BEYOND THE CLICK
Customer relationships after the sale
Ask CEOs about what their company sells and their answer speaks volumes. Because no company sells just a product anymore, whether leadership realizes it or not. And what happens after the sale has become of equal importance to what happens during it.

Yet, many companies do not invest heavily in customer experience beyond the purchase, and it shows. Only 17 percent of consumers believe retailers care about their experience post-purchase.¹ And without post-purchase attention, the right outcomes stop at the point of sale.

While some leading companies are ahead of this new reality, many companies are still catching up to it, and a few—unfortunately—are still catching on to it.

Yet, top companies get 75 percent of their revenues from repeat purchases, which means they are paying attention to what happens after the sale. An average online store pales in comparison, at 43 percent.²

An excellent customer experience must last for the entire customer journey, from product awareness to replenishment. Otherwise, companies are losing out on the potential lifetime value of loyal repeat customers.

**ONLY 17%**

of consumers believe retailers care about their experience post-purchase. And without post-purchase attention, the right outcomes stop at the point of sale.¹
Where do they start?

As the post-purchase journey moves beyond the click, companies need a strategy to be relevant beyond the exchange of money. Because that’s the type of value that creates customers for life.

Our client experience shows four key areas can significantly impact value for customers:

**DESIGN FOR SUCCESS**
Designing sales, marketing, and support into products

**SOLVE PROBLEMS, DON’T PUSH PRODUCTS**
Pivoting sales, marketing and support from products to use cases

**MEET CUSTOMERS ON THEIR TERMS**
Knowing when and how to reach out to customers

**LEARN WITH EVERY INTERACTION**
Capturing when and how each customer engages to continuously improve

But first, let’s investigate why post-purchase is so key to retail success across industries.
Why post-purchase matters more than ever

The post-purchase lifecycle is important for many reasons, but particularly because it allows brands to move beyond a transaction with a customer into an ongoing relationship. Companies have the opportunity to learn about customer behavior through post-purchase interactions. They can collect valuable information regarding set-up pain points, customer interests, usage patterns and work-arounds.

What is the lifecycle post-purchase?

- **Customer Want/Need**
- **Awareness & Interest**
- **Intent to Buy**
- **Purchase to Set-up**
- **New Use Case Discovery and Extension**
- **Advocacy**
- **Day-to-day use and reliance**
- **Initial use and learning**
- **Customer HW purchase & usage lifecycle**
- **Cycle over time as commitment increases**

**70%** of brands see post-purchase as an opportunity to improve CLV

**ONLY 6%** have CMOs responsible for the post-purchase experience

Continued use of the product and extending commitment to the brand can drive advocacy and engagement over time.

A lifecycle focused on post-purchase generates a “Platform” effect that positively impacts the following KPIs: **additional new users and retention** and **increased new and repeat sales**.

Source: CMO Council, “Elevate What Consumers Appreciate”
Using this information, brands can then better serve customers post-purchase. Selling during the post-purchase journey brings higher customer value because consumer needs and potential offers are contextualized and relevant. After the sale, customers are already within an ecosystem or platform that lends itself to other services of value. Done correctly and continuously, post-purchase care becomes a virtuous cycle that contributes to new purchases again and again. Most companies still have some road to travel.

80% of consumers told us that previous service providers could have done something that would have kept them as a customer.³

As this lifecycle continues, the customer is more likely to bypass the initial stages of purchase for an adjacent product category within the same brand, awareness and interest, and into intent to buy. Put simply, you’re deepening your relationship with your best customers with increased product and service usage, opening up opportunities for cross-selling.

Making the post-purchase experience a plus

Let’s look at a customer’s purchase of a smart home speaker. After a purchase, the customer goes through a phase of initial use and learning, followed by day-to-day use and reliance. If happy with the product, the customer will provide advocacy and recommend the product to others.

However, this particular customer’s journey could include new use case discovery to extend the uses of her existing product. If the company knows what she has used and how she has used it, the brand can make useful suggestions to extend the use case. For example, she learns she can easily replenish household items by purchasing through it. Or, she is coached on how to connect it to her intelligent home management system.
Investment in post-purchase: Four areas of high impact

Nailing the post-purchase experience is about solution creation, not just products. And it takes a level of cross-functional collaboration most companies have not yet achieved.

