

 EBOOK

# A Roadmap to Superior Customer Experience Through Learning

  
A Skillsoft Company

# Introduction



An introductory guide on how to use learning to catapult your customer experience to excellence.

Get tips on how to apply learning at every phase of the customer life cycle, the benefits you'll gain, and examples of how leading organizations are putting external learning into practice.

# Customer experience is your key differentiator.

## What is customer experience all about?

It's the cumulative impression formed by every interaction that all constituents have with your business. It's not just the result of one or two defining interactions, it is the sum of them all: with your people, products, processes and technology. If superior customer experience isn't a primary focus across your company, you risk losing ground as your competitors embrace the trend and grab market share.

The trend is well underway and growing rapidly as more and more customers make buying decisions based on the overall experience. Not pricing, not product, but the quality of experience your organization delivers.



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### Orbitz Case Study

Orbitz benchmarks learning program results against business performance factors such as customer satisfaction and productivity to identify connections.

## CUSTOMER ACQUISITION VS. RETENTION

**7X**

How much more it costs to sell to a new prospect versus an existing customer<sup>1</sup>

**25-95%**

potential increase in sales via customer retention programs<sup>1</sup>

**31%**

How much more repeat customers spend than new ones<sup>1</sup>

**73%**

of survey respondents cited empowered employees as 1 of 3 top factors contributing to a positive customer experience<sup>2</sup>

**2X**

Investment in training resulted in companies with the highest productivity levels.<sup>2</sup>

**46%**

of learning organizations supporting external audiences<sup>3</sup>

1 "The Cost of Customer Acquisition vs. Customer Retention." Savino Longo, Kapost, April 6, 2016.

2 "4 Ways Online Training Increases Productivity." Roz Bahrami, eLearning Industry, July 4, 2015.

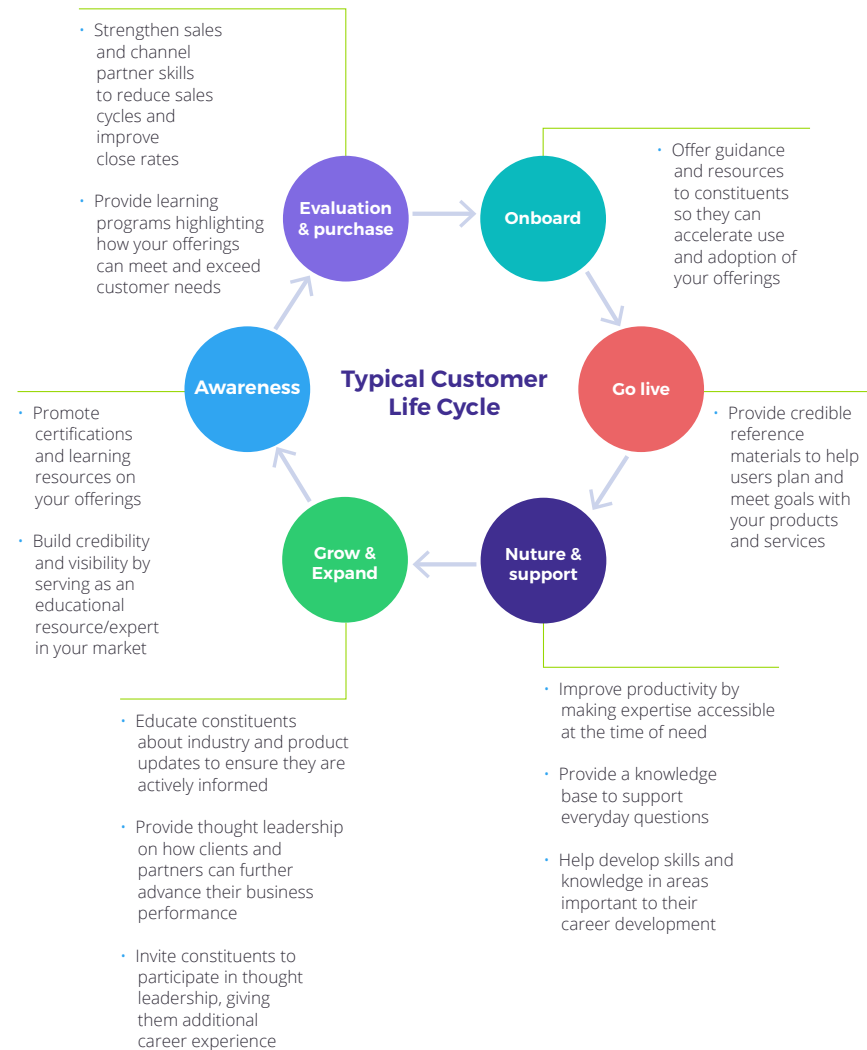
3 "Extended Enterprise Training Goes Mainstream." Catherine Upton & Jerry Roche, Elearning, February/March 2015.

