CX Management in the Enterprise, Part XI:
Main Challenges to Adoption
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To meet increasingly elevated customer expectations, organizations are implementing detailed strategies for distributing customer experience (CX) practices across the organization. This includes defining and standardizing the customer journey across different channels in order to strengthen their brand, increase customer loyalty, reduce costs, make better use of customer feedback, and so forth. Organizations are also investing in leading technologies designed to enhance CX, regardless of which channels customers choose to engage with them.

Most can agree that providing a great customer experience is essential for any organization seeking to remain competitive today. However, actually implementing CX practices and technologies can be difficult. Consequently, Cutter Consortium conducted a [survey](#) to gain insight into how organizations are adopting CX management practices and technologies and what they see as the possible impacts on their businesses. Goals include:

- Determining the current status of organizations' CX initiatives and their future plans for utilizing CX

- Gaining insight from organizations regarding perceived benefits and opportunities offered by CX practices and technologies

- Measuring the extent that organizations actually achieve benefits as a result of their CX efforts to date

- Identifying specific CX practices and technologies organizations use or plan to use to support their CX initiatives

- Highlighting the important trends, issues, obstacles, and other considerations organizations encounter in their CX efforts

In addition to gathering and analyzing survey data, I have been interviewing leaders and practitioners at different organizations who are implementing or working to implement CX practices and technologies. Their opinions and recommendations add some depth and richness to the responses to our questionnaire. (For more information on survey demographics, see Part I.)

Part I of this *Executive Update* series examined the extent that organizations are using or planning to use CX practices and technologies, the status of implementing CX management, the establishment of dedicated enterprise CX groups, and the reason such groups oversee CX initiatives. Part II looked at survey findings covering budgeting trends for CX initiatives and the status of the "chief customer officer" (CCO) in the enterprise. Part III considered the benefits organizations hope to obtain from implementing CX practices and technologies, while Part IV focused on the various CX practices organizations are interested in adopting. Part V examined the leading CX technologies organizations are interested in adopting. Part VI and Part VII covered findings about the various advanced technologies organizations are interested in adopting for their CX efforts. Part VIII looked at the use cases and domains organizations see as most viable for applying CX. Part IX covered findings pertaining to several enterprise CX adoption trends, including employee CX training and the use of outside CX professionals in support of CX initiatives as well as commercial cloud-based CX platforms and services usage. Part X discussed findings about how organizations currently view their CX efforts. Here in Part XI, the final *Update* in this series, we cover the major issues and stumbling blocks that organizations tell us are holding back their CX efforts.

Biggest Adoption Challenges to CX

Figure 1 shows the main issues that surveyed organizations report as hindering their efforts to adopt and implement CX processes. Let's consider each, ranked from highest to lowest in severity.

Inability/Difficulty to Provide Seamless CX Across All Customer Channels

The number one issue surveyed organizations believe is causing the most problems for implementing their CX initiatives involves ensuring that CX is cohesive across all their virtual/actual properties and lines of business. This makes sense because CX is a somewhat abstract or difficult to define concept — although everyone seems to recognize a good CX when exposed to it. Consequently, implementing an omnichannel CX requires a plan as well as defining a strategy for developing and delivering consistent messaging and communications across various channels — ranging from mobile/voice, chat, text to video, social media, and in-store experience.

