Organizations need to leverage the digital experience management technologies and best practices already in place for customer experience to improve on their internally facing efforts. A modern digital experience platform can help achieve this goal.

Digital Transformation Meets Digital Experience Management: Engaging Customers, Partners, and Employees

November 2018

Questions posed by: Adobe
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Q How has the charter for digital transformation grown/changed in the past year or two?

A Improving the customer experience has been a central focus of many digital transformation projects. More recently, organizations have realized that delivering a great experience to partners and employees is just as important.

Organizations must make it easy for business partners to work with them, and they often compete for mindshare and loyalty. They must also empower distribution partners to properly represent their brand. A consistent, high-quality digital experience, therefore, is key to transforming the supply chain.

Workforce transformation is another essential component of digital transformation. Organizations must recruit, onboard, train, motivate, and equip an increasingly distributed workforce. Building employee engagement can be a significant challenge in organizations where employees work in different locations and time zones, and that makes delivering a great digital employee experience even more important.

Frankly, a great digital experience is something partners and employees already expect. We are all consumers, and our expectations are continually reset by the last great digital experience we had — regardless of the company that provided it. The consumerization of IT, beginning with the "bring your own device" (BYOD) trend and continuing with "bring your own app" (BYOA), was driven by these expectations. Younger workers in particular have little patience for poorly designed applications and awkward internal processes. Companies competing for talent in today's tight labor market must make the digital employee experience a priority.

Q How are best-in-class CIOs addressing digital transformation for internal experiences?

A Best-in-class CIOs are outcome focused rather than just technology focused. They are intent on delivering business results and are KPI driven. IDC research shows that the more advanced digital transformers are embedding transformation KPIs in employees' performance goals to ensure companywide alignment and foster buy-in. Consider the global launch of a new product or service: Numerous external and internal activities must be coordinated. Leading CIOs understand the role of internal experience in attaining the organization's business objectives.

Best-in-class CIOs also seek to standardize where possible — both in the technologies they use and in best practices. IDC sees leading CIOs applying learnings from customer experience to employee experience. The consumerization of IT, with the shift to mobile and cloud services, was just the beginning of a sea change. IT has spent the past several years putting the customer at the center as it contemplates making new investments in its role as part of the digital transformation team, and this has ushered in an intense focus on the user. This focus is reflected in "design first" approaches to application development and increased emphasis on user experience (UX) for both externally facing and internally facing experiences.

Leading CIOs are forward looking and receptive to new ideas. New technologies such as the Internet of Things (IoT), augmented reality, voice, artificial intelligence (AI), and machine learning continue to drive innovation in digital experience. Best-in-class CIOs proactively harness new technologies wherever they offer competitive advantage — both inside and outside the organization.

Q How similarly/differently should internal and external experiences be treated?

A Many organizations still invest more in the quality of their external experiences than in their internal experiences. It's the "shoemaker's children" syndrome. Perhaps the rationale is that internally facing applications aren't visible to outsiders, so they don't impact brand and aren't worth the "extra" investment.

With the rise of the gig economy, however, it's no longer the case that internally focused systems are seen only by employees. Contractors, agency staff, and other "outsiders" are an important part of the workforce in many organizations. Today, organizations are really building applications for the "extended enterprise," which also includes partners.

As previously noted, today's employees bring much higher expectations to work. They expect well-designed, intuitive experiences that require little or no training and provide snappy performance. They expect it to be easy to find the information they need and, increasingly, they expect information in video format.

Forward-thinking brands know that disconnects between their external and internal "images" are problematic. They aspire to "live the brand," seeking to make passionate advocates of not just customers but also partners and employees. In an "everyone sells" culture, making the internal experience as compelling as the external experience is key to an engaged workforce.

IDC thinks organizations should treat external and internal digital experiences the same way and make digital experience delivery a core competency. A center of excellence (CoE) for digital experience delivery is a good way to bring together the needed skill sets and share best practices.

IDC also recommends a design-led approach to experience delivery. Organizations that do so have significantly reduced their implementation time and costs and improved both employee satisfaction and adoption. Some of the more advanced digital transformers tell us that they have established a unified UX design group for both products and digital experiences.

IDC sees significant untapped potential for organizations to leverage the digital experience management technologies and best practices already in place for customer experience to improve on their internally facing efforts. There is a great opportunity to leverage existing investments.

Q How can the technology foundation contribute to (or damage) the success of digital transformation across internal and external use cases?

A If we agree that external and internal experiences should be treated the same, it's clear that organizations should standardize on a common platform.

A common platform offers plenty of benefits for IT, including one skill set; one integration point for the myriad applications/systems that need to plug in and a common approach for widgets; one vendor to call and single-vendor support; and negotiating leverage at procurement time.

For business users responsible for creating and delivering experiences, the benefits of a common platform include transferable skills using editorial and design tools, the opportunity to leverage power users to help train others in different departments, and a more consistent branded experience across external and internal "channels."

End users benefit from quicker time to market and better user experiences because the organization leverages both a technology stack and a set of best practices refined to maximize customer engagement. Most of what organizations learn delivering external experiences can help inform internal experiences. Personalization and testing, for example, are tremendously useful in internal initiatives to serve up role-specific content and ensure an intuitive experience.

IDC believes that a modern digital experience platform helps the organization become more agile. Companies exploring such platforms should consider those that offer the following features:

» Robust tools that enable stakeholders — including content authors/editors, designers, application developers, and IT operations — to contribute to digital experiences

> » Easy integration and extensibility so that organizations have the flexibility to extend whatever solution they buy with new widgets, plug-ins, and applications

> » Omni-channel support so that organizations can deliver external and internal experiences across web, mobile, and social channels, among others

> » Cloud-ready deployment so that organizations can migrate applications to the cloud and offload infrastructure, system, and application management tasks

IDC also believes that modern digital experience management platforms are distinguished by their incorporation of AI and machine learning to streamline user tasks and achieve a great result with less effort.

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Melissa Webster leads IDC's research on digital experience management software and cloud services. Her coverage area encompasses solutions for web content management, digital asset management, content marketing, user-generated content (UGC) harvesting and curation, mobile content apps, online video solutions, and rich media analytics to support the digital experience.

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