# External learning is simply smart business strategy

Every company has goals to meet. Success criteria differ from year to year and organization to organization. But most stem from a common set of objectives, facilitated by the customer life cycle: generate awareness, acquire new customers, increase revenue, retain clients and so forth.

Most businesses are dependent on customers, partners and the rest of their extended enterprise, in addition to employees, to achieve those goals. Yet, they too often give short shrift to investing in learning programs for those very folks. Big mistake.

Extending learning to external audiences is a great chance for your business to lead, create differentiation, and own your market, just as customer experience is crowned king.



# Leverage external learning to catapult business performance

Sample Benefits	How does learning add value?
Achieve greater productivity	Ready access to information and subject matter expertise empowers your employees, customers and partners to work smarter and more efficiently
Reduce operational costs	Effective learning reduces the volume and frequency of support inquiries, which saves your company time and money
Reduce risk and maintain compliance	Your contingent workers and partners are often required to adhere to the same regulations and standards as your staff. Proactive, timely training can help you avoid fines and exposure
Grow new client acquisition	More knowledgeable, well trained sales teams and channel partners lead to shorter sales cycles and improved close rates on new customer opportunities
Improve satisfaction and retention	Learning programs accelerate product adoption and usage, enabling customers and partners to attain greater speed to value from your offerings
Increase revenue potential	Position learning content, certification programs and continuing education as an add-on service for a fee; also tie learning results to business performance goals to measure the impact of learning investments to overall growth

# Invest in an engaging learning experience

Don't underestimate the importance of quality and ease of use when delivering learning to your network of partners and customers.

Increase the likelihood that users will take advantage of the learning content available to them—deliver it through technology that mirrors how they gather and consume information in their daily personal and professional experiences. Customers and partners may make few complaints about cumbersome learning delivery, but their low usage will make their opinions loud and clear.

To give your external audience the engaging learning experience they expect, follow these fundamental best practices as a baseline.

## Personalize it:

Don't just deliver the same content over and over, no matter who the user is. Target the branding, design and content to each audience (customer, partner, supplier, etc.), skill level and role.

## Put it in context:

Your external audience needs the right information at the right time. Make sure content is relevant to the task at hand and as tightly integrated as possible into the systems and processes they use every day.

## Make it mobile:

Your external learners are likely on-the-go in both their personal and professional lives. Access should be available anywhere, at any time, and from any type of connected device.

## Track and measure:

Show your stakeholders—including customers and partners—the success of your expanded learning programs. Provide progress charts, badges and other indicators of success.

## Tips, tricks & best practices

Let's look at how you can put learning into practice for a few different audiences within your extended enterprise, at various stages in their relationship with your business.

### **The Newbie:**

Onboard new clients you've recently acquired

### **The Empowered Partner:**

Establish programs to optimize partner relationships

### **The Happy Expert:**

Use learning to increase client retention and satisfaction

### **The Loyal Fan:**

Transform customers and partners into advocates

### **EXTENDED ENTERPRISE AUDIENCES**

**77%** 77% of organizations offer customer training, but only 29% offer training to reseller, channel, and partner communities<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> "Extended Enterprise Training Goes Mainstream." Catherine Upton & Jerry Roche, Elearning, February/March 2015.

# The Newbie: show the path to success

## Set the tone

You have a brand new customer or partner — so wow them now! The first weeks and months they work with you set the tone for their overall perception of your company. Make it the best it can be, because it's a lot harder (and more costly) to turn around a bad impression. Not to mention the negative hit to your brand if they share it publicly or on social networks. And they will — 53% of people will tell their friends about a bad customer experience on social media.

Are you responsive? Is information easy to find? Is it relevant and does it help them get started quickly and easily?

## 5 Learning tips to WOW

**1. Communicate:** Establish an immediate connection by sending a “Welcome” email, outlining your onboarding process.

**2. Create an onboarding program:** Step learners through the basics of your products and services, and make resources and templates available and accessible to help them ramp quickly.

**3. Lead & facilitate:** Provide a regularly scheduled instructor-led online introductory training class. The personal touch counts.

**4. Deliver compelling content:** Variety is a plus: tutorial videos, an easy to search knowledge base, polls, fun quizzes and short 15 minute courses are just some examples.

**5. Be responsive!** Make it a corporate value and lead by example. Nothing spoils customer experience faster than interacting with unresponsive, uninformed employees.



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### USA Funds Case Study

USA Funds helps college students prepare for success by offering courses on topics such as choosing a major, budgeting and managing debt.



# The Empowered Partner: part of your team

Whether on the front lines selling and servicing your customers, behind the scenes in administrative/consultant roles or building products, partners need ongoing training and access to information. Just as learning increases engagement, expertise, and productivity for your employees, it does the same for your partners.

Your partners are also your customers—so many of the tips presented for customers can be modified for partners. Let your creativity shine and examine how you can use those techniques to serve your partners as well. But partners also have specific needs to achieve their goals and optimize their contribution to your company.

