

Customer Journey Mapping – Helping you understand your customers

The importance of ‘stepping into your customers shoes’ has long been known and accepted as the best way to understand what customers really want, what they think and how they behave.

In reality however most organisations don’t do this at all, don’t do it well, or don’t keep up with varying customer needs.

Fortunately this is changing and increasingly, businesses are looking more closely to their customers and the journey from their perspective, in order to better understand them and pinpoint what customers are actually looking for throughout all stages in the buying and relationship life-cycle. This process enables organisations to identify opportunities to enhance deliverables, provide customers with the desired product or service experiences and strengthen their market position.

What is a customer journey map?

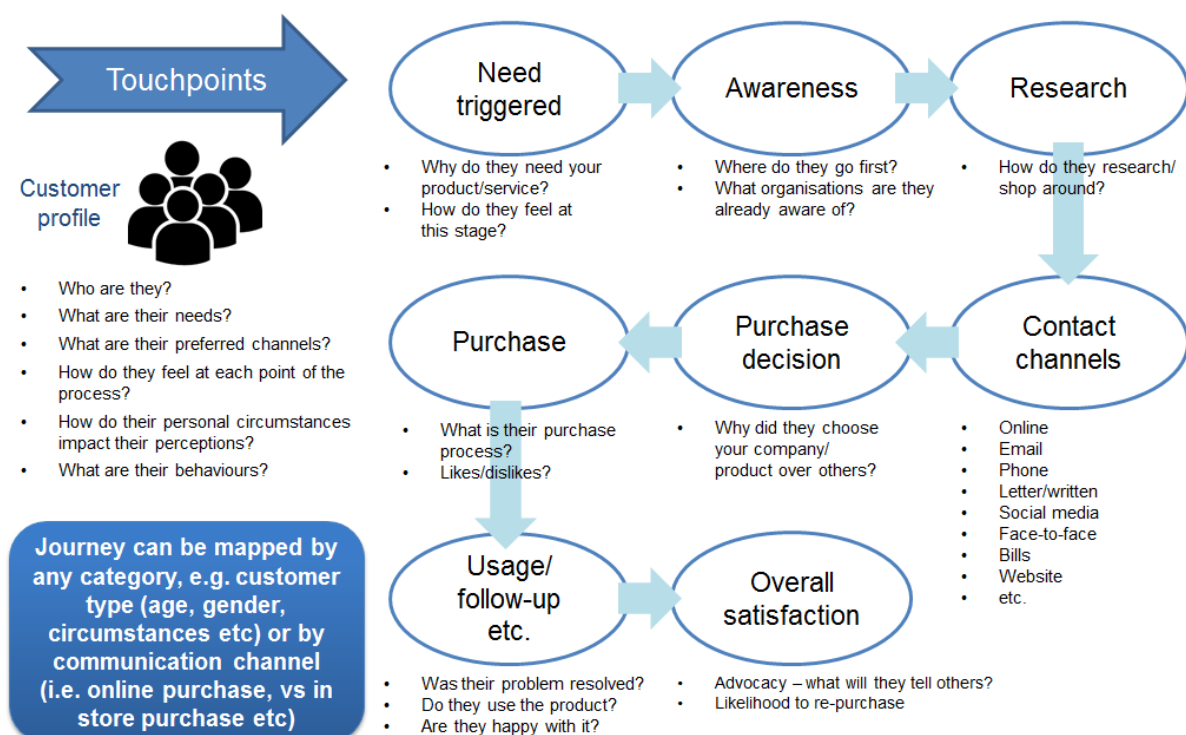
A customer journey map is a structured representation in graphical format of your customers’ experience in dealing with your organisation – whether it be purchasing or using a product or service or interacting with your employees through various service touch points.

Customer journey maps step out a customer’s journey from the beginning to the end and at each interaction with your company, your products and services.

A journey map can display the different channels a customer connects with in your organisation and the different points in the process where decisions are made – where customers decide to continue on the journey with you or depart and go to a competitor.

By working through a customer’s journey you can effectively identify problem areas as well as areas of excellence.

The end result is an informed perspective of what customers receive vs what they want, and how that aligns with what your organisation thinks it is actually providing.



How can a customer journey map assist my organisation?

In order to provide the best possible service or product experience for your customers, you need to be able to understand them. Who are they? What are they looking for? What's important to them?

A journey map can help you understand the journey that customers go through from the very beginning of the process: when the initial need or desire is triggered, through investigation, first contact and right through to purchase and post purchase.

A well designed and executed customer journey mapping process can assist you to determine what customers value at each touch point and what's important or not so important, enabling you to focus product, service and marketing enhancements on key determinants. This ultimately enables you to develop strategies that are able to deliver a better ROI, increase customer satisfaction and allow higher advocacy levels amongst customers. Customer journey mapping is a powerful tool to affect change for the better within your organisation.

Ultimately, a customer journey map will:

- ✦ Tell the story of your customers' experiences from their point of view
 - putting you 'in their shoes'
- ✦ Help you understand the relationship and expectations your customers have
 - in an informed, unbiased manner
- ✦ Bring the 'voice of the customer' into your organisation
 - which can in turn improve buy-in from internal teams and departments
- ✦ Identify 'moments of truth'
 - 'pain points' and 'areas of excellence' to learn from
- ✦ Identify gaps in service delivery
 - to inform you and your staff on where and how your organisation can make improvements
- ✦ Track the impact of negative perceptions or experiences at one touch-point and its impact at subsequent stages during the journey
 - to allow risk areas to be mitigated
- ✦ Provide customer experience covering every channel or touchpoint
 - allowing a business-wide holistic view of customers

How to map your customers' journey

There are two common misconceptions about customer journey mapping:

1. One approach suits all
Every organisation and customer experience is unique and customer mapping needs to be constructed with this uniqueness in mind.
2. Customer journey mapping can be constructed from an internal perspective
Whilst an internal perspective is critical to identify the gaps between current company practices and desired customer experience, if left to just an internal view it will result in an incomplete picture with, at best, an uninspiring customer experience and at worst, errors of the past being repeated and customers ultimately lost.

Taking a holistic approach that matches internal requirements with external expectations allows an organisation to have a dynamic and comprehensive understanding of what it is that customers want, and how organisations can deliver the desired experience - from the very start to the end – taking into account what brought a customer to their organisation in the first place, what steps they took, what contact they had and how they felt at each stage.

Customer journey mapping needs to consider and address numerous elements in order to understand:

- ✦ Who customers are
 - segments represented and how segments differ
- ✦ When does their journey start?
 - what triggers the need/why do they require your service/product?
- ✦ What are the steps customers take that leads to the point of purchase?
 - investigation, options considered, comparison made etc
- ✦ How do they choose a service/product or a particular organisation?
 - Decision-making schemas and criteria adopted
- ✦ What emotions do customers go through?
 - positive and negative feelings they have at key points along the way
- ✦ How do they want to be serviced and how does this compare to actual experience?
 - the expectations and gaps existing
- ✦ What level of communication are they looking for?
 - the messages that resonate and the media customers adopt
- ✦ When does their journey end?
 - from a customer's perspective - on purchase, on use, on reflection, on post-purchase follow-up, on telling someone else about their experience, on repurchase

The end result is a structured, tailored map of your customers and how they interact with your organisation – your products, services and channels – featuring at a minimum a picture of:

- ✦ ***The customer***
- ✦ ***The touchpoints***
- ✦ ***The timeline***
- ✦ ***The expectations***
- ✦ ***The experience***

What's involved? - Steps to creating a customer journey map

Primarily, customer journey maps are created from a number of different elements but it will essentially come from getting to know your customers.

The following steps are crucial to the creation of effective customer journey maps:

1. Have a thorough understanding of your internal processes
 - review processes in place
2. Include an internal perspective
 - workshop with internal stakeholders their perceived customer journey
 - (it's just as important to understand how your staff view the customer process, how they see their roles in the customer journey, and to gain buy-in from internal stakeholders to improve deliverables)
3. Obtain customer perspective - based on informed insights from customer direct research:
 - qualitative - to explore the journey from start to end, hearing it directly from the customer (eg through focus groups, workshops, in-depth interviews, ethnography)
 - quantitative – to measure customer perspectives and validate the journey (eg through online, telephone surveys, intercept)
 - utilise other information available to complete the picture (eg social media data, Google Analytics, website analysis, sales data, customer feedback, call centre metrics etc)
4. Create the map
 - a visual representation of what is desired vs what actually happens in a form that suits your business
5. Share and use internally
 - involve staff, workshop with internal stakeholders and allow them to be involved in designing enhancements and re-engineering customer journey deliverables

How newfocus can help

newfocus has extensive experience in customer engagement and journey mapping research. We also have expertise and adopt specialist tools to assist in distilling information from multiple sources.

The outcomes are clear and informed insights on the strategic and operational issues impacting your organisation and the relationships you have with your customers. We work with you at each step in creating a customer journey map designed to meet your unique needs.

[Contact us](#) today to find out more about customer journey mapping.