagues – and online reviews – propel business growth.

The benefits of Customer Experience Design are far-reaching. By understanding which promises are most important to your customers, then aligning your organization to make and to keep them, you get a more responsive and less-costly design with a number of quantifiable rewards:

- Increased customer loyalty and referrals
- The ability to sustain higher-margin pricing
- Reduced employee turnover and training costs from an employee base that understands and is gratified by the key role they play in delighting customers
- Frequently, cost savings from discovering and correcting costly and customer-alienating operational dysfunctions

## What questions should I ask myself to determine whether Customer Experience Design is a good fit for my business?

Your company could probably benefit from Customer Experience Design if you answer “yes” to three or more of these questions:

- Am I in an industry that's trending toward commoditization?
- Am I concerned that I'll have to resort to competing on price?
- Does my business involve a large degree of customer service, either face-to-face, over-the-phone, or on-the-web?
- Have my competitors introduced positive changes that my customers are noticing?



- Am I in a highly competitive space? When my company introduces a new product, service, or idea, is it quickly matched by the competition?
- Has recruiting, retaining, and motivating employees become more difficult?
- Am I spending too much trying to attract new customers to keep my business afloat?
- Are my customers, prospects, or employees confused about how my brand's promises are different from competitors?
- Were the policies and procedures that my business follows established for the convenience of the business (rather than the delight of customers)?
- Do different departments and functional areas within my business often seem unsynchronized resulting in disappointed customers?

### How does Customer Experience Design happen? What's the process?

The process is one that clients describe as challenging but very worthwhile. Since your brand will thrive from making – and then keeping – the right promises to customers, we follow an approach that uncovers what the right promises are, determines which ones your organization can authentically keep, and helps you realign the organization to deliver on important but unkept promises.

**We start with your customers.** We listen intently to learn what points of differentiation will be most meaningful from their point of view. To do so, we use a variety of research tools from traditional interviews and observation to cutting-edge techniques like facial profiling and Human Prototyping® to discover the moments that have the potential to create raving fans. Often this step also involves examining the behavior and 'hot buttons' of your competitors' customers.

**We do similar digging into the attitudes and behaviors of your employees, particularly those with customer-facing positions.**

The objective of this step is to understand how clearly they recognize and respond to the things that will truly differentiate you in your customers' minds. Insights we gain from this step help assure that the designs we develop will be readily adopted. With this information in hand, we work with the key players in your organization to describe very clearly and succinctly your Reason for Being. It outlines the promises you must make and keep to deliver a compelling customer experience.

**We make it easy and fun for everyone to get on board by creating a Story that brings your brand to life.**

It's the verbal DNA that pulls everyone onto the same page for the same reasons. Your story might take several different formats – a video, PowerPoint presentation, a document or a set of pictures. What matters is that it transmits your key messages and brand personality so that people can connect with it, believe in it, and focus their attention on the desired outcomes.

**Next, we capture the present the design in great detail – so you see both the customer touch points and the behind-the-scenes activities that support them.**

Together with you, we consider which of these touch points are the most important (have the biggest impact, are the most memorable, best define the brand, are the most story-worthy, etc) never losing sight of what is operationally effective. From these discussions we evolve a design for future customer encounters and a detailed plan for achieving that design.

**We then work with you to implement the changes that the previous steps have shown will make the most difference to your customers.**

However far reaching the right changes are for your organization, from employee training to redesign of your physical space to internal and external communications to rethinking and communicating some customer and employee policies, we will work closely with you at every step to assure proper implementation with realistic adoption.

## How disruptive is this really? Will it turn my company inside-out?

If you consider the negative impact and lost opportunities surrounding experiences you don't manage, the benefit seems worth the cost.

Creating a new set of experiences during the design phase can be quite uplifting for your employees. They may take an interest in designing their own future and feel empowered by it. Creative types will show you opportunities to please customers on the front lines you never knew you had. Process-oriented folks will help you make delivering an experience better, smarter, faster, cheaper, and more enjoyable on both sides of the transaction. You WILL have to spend more time on this issue and make it a priority. Fortunately, Customer Experience Design is a good Trojan horse for making other positive changes in the business. Figure about 3-4 months for your first experience designs and 2-3 months for each additional phase.

## Who in an organization tends to undertake this?

### How do I garner support to get it accepted?

While the earliest recognition of a need for Customer Experience Design often comes from Marketing, the process may touch every part of the organization, making C-level support imperative. Once explained, Customer Experience Design has the sort of business-defining potential that ignites the executive suite with its promise. Often, the CEO champions the business context and marketing/operations co-sponsor the experience design and delivery.

Of course, building a business case for Customer Experience Design requires careful attention to the financial implications. That's why StoryMiners works with you to define Metrics that Matter™ and makes measurement of these metrics a key component of our process. Knowing you have near real-time tools to monitor the results of changes often makes sell-in easier.

Customer Experience Design works best when the employee and



customer experiences are designed to work together. Internal salesmanship is a vital and sometimes overlooked aspect of Customer Experience Design. Employees who may be asked to change their behavior are, of course, often fearful and resistant. StoryMiners uses stories as one vehicle to let them discover that the future is actually exciting and full of promise, to assuage fears, and to win internal resilience for the upcoming changes. Ongoing internal communications with authentic content and genuine feedback opportunities are just as important as the communications we create for your customers. Don't worry, we're here to guide you.

**I'm ready to take the next step. What should I ask a potential provider of Customer Experience Design services to see if they know their stuff and whether they're a good fit for my company?**

Challenge any potential Customer Experience Design expert or firm with questions that probe the way they think and test the breadth of their expertise. Think beyond your immediate Customer Experience Design engagement consider to whether their work will prepare your company to handle changes in the future. You might consider questions like:

- How do you envision the new experiences?
- How do you know you're recommending things that will actually make a difference to our current and future customers?
- How do you tie customer and employee experiences together?
- How do you help me win the support of others in my organization and what do you do to help the organization understand and adopt the changes?
- On what do you base experience design? (Look for meaningful context.)
- How can you keep our experiences fresh?
- How do you actually help us get the changes we make to last?
- Which vendors outside of your specialty can you authentically manage?
- How much work do you do vs. let or require the client do?



Have a question that wasn't covered here?

Contact us at [8thquestion@storyminers.com](mailto:8thquestion@storyminers.com).

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