The rise of new business models also compounds the problem of defining a consistent, yet satisfying, CX. Consequently, organizations are struggling to define the processes needed for customer engagement, as opposed to just treating customer interactions as a basic transaction that needs to be completed as efficiently as possible.
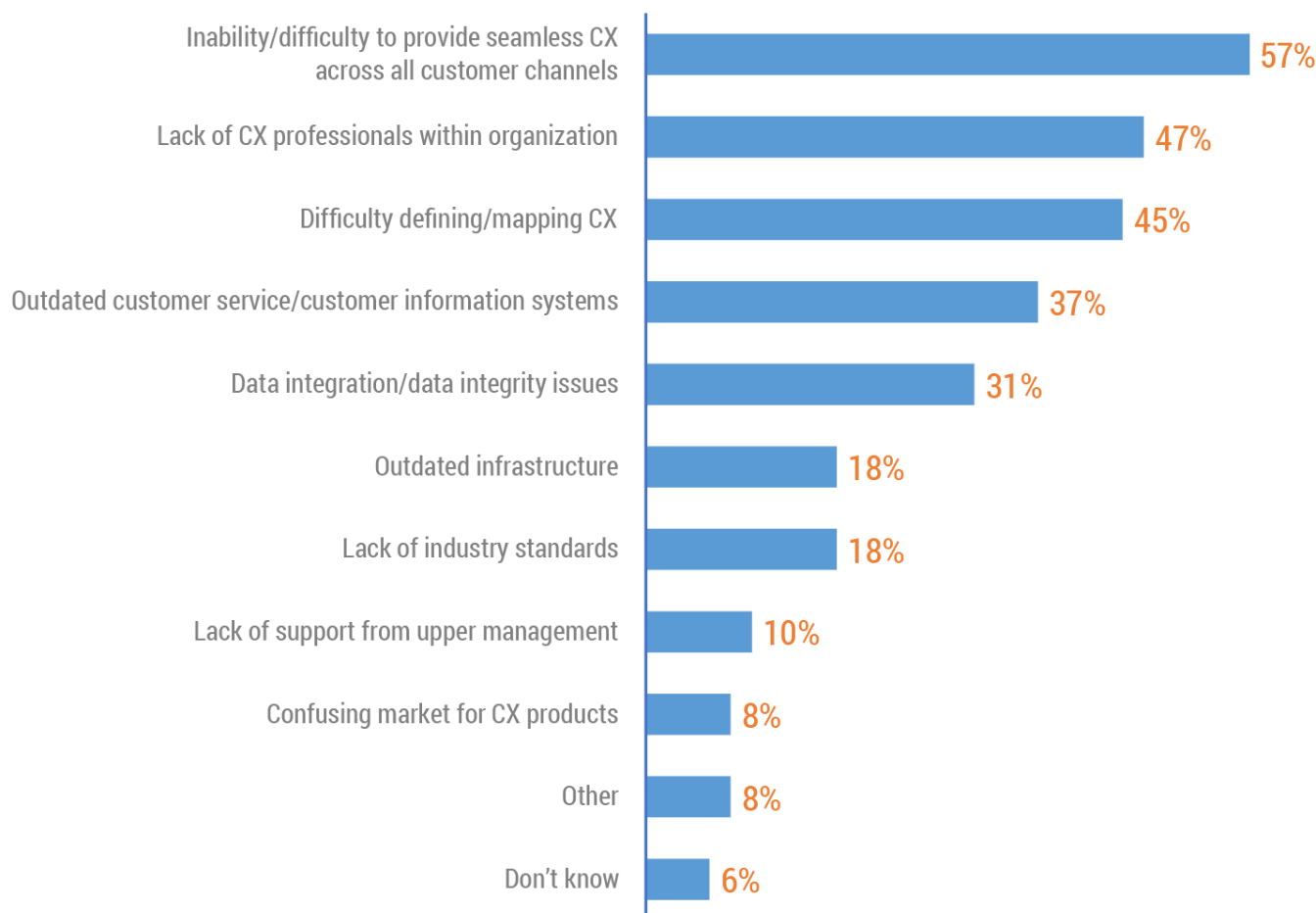
Challenge	Percentage
Inability/difficulty to provide seamless CX across all customer channels	57%
Lack of CX professionals within organization	47%
Difficulty defining/mapping CX	45%
Outdated customer service/customer information systems	37%
Data integration/data integrity issues	31%
Outdated infrastructure	18%
Lack of industry standards	18%
Lack of support from upper management	10%
Confusing market for CX products	8%
Other	8%
Don't know	6%

Figure 1 — What are the biggest adoption challenges to your organization's efforts in implementing its CX strategy and technologies?

Lack of CX Professionals Within Organization

Almost half of responding organizations report that the issues they are encountering regarding CX are further complicated by a lack of internal staff experienced with CX practices and technologies. Accordingly, as we saw in Part IX, they are initiating training programs to instruct their employees in CX practices and technologies. Recall that some companies are also turning to outside consultancies to assist them with their CX initiatives. Indeed, more than 40% of surveyed organizations use outside CX consultancies; this is in addition to training existing employees in CX practices and technologies (see Part IX). These trends should continue over the next several years as more organizations broaden and expand their CX efforts.

Difficulty Defining/Mapping CX

Forty-five percent of surveyed organizations indicate that defining and mapping customer journeys can be complex. This really goes hand in hand with the issue of trying to provide a seamless CX across all customer

channels, because, again, just what exactly comprises a great customer experience? While it may be easy to say that "great customer service," "zero wait times," "quick responses," "easy returns," and so forth are all representative of a great customer experience, in reality, companies may not have an existing, well-documented overview of all their existing systems and processes (and capabilities) required to make providing a great CX practical. Consequently, organizations are turning to various technologies to assist them. As we learned in Part V, customer intent/journey mapping and analysis tools along with omnichannel customer engagement hubs and marketing platforms are two often-cited tools by our survey participants. Others include personalization, customer analytics/behavioral modeling, and artificial intelligence (AI) tools like chatbots and digital assistants.