Leading brands that can mold a more holistic approach to customer experience maximize their increased value. Four areas are particularly important: Product design sales and support, selling solutions for specific use cases rather than products, intelligent outreach and engagement and using the brand as a learning lab.

**Thoughtful Product Design**
- Self-activating
- Upgradeable
- Sustainable
- End-user driven design
- Self-healing

**Intelligent Outreach & Engagement**
- Know when and how to reach out or when just to fix an issue
  - Proactive enrichment
  - Next best product/service
  - AI powered care via the right channel
  - Build trust and brand affinity

**Solution vs. Product Selling**
- Pivot sales, marketing and support from product to use case focus
  - Bundle products and services
  - Curate for high value customers
  - Customer need based solutions
  - Own an ecosystem

**When Your Brand is a Learning Lab**
- Capture how your customers engage with each channel and product to continually improve
  - End-user research – needs based
  - Aim for high CLV
  - Omni-channel experimentation
  - Close the loop with product, marketing and sales teams

Source: CMO Council, "Elevate What Consumers Appreciate"
Design sales and support

Too many times, a product or service is designed in a silo and then foisted upon teams to just “make it work.” Some companies are chasing a better way, though. They ensure the customer is represented in the design process, asking teams to consider how the customer will interact with the product and potential related use cases. Doing this upfront makes for a more targeted, holistic process—and product or service. From self-activation to sustainability and self-healing capabilities, building customer insights into your design process makes sense. Not only does it meet customer needs, it takes the burden off of them.

For instance, companies can ease the user experience by making a product or subscription self-activating upon purchase. Gone are the 25-step processes where a customer has the patience to reenter personal information, remember a password, etc. Oral care startup Quip offers customers who purchase an electric toothbrush a refill subscription for a new toothbrush head and toothpaste, delivered every three months. This self-activating offering keeps the customer in its ecosystem, and allows for new personalized adjacent offers in the future.
Selling solutions instead of products

Historically, the more bundled combinations brands could sell, the better. That was the reigning philosophy. But brand leaders today are realizing that’s not a targeted, cost-effective approach. They ask themselves: Who is my customer? What is she using my product for? What future or related problems can we solve for her via our ecosystem? Artificial intelligence (AI) and predictive analytics come into play in a big way. Lifestyle brand Goop sells products via its website and continues to expand into post-purchase interactions of value to its loyal customers, from lifestyle advice to pop-up shops, an annual wellness summit and a Netflix docuseries on topics of interest to its community. Curated by founder Gwyneth Paltrow and her staff, Goop sells lifestyle solutions backed by content and support for that lifestyle.4

Luxury rental brand Onefinestay announced its Higher Living program in early 2018, meant to take the brand beyond a transactional relationship with consumers into their daily lives post-purchase. It offers free, round-the-clock concierge service for an entire year after a stay at one of its vacation rental properties. Not only does this help it learn more about its customers’ habits, it puts the company in the role of trusted provider of services for a longer period of time—increasing the odds that customers will book their next stay through the company.5

The leaders in customer engagement and centricity remember one thing above all else: every product or service is only valuable when it fits into the context of customers’ daily lives. A product that does that is a solution. A product that doesn’t is an expendable commodity.
Intelligent outreach and engagement

Across channels, personalization is not only possible, it’s necessary. Modern inboxes are buzzing with offers, updates, confirmations from brands that the consumer has engaged with – culminating in almost 120 billion daily consumer emails sent and received globally. With the advent of AI and analytics, every company (properly equipped) can know how its customers like to interact with them in various contexts. It’s not that customers don’t want to be contacted. They want it to happen at the right time, with the right message, via the right channel, cutting through the distractions. This next level kind of care, pioneered by the likes of Amazon, Netflix and Google, harnesses the power of predictive analytics and AI with a human touch.

