

WE LIVE in an age of choice and convenience. Be it e-commerce platforms lowering the barriers to entry for smaller retail businesses, or the explosion in social and digital media enabling businesses to grow, the truth is that it has never been easier to turn your idea into a company.

This means that today's consumers have unprecedented ease of access to a wide range of goods and services.

Take food delivery services, for example. Where we were limited to just a few vendors who could address late-night cravings just a decade ago, the introduction of multiple delivery services in recent years has given every consumer in Singapore almost limitless choice, with the touch of a button.

With increased competition – both from companies within Singapore and across the Asean region – it is natural that brands should be looking to enhance the customer experience, keep customers loyal, and drive word-of-mouth recommendations.

Yet this seems to be an area in which many Singaporean brands are failing to hit the mark. According to Forrester's 2018 Singapore Customer Experience Index, overall perception of quality of experience with Singapore-based brands is poor.

Out of 16 brands ranked, 14 were noted to provide a poor customer experience, with no brand reaching "good" level. In particular, brands were noted to have failed to create emotionally engaging experiences.

For smaller businesses in particular, this is an opportunity to carve out their own niches in the market, and expand their customer base.

HOW CAN BRANDS IMPROVE THE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE?

Building a customer-centric culture is more than learning to say "the customer is always right". Companies tend to have the impression that the interests of customers and employees are at polar opposites when in reality, there are many ways to bring the two together.

At the end of the day, each employee in an organisation is responsible for different aspects of the customer experience.

For example, software engineers are not traditionally customer-facing roles, but they influence the customer journey heavily, by moulding a customer's digital experience.

For roles that are customer facing, such as sales, businesses should think about aligning their employees' incentives with customer success.

For example, at HubSpot, if a salesperson brings onboard a customer who cancels within a certain period of time – in other words, a customer that is not a good fit and is therefore not seeing success with our growth platform – that salesperson loses the commission that was made on that deal.

While it is not feasible – or favourable – to suggest that every role becomes customer-facing, it is important for brands to re-orientate their teams to focus on how they affect the customer, as a factor in evaluating the success of their work.

FROM WORDS TO ACTION

Here are four ways that companies can encourage customer-centricity within their teams:

- **Update job descriptions:** Not everyone needs to have "customer experience" embedded within their titles, but having customer-centric roles and responsibilities baked into job descriptions helps set the tone from day one that the work being done should ultimately positively impact the customer experience.
- **Move the goalpost to suit the goal:** A big part of making every team customer-centric is to identify how and where they impact the customer journey.