Outdated Customer Service/Customer Information Systems and Data Integration/Integrity Issues

Although these problems are shown separately in Figure 1, they really belong together, so I have combined them to facilitate easier discussion. Surveyed organizations note that outdated customer service/customer information systems are posing problems for their efforts to provide a (seamless) CX across all customer channels because such systems are difficult to integrate. To get around this, some organizations are turning to integration platform-as-a-service (iPaaS).

You might have thought that since many of today's organizations have well-established data warehousing and BI practices, data integration and data integrity issues would not be major factors when it comes to CX management; this does not appear to be the case. Respondents are finding it difficult to integrate data because of outdated customer information and customer-support systems. Consequently, they are turning to cloud customer data integration platforms, customer data hubs, and omnichannel customer engagement platforms. The goal, of course, is to be able to respond faster to rapidly changing customer expectations.

Going forward, both platform and data integration issues are likely to intensify due to the trend of organizations seeking to integrate more and more customer data sourced from systems of engagement — including unstructured data from social media, mobile apps, popular messaging systems, online surveys, and other customer feedback platforms — with operational data from CRM and other enterprise systems in order to effect more dynamic CX management. This senior consultant of IT change and strategy alludes to the issue:

> We've found that improving the customer experience requires a lot of customer data. Trouble is, a lot of the required data sits in different systems and databases. It may not be easy to get at. It may be textual data from social media and customer surveys, which is extremely valuable for qualitative analysis, but which is more difficult to integrate into your BI [business intelligence] tools. Text analytics and sentiment analysis can help with that, but then you have to figure out just where to apply the findings in your CX processes.

Outdated Infrastructure

It seems that outdated infrastructure is posing headaches for about a fifth of surveyed organizations' CX projects and that this hinders efforts to implement new technologies, ranging from process automation platforms and customer data hubs (attributed to siloed processes and data/information sources) to new, AI-based CX tools like smartbots, natural language processing (NLP), and customer self-service applications.

Lack of Industry Standards

A lack of industry standards among CX tools and platforms ranks fairly far down the list when it comes to issues organizations perceive as impeding their CX efforts. I believe that lack of industry standards will become even less of an issue over the next two to four years as more organizations turn to Web CX platforms and tailored services. Basically, these platforms support different CX scenarios, including omnichannel customer engagement, customer behavioral modeling, personalization, social video and messaging (for engaging with customers on social media platforms), customer loyalty, customer satisfaction assessment and measurement, customer intent/journey analysis and visualization, and visual search. (For more on these technologies, see Part V.)

Lack of Support from Upper Management

Although lack of upper management support is a frequently voiced complaint or issue when it comes to the adoption of almost any new technology or practice, it does not appear to be significantly impacting surveyed organizations' CX implementation efforts. Still, some CX proponents say there can be a tendency to place support for CX initiatives on the back burner, behind other efforts perceived to have the likelihood of providing more impact on a business's bottom line. Consequently, that is why proponents typically recommend CX groups focus their initial efforts on projects that have the greatest chance of leading to some form of financial result (e.g., customer retention), which has proved to benefit heavily from a better customer experience in general. Moreover, it is also easy to show how customer retention can positively impact the bottom line.

Others have pointed out that they have had some difficulty getting senior managers and executives to sign onto the idea of the need to take an all-encompassing approach to CX, as this program manager of business modernization/digital transformation at an outsourcing/Web services provider explains:

> There's never been a problem convincing anyone about the need for CX improvement in our company. What we do have a problem with is getting some to understand that you simply cannot take a piecemeal approach to CX ... one that only addresses specific customer touchpoints. You need to take a holistic approach to CX, one that covers all the relevant channels, departments, and processes.

Confusing Market for CX Products

Most responding organizations appear fairly content with the current market for CX solutions — or at least they do not perceive it as a significant hindrance to their CX adoption and implementation plans. This makes sense because, in reality, commercial CX developments are proceeding quickly. In fact, there is an incredible amount of innovation taking place around CX, especially when it comes to AI, social, and mobile technologies, as well as Web-based platforms and domain- and industry-specific solutions. (See Part V, Part VI, and Part VII for more on developments in these areas.)