Other industries are catching on. For example, Volvo’s AI Program uses AI-powered data to predict when cars need to be serviced and what parts need to be repaired/ replaced. By analyzing over one million events every week to predict each part’s breakdown rate, customer support can recommend service and maintenance plans to customers before the part breaks and creates a bigger problem. Recognizing normal patterns of use and anticipating needs before they happen gives brands an edge over the majority of their competitors, making its messaging and outreaches more relevant.

“What I want when and how I want it”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Use your brand as a learning lab

Companies still spend a lot of money on focus groups. But focus groups don’t tend to capture information outside of customer siloes. Every interaction is important, but only in light of the full customer picture can you build from them collectively.

A growing number of consumers want companies to know about them, using that information to better tailor their experience. Almost one-third (30 percent) of consumers expect all types of company representatives and sales associates to know more about them and their preferences.

We help clients address that need through carefully designed experimentation that covers all channels—from physical store interaction, to mobile app purchases, to a customer’s online story. When put together in a thoughtful way, it provides insights for continuous learning, such as purchase patterns. Applying these learnings to the post-purchase journey helps brands learn about how to better serve their most valuable customers—investing in areas that move the needle the most for the most people.

49% of consumers want companies to learn more about them while protecting sensitive data.
Moving beyond the click

In the post-digital world, there will be less and less friction after each customer purchase. Brand leaders are making it happen now. Knowing more about their customers, gathering information from each and every interaction, they ease the journey. They are able to predict new use cases that fit customer needs, anticipating them before they occur. From post-purchase setup, to initial use and learning, to day-to-day use and reliance, and new use cases, companies will eliminate pain points and provide more targeted products and services.

Nine out of ten consumers are more likely to shop with brands that recognize them, remember them, and provide them with relevant offers and recommendations. Customers supported by a company representative post-purchase are the most likely to renew purchases. And supporting customers with a Customer Success Manager works well; almost 98 percent say they are likely to renew.

It’s not just about the numbers, though. As products and services become more sophisticated and complex, customers will require more care, training and outreach to unlock their value. Already, 40 percent of customers believe post-purchase experiences make up the most memorable aspects of the brand experience overall.

Moving from being a purveyor of products to being a true part of your customer’s ecosystem means paying attention after the sale. Moving beyond the click is still uncharted territory for many large companies, but it is the pioneers that will emerge as the true customer keeper.
References

1 Vision Critical, “Companies Ignore the Post-Purchase Experience at Their Peril”
3 Accenture Global Consumer Pulse research, 2018
4 Tech Crunch, “Gwyneth Paltrow’s Goop is coming to Netflix”
5 Accenture, “Winning Loyalty With Hyper Relevance in Travel”
6 Radicati, Email Statistics Report, 2015-2019
7 Forbes, “10 Examples of Predictive Customer Experience Outcomes Powered by AI”
8 Accenture, “Widening Gap Between Consumer Expectations and Reality in Personalization Signals Warning for Brands, Accenture Interactive Research Finds”
9 Accenture, “Nurturing Customer Value: The New Growth Mantra”
10 Retail Dive, “The Riddle of the post-purchase customer experience”
About Accenture

Accenture is a leading global professional services company, providing a broad range of services and solutions in strategy, consulting, digital, technology and operations. Combining unmatched experience and specialized skills across more than 40 industries and all business functions — underpinned by the world’s largest delivery network — Accenture works at the intersection of business and technology to help clients improve their performance and create sustainable value for their stakeholders. With 492,000 people serving clients in more than 120 countries, Accenture drives innovation to improve the way the world works and lives. Visit us at www.accenture.com.

Join the conversation

@AccentureComms

Authors

Anne Hodson
Managing Director
anne.l.hodson@accenture.com

Wendy Han
Business Strategy Manager
wendy.han@accenture.com

Contact

Jacqueline Morgan
Principal Director, San Francisco
jacqueline.morgan@accenture.com

Dawn Anderson
Senior Managing Director, Denver, CO
dawn.e.anderson@accenture.com

This document makes descriptive reference to trademarks that may be owned by others. The use of such trademarks herein is not an assertion of ownership of such trademarks by Accenture and is not intended to represent or imply the existence of an association between Accenture and the lawful owners of such trademarks.

Copyright © 2019 Accenture. All rights reserved. Accenture and its logo are trademarks of Accenture.