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CX and Your Website: The 8-Second Rule

By: Kim Tidwell

Are you familiar with the term customer experience (CX)? Not just for app developers or folks operating on the fringes of innovation, CX is a pervasive value system that will affect your company's success. So what exactly is CX? I like [Forrester's definition](#) for its simplicity:

"How customers perceive their interactions with your company."

Anytime you interact with a customer, whether it is online, in person or over the phone, you are engaging in forming customer experience – good, bad or ugly. Most of us, apparently, feel that we are doing a good job – only, we are not.

According to [Bain & Company](#), 80 percent of CEOs believe they deliver a superior customer experience, but only 8 percent of their customers agree.

How do companies go about bringing those two numbers closer together? When it comes to your first chances to nurture positive CX – your website and social media profiles – it is important to set your brand ego aside. Think about this:

"There are only 86,400 seconds in a day. Given that we are universally bound by this limited resource, how can we make things easier, quicker and simpler for our customers?"

This question, posed by MGM Resorts International's chief experience officer, Julie Hoffmann, at the American Marketing Association's National Conference in September, is one that you should ask regularly.

In addition, here are two exercises you can do today to positively impact the online customer experience you provide.

How would you describe your company or product to a 10-year-old?

Visit your website home page. Without scrolling, does it answer this question in under eight seconds? The average attention span for the notoriously ill-focused goldfish is nine seconds, but according to a [recent study](#) from Microsoft Corp., people now generally lose concentration after eight seconds.

If a first-time visitor sees only your clever brand tagline, then it is time to make one critical change on your home page. Add a succinct single-line message that communicates your value proposition. A quick web search turned up these examples of effective home page value messages:

- *The easy, fast, affordable way to send money online – from your desktop, tablet or mobile device.*
- *Comprehensive, easy-to-use cloud-based law practice management software.*
- *Software for automated sales tax compliance. "Sales tax is hard. We make it easy."*

That value message will help visitors confirm their interest in your product or service. Make sure this simple description also lives on your social media profiles.



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Within the first eight seconds, visitors should also see one or more simple, low-risk ways to engage with you. An opt-in subscription form, download offer or free trial may extend the visit well beyond eight seconds.

What are the top five questions your prospective customers ask you?

You are sitting on the most valuable insights money can buy – actual customer interactions. Ask your sales team to account for the questions they continually get asked by prospects at the beginning of the relationship. Do you address these questions on your website's most important pages? How many pages and links does it take to get the answers? Your customers are coming to your website to figure out if you provide a solution for their pesky, nagging pain point. Is there a way to provide relief in fewer interactions?

Sometimes, particularly with B2B, we get caught up in trying to deliver so much information that the most customer-relevant part gets lost or left out. You do not need a new website to make real strides in your CX. Real improvements can result from simply creating headlines and separating blocks of copy and important callouts with more white space.

Your brand is not just a tagline, a collection of bright colors and a logo. Ultimately, your true brand is your customers' experience of your company over the duration of their relationship with you. Your website is a prominent part of that, so start your CX initiative there.

About the author

Kim Tidwell is an account manager with Edge Marketing, Inc. She has over 15 years of experience with brand development, retail product development and both outbound and inbound marketing. In her spare time, she loves to run in Austin's Hill Country, and enjoys cooking and yoga.



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