## 5 learning tips to optimize partner performance

### 1. Show them they're valued

Make your partners part of your team. Let them know that you are invested in their success by providing ongoing communication and training. After all, their success is your success.

### 2. Interact regularly

Set up regular information sharing and Q&A sessions. Use these sessions to identify training or information gaps and update your LMS with the right content.

### 3. Get them involved early and often

Don't forget to include your partners in product launch training so they hit the ground running on launch day.

### 4. Stand out & differentiate

You are competing for each partner's attention, so don't rely on a one-size-fits-all training program. Use your LMS to deliver personalized information and training. Doing so will engage your partners and set your company apart.

### 5. Keep it simple

Your partners are busy. Short snippets of info delivered often are more effective than long training videos or documentation.



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### McAfee Case Study

McAfee provides certifications and continuing education to its more than 85,000 channel partner representatives, who provide 75% of company's revenue.

# The Happy Expert: engage, educate & empower them

Retaining customers is key to maintaining and growing your business. Your existing customers are more likely to buy from you—and it costs less to retain a customer than to acquire a new one. So don't stop or ease up after they are fully on board. Keep the communication channels open and relevant content, training and information flowing.

## 5 learning tips to keep customers happy

- 1. Keep in touch:** Reach out often with offers for advanced training, new product information and the value it will bring (upsell opportunity!), webinars with industry experts.
- 2. Be relevant:** Personalize learning content to ensure it's applicable to the work your customer is doing at the moment, while using your product.
- 3. Encourage & reward participation:** Assign points to every learning activity. Reward customers with badges for attaining point

levels and recognize their accomplishment by prominently displaying badges on profiles and in forum activities.

- 4. Help them succeed:** Provide consumers tips on using your products and services in new ways. This is a chance to add a little bit of fun! For business customers, deliver best practice seminars to help them get better at their jobs, and gain recognition as subject matter experts.
- 5. Offer certifications:** Reward customers who demonstrate mastery of your product or service with certifications—this tactic helps customers advance their careers, while promoting your brand and authority. Bonus: A certification program is a revenue opportunity that can transform learning from a cost center to a profit center.



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### AMA Case Study

American Management Association uses learning as a revenue-generating initiative that extends their reach and increases awareness.

# The Loyal Fan: support and nurture to extend your reach

The customer or partner who becomes your loyal fan is nice validation of the great experience your company provides. More importantly, they have high retention rates, become valuable brand advocates and are an extension of your sales force.

## 5 learning tips to turn loyal fans into advocates

- 1. Keep your learning content fresh:** When you update content regularly, customers will return to see what's new. Content doesn't have to be full-blown training courses – it can be quick five minute tip videos from leading executives or job aids – be creative!
- 2. Showcase and share your subject matter expertise:** Provide thought leadership content and insights to help customers and partners perform at their best.
- 3. Ask them to present on behalf of your brand:** Invite customers and partners to co-present a webinar or speak at a user conference session.

Record the presentation and add it to your content arsenal.

- 4. Invite them to join user groups:** Allow members help shape learning content and provide feedback on improving the overall learning experience (and then act on it)!
- 5. Feature and promote their knowledge:** Invite them to submit content to your blog. Turn their know-how into a job aid for others—just be sure to credit your customer as the author. Promote your brand by sharing the content via social media.



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### Tokyo Electron Case Study

Tokyo Electron delivers a better customer experience by providing direct access to real-time training in local languages.

We hope you've gathered from this eBook that knowledge is essential to establishing an exceptional customer experience for your extended enterprise. And learning programs are the path to make that exceptional experience happen.

SumTotal helps organizations around the globe deliver world-class learning to both internal and external audiences to drive better business performance.

SumTotal Extended Enterprise solutions allow you to fully optimize your investment in learning to serve your entire ecosystem — all from a single solution. Contact us today to learn how we can help you achieve:

**Customer Satisfaction:** Customer training enhances understanding and appreciation of products and services, reducing support costs.

**Partner Engagement:** Consistent, up-to-date knowledge improves partner relationships and increases their involvement and productivity.

**Revenue Generation:** e-commerce capabilities turn external education and training initiatives into profit centers.





**Value Chain Optimization:** Certifications and training increase the quality of the products and services you provide customers.



## About SumTotal

SumTotal Systems, LLC, a Skillsoft Company, is the only HR software provider to deliver Talent Expansion™ solutions that help organizations discover, develop and unleash the hidden potential within their workforce. SumTotal goes beyond traditional talent management and HCM applications, offering contextual and pervasive HR solutions that actually help improve employee performance in real time.

More than 3,500 organizations, including some of Fortune's "Best Places to Work," rely on SumTotal's award winning solutions to empower their employees. For more information, visit [www.sumtotalsystems.com](http://www.sumtotalsystems.com).

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