

***HBR*/CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE**

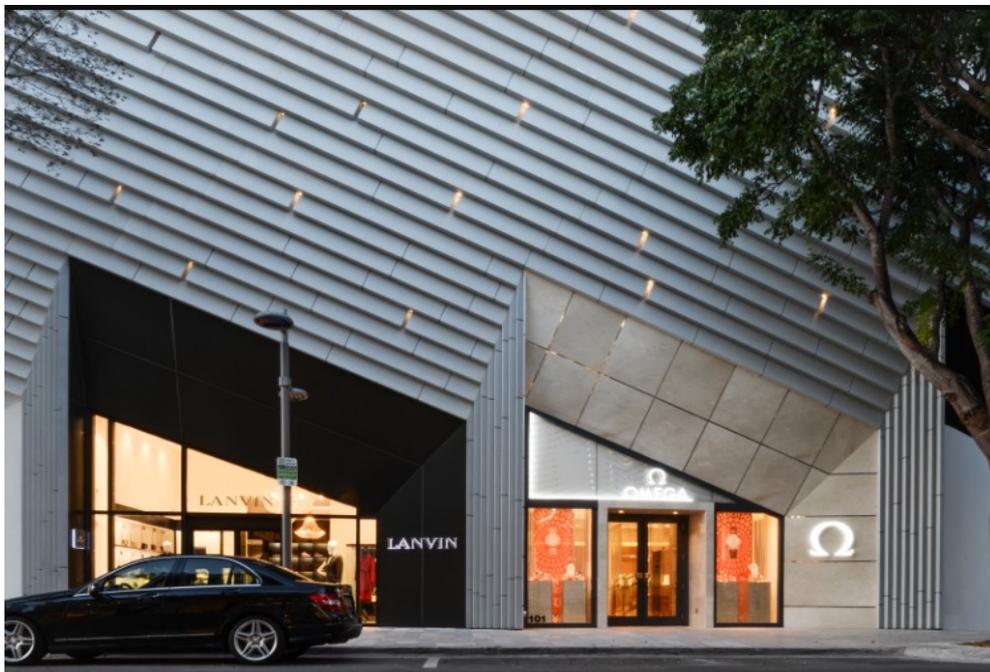
CONVERSATIONS

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I recently read an informative piece from the *Harvard Business Review* on customer experience, more commonly referred to as CX. They had conducted several case studies across telecoms, car rentals, and pay TV, with the assistance of McKinsey. Most of their core findings are reflected in retail as well.

The piece sites that the customer's engagement experience has three main phases: before contact, during the visit, and post visit. All are critical as customers often pivot back based on their needs, whether online or in store. Interestingly, research found that most often it was not a singular unsatisfactory moment that dissuaded future purchases but the cumulative effect of several instances over time.

Organizations that consistently managed all phases well were rewarded with a higher level of customer satisfaction, increased sales revenue, higher employee satisfaction, and reduced turnover. While this makes sense, many leaders lose sight of it for a variety of reasons.



In my experience, when it comes to setting the stage for a positive customer experience during the visit, there are several non-negotiable priorities to keep in mind as a leader of an omnichannel organization with physical environments.

First, **get on your shop floor**—as frequently as possible. Arrive announced and unannounced. This includes senior management, support departments, and certainly the in-store managers. This will position you to observe and communicate with teams on what is working well, how service is in play, and opportunities for improvement. Remember, those on the front line with customers are most frequently able to provide clues, input, and solutions.

Second, **talk to your customers**. Engage, build relationships, ask questions, and listen. You will find a wealth of information to assist you in providing resources and opportunities you may not have considered as your business develops.

Third, clearly **define the behaviors, gestures, and exchange** for your organization across the three phases of the customer experience. It should have its own unique personality across the core business touch points, including customer service, visual merchandising, operations, marketing, online, and call centers to name a few.

Lastly, remember when engaging clients, add an **element of surprise**, genuine **moments matter** more than ever, and if/when there are problems, seize the opportunity to make it right in order to **build trust and loyalty**. Remember, word of mouth from your customers—whether in person or online—is key.

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