Other Issues

Other concerns surveyed organizations believe are hindering their CX adoption and implementation plans include an organizational culture that makes it difficult for a company to shift from a product-focused to a customer-focused strategy. Another issue is bandwidth, as noted by this senior VP at a CX management consulting firm:

> *Bandwidth. We often do this as our passion and our second or third role. The training will not be bad as long as we are applying best practices from the change management perspective. It's really about defining and continuously improving. I don't expect that we will just roll out an enterprise CX management approach without applying good change management. We will need to do this in iterations.*

Conclusion

Our research identifies several key findings pertaining to the issues and concerns organizations see as hampering their efforts to adopt and utilize CX practices and technologies, including:

- **Inability/difficulty to provide seamless CX across all customer channels.** This currently is, and will remain for the foreseeable future, the number one problem hindering surveyed organizations from carrying out their CX practices.

- **Lack of CX professionals within the organization is a serious problem when it comes to carrying out CX initiatives.** The current workaround has organizations launching training programs for employees and utilizing consulting organizations experienced in CX to meet project needs. We can expect this trend to continue for the foreseeable future.

- **Defining and mapping customer journeys is still limiting CX efforts.** Even with the introduction of technologies like customer journey mapping and analysis tools as well as omnichannel customer engagement hubs and marketing platforms, we can assume that defining and mapping customer journeys will present significant problems for organizations for at least the next two years.

- **Outdated customer service/customer information systems and data integration/integrity issues.** These are posing problems for responding organizations in their efforts to provide a seamless CX across all their customer channels. This is due to difficulties involved in process and data integration, including the increasing need to integrate unstructured data into the CX analysis. Data quality is also impacting CX efforts because incomplete, dirty, or missing data can lead to inaccurate results, which limits the ability to provide a complete view of the customer.

- **Outdated infrastructure causes surveyed organizations a great deal of headaches with their CX adoption efforts.** This includes data integration and process integration problems as well as difficulties complicating attempts to incorporate new mobile, social, and AI technologies into CX programs.

- **A perceived lack of industry standards among CX tools and platforms does not appear to be an important factor hindering CX efforts.** Moreover, we can expect this to become even less of an issue over the next several years as organizations increasingly turn to Web CX platforms and tailored services.

- **Lack of upper management support ranks near the bottom of the list of issues hindering CX implementation efforts.** In short, it appears that the importance of being able to provide a great CX is well accepted by C-level and other management.

- **There does not appear to be much confusion among surveyed organizations when it comes to the current market for CX products and services.** This ranks at the very bottom of issues seen as impacting CX efforts. The market for commercial CX offerings is evolving rapidly, especially when it comes to social, mobile, and AI-based CX applications and services.

This concludes our *Update* series on CX management trends in the enterprise. Thank you, everyone, for your contributions to our effort.

About the Author

Curt Hall is a Senior Consultant with Cutter Consortium's [Data Analytics & Digital Technologies](#) and [Business & Enterprise Architecture](#) practices. He has extensive experience as an IT analyst covering technology trends, application development trends, markets, software, and services. Mr. Hall's expertise includes artificial intelligence (AI), cognitive systems, machine learning, conversational computing, and advanced analytics. He also focuses on the Internet of Things, including platforms, architectures, and use cases; big data platforms and use cases; blockchain for business; and business intelligence (BI), predictive modeling, and other analytic practices. Mr. Hall's research also includes mobile and social technologies in the enterprise as well as mobile BI and collaboration. He has conducted extensive research on how all these technologies are being applied to develop new advisory, decision support, customer engagement, and other enterprise applications.

Mr. Hall is a frequent contributor to Cutter Consortium's [Data Analytics & Digital Technologies](#) research deliverables as well as Cutter Business Technology Journal. *He served as Editor of numerous Cutter Consortium journals, including* Intelligent Software Strategies, Data Management Strategies, *and* Business Intelligence Advisor. *His study on the corporate use of data warehouses and the issues associated with data warehousing projects resulted in the in-depth Cutter Consortium research report* Corporate Use of Data Warehousing and Enterprise Analytic Technologies. *Mr. Hall also coauthored, with Cutter Consortium Senior Consultant Paul Harmon,* Intelligent Software Systems Development: An IS Manager's Guide, *and contributed to James Martin and James Odell's* Object-Oriented Methods: Pragmatic Considerations. *His work has appeared in various technical journals and IT publications, including as a contributing author to* PricewaterhouseCoopers Technology Forecast Yearbooks. *He can be reached at chall@cutter.com.*