

# Deliver an Amazing Customer Experience

## What's It Like to Make Buying Decisions in Your Customers' Shoes?

*“Customers value various factors, depending on the product or service: price, ease of use, consistency, durability, etc. The list of attributes is endless, and customers attach significance to different factors based on personal taste and preference.”*

—Mary Claire Mandeville, Business Development Manager at Venni<sup>1</sup>

**To Do:** Read the Introduction and then, in Parts 1–3, follow the guide to analyze your customers' experiences, using the examples as models.

### Introduction

From **customer discovery** to customer personas, the business community is obsessed with knowing the customer. What does the customer *want*? What does the customer *want to avoid*? How do you convert a simple purchase into customer loyalty? Some brands have embraced **customer centricity** so much that they're known for their customer experience as much as they are their products or services, if not more so. Examples of such customer-centric brands include Airbnb, Amazon, Apple, Nordstrom, and Zappos. In fact, up until a few years ago, Nordstrom had live pianists performing in each store across the country to enhance their customers' shopping experience.

**Customer experience (CX)** is the interaction between an organization and its customer during their relationship. This includes the customer's decision-making process during the purchase, how the customer and the business communicate during sales, how they relate during services, and where these exchanges take place, whether face-to-face or online. Entrepreneurs know a positive customer experience brings buyers back time and time again, but a negative customer experience can stop a sale dead in its tracks and can cause potential customers who read bad reviews of your business to never give your business a chance.

How can your customer experience process foster loyalty and repeat business? How can you know your customer's wants, needs, and dislikes even better? How do you know if your customer-centric

approach is working? One way is through **customer experience mapping**, which documents your customers' experience from searching for a product or service that solves their needs to their post-purchase experiences.

This is an important practice, because there's a huge gap in understanding between the 80 percent of businesses who think they deliver a superior customer experience—and the mere 8 percent of customers who agree with them.<sup>2</sup> So, how do you better understand your interaction with customers? Let's get started.

## **PART 1 | What are my customer touchpoints?**

What are all the ways potential customers come into contact with your business, before, during, and after a purchase (also known as **customer touchpoints**)? How do they learn about your business in the first place? Communicate with your business? Give your business feedback? Use the following chart to help you brainstorm.

<b>Before Purchase</b>	<b>During Purchase</b>	<b>After Purchase</b>
Advertising	Catalog	Billing
Marketing	Phone system	Marketing e-mails
Reviews	Sales staff	Service
Social media	Store	Support
Word of mouth	Website	"Thank you" cards
Other	Other	Other

**Example: Jenny’s Air Conditioning Home Services**—Before the purchase, our customers will most often research us on the customer review sites and then ask about us with their neighbors on neighborhood networking sites, which is where word of mouth takes over. We do advertise in both print and online. During the purchase process, customers call us on the phone and then we meet with them in person. That’s also a key point of interaction, because how they perceive our workers is hugely important to us. After the purchase and installation or service, we immediately follow up with a phone call. Then, the customer receives marketing e-mails and periodic phone calls reminding them of maintenance service or specials.



## **PART 2 | How do customers interact with my business?**

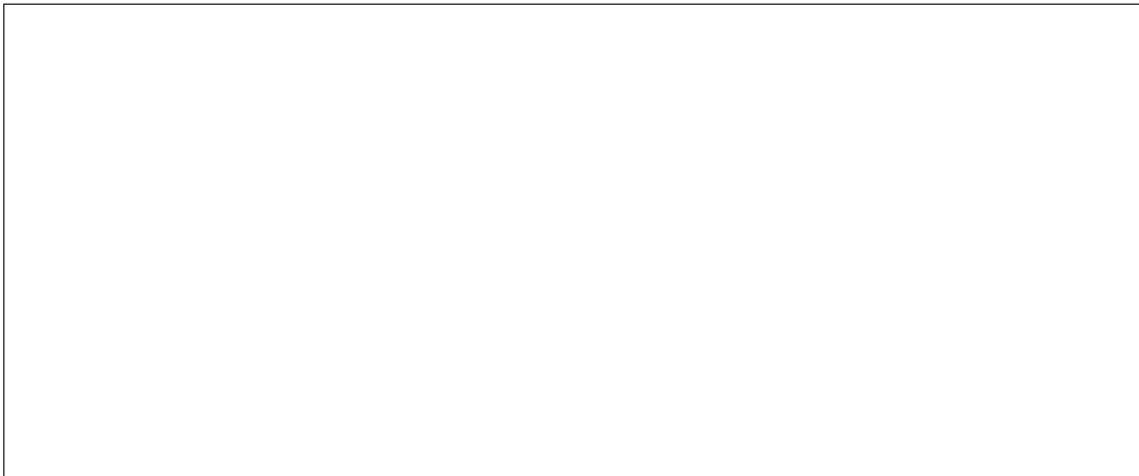
What is the sequence of events, from research, to closing the deal, to customer follow-ups? How do they learn about you? How does your business respond to customers in terms of communication, sales, and follow-through? Here is an example of tracking your customer experience.

### **Example: Jenny’s Air Conditioning Home Services**

*For Jenny’s business, the sequence is: Awareness of a need, Research options, Purchase the work, Installation of the work, Follow-up and Review.*

- **Awareness:** *For much of our work, we respond to an immediate need or crisis a homeowner has, like an air conditioning system that has failed during August in Texas, in which case a client is looking for fast project completion.*
- **Research:** *Typically, in events like these, clients seek advice from their direct neighbors who had similar problems that need solving, or they ask a neighborhood message board.*

- **Purchase:** They'll then conduct their own research by reviewing recommendations on websites such as the Better Business Bureau, reading our website, and then calling our phone system for specific questions.
- **Installation:** At the point of purchase, our sales associate will meet as soon as possible (often the next day) to talk through the project and sign paperwork. Next is the installation stage, where the project is completed.
- **Follow-up:** We then follow up with them, and...
- **Review:** Request they review us on a public forum, if they are satisfied.



### **PART 3 | Map the customer experience process.**

There are many creative ways to make a customer experience map. Below are two types of mapping methods:

