

Customer Experience and BPM: A Winning Combination

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The central role of both customer experience (CX) and process management (BPM) in digital transformation success has been well known for some time now. However, it is less widely understood that success with both CX and BPM relies on adopting many of the same best practices and overcoming a set of similar challenges. Some readers may recall that I wrote an [article](#) about the evolving role of process practitioners a couple of months ago advocating the building of skills in areas such as customer experience, design thinking and operating models. The current article focuses on customer experience. Future articles will address the other areas. Breaking down silos is an essential part of both CX and BPM. Process improvement professionals have had to deal with departmental silos for decades. In the age of digital business, data silos now present an equal challenge for CX and BPM.

Performance improvement is compromised when departments view the business just from their own perspective and protect their own turf. [Departmental silos are known to waste resources](#), kill productivity, and jeopardize the achievement of organizational goals. Just as organizational silos are bad for business – so are data silos! Data silos are a byproduct of departments guarding their data such that no one has the big picture. It's increasingly recognized that [data silos are a serious business problem](#). Customer experience data in one place, security data in another, performance data in yet another, etc. Breaking down data silos enables a more effective use of analytics, better decision-making and increased likelihood of success with digital. This is particularly important in the current business environment. Covid 19 has underlined the importance of capturing and integrating customer and employee data. Of course, this means that the amount of data that has to be captured is becoming increasingly large and can be hard to manage. The persistent problem with data silos is linked to the fact that organizations have historically developed IT systems along departmental lines. That has to change before progress can be made.

Instead of [operating in silos](#), best in class companies develop agile, cross-functional teams to optimize both the customer experience and process performance thereby driving deep customer loyalty and, ultimately, greater profitability.

The central role of process in [digital transformation success](#) has been known for some time now. Major pain points on a typical customer journey map can only be

addressed by redesigning the related cross functional business process. In some companies, process practitioners continue to focus on modeling small processes within departmental boundaries. In others, process specialists emphasize incremental improvements with a cost reduction focus and fail to look at the business from the outside-in – from the customers' point of view. In yet others, due to a lack of collaboration with IT – they downplay the potential contribution of information technology. Process experts need to elevate their game to looking at the cross functional, end to end processes that create customer value.

By staying at a relatively high level, one can focus on those touch points – or moments of truth – that really matter to customers. Customer journey maps can be used to drive dialogue with the executive team on the importance of cross functional collaboration. In this way, process practitioners can take the lead in advocating that [digital transformation should start with the customer](#).

The best opportunities for deploying enabling technology are realized when the organization examines its business from the customer's point of view. That's when an organization can best leverage technology integration opportunities. [Combining robotic process automation \(RPA\) with artificial intelligence \(AI\)](#) makes it possible for machines to mimic human tasks, such as pattern recognition, visual perception, speech recognition, decision-making, and adaptability. RPA focuses on the use of software bots to automate highly repetitive, routine tasks usually performed by knowledge workers. Integration of digital tools can unlock new capabilities and insights, and improved outcomes. The opportunities to integrate other tools such as [IBM's tone analyzer](#) are rapidly increasing with potential to improve performance and even heightened empathy.

Competent leadership and change management matters hugely too. In an interview with CIO magazine, [the CIO and SVP of Supply Chain](#) at Reynolds Consumer Products recognized that customer and consumer expectations are changing, and that the only way to meet those expectations is by reimagining the business and creating the necessary cultural change for transformation. Digital transformation success also calls for a shift of management attention from what individual departments do – to how they collaborate in creating value for customers. That can best be accomplished when the organization adopts a customer centered, business process view of performance. That involves certain [leadership behaviors](#) such as showing curiosity (the need to learn and discover) on the details of the entire customer journey and how end to end business processes drive performance for both the customer and the company. Empathy is equally important – as happy employees make for loyal customers.

Recent [research](#) revealed that "'customer-centric' organizations are 38% more likely to report greater profitability than those that are not." So, what are the key actions needed to take best advantage of CX and BPM to drive improved performance? First, make widespread use of cross-functional teams to [foster increased collaboration](#). Next, take a customer centered, process focus and insist that projects integrate the data needs of each department touched by the process. Then, ramp up analytics capability and don't allow departments to hoard data. Stop modeling small processes within departmental boundaries. Don't just focus on volume and cost metrics, emphasize and integrate quality and timeliness. Finally, engage leadership in promoting curiosity and nurturing the habits of collaboration and empathy.

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