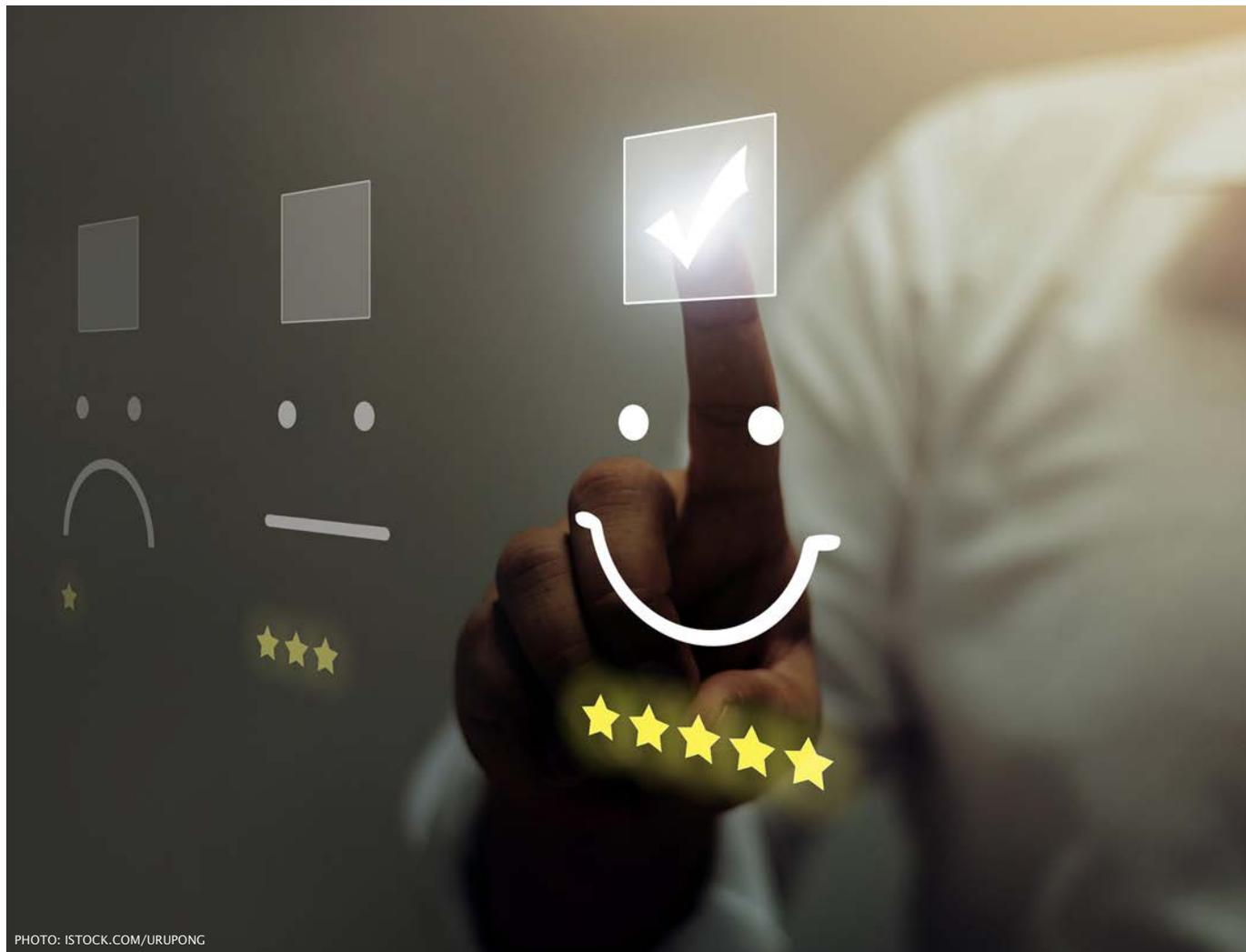


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MAKING CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE EVERYBODY'S JOB

By ensuring that every team member is dedicated to improving the customer experience, companies in Singapore can stand out from the competition

BY **SHAHID NIZAMI**

Whether they are on the frontline responding to customer queries or behind the scenes ensuring that ongoing tasks such as invoicing remain uninterrupted, it is important to demonstrate how every role affects the customer experience. Employers can amend key performance indicators and targets to encourage employees to drive their efforts towards greater customer satisfaction.

- **Make it visible:** Much like a ticker displaying live scores during a sporting match, displaying team goals prominently can help teams organise themselves around a common objective.

Whether it is Net Promoter Scores (NPS), app downtime or any other metric that relates to customer experience, placing it front and centre helps organisations be reminded of their end objective, and is an opportunity for different teams to rally around their goals.

- **Make it actionable:** A great idea remains just that – an idea – until it is put into action. Nothing is worse

than missing opportunities for growth because of red tape and bureaucracy.

Empowering teams to act on insight can make a big difference by reducing time to action, and making every employee feel they have the autonomy to improve the customer experience.

In addition, it is also important to provide teams with the tools and information to make insight-driven actions, such as predictive analytics dashboards or customer response scores.

A BETTER WAY TO GROW

Customer experience directly impacts customer loyalty, increases lifetime value, drives word of mouth and, by extension, fuels business growth. By ensuring that every team member is dedicated to improving the customer experience, companies in Singapore can stand out from the competition. ■

The writer is HubSpot's managing director, Asia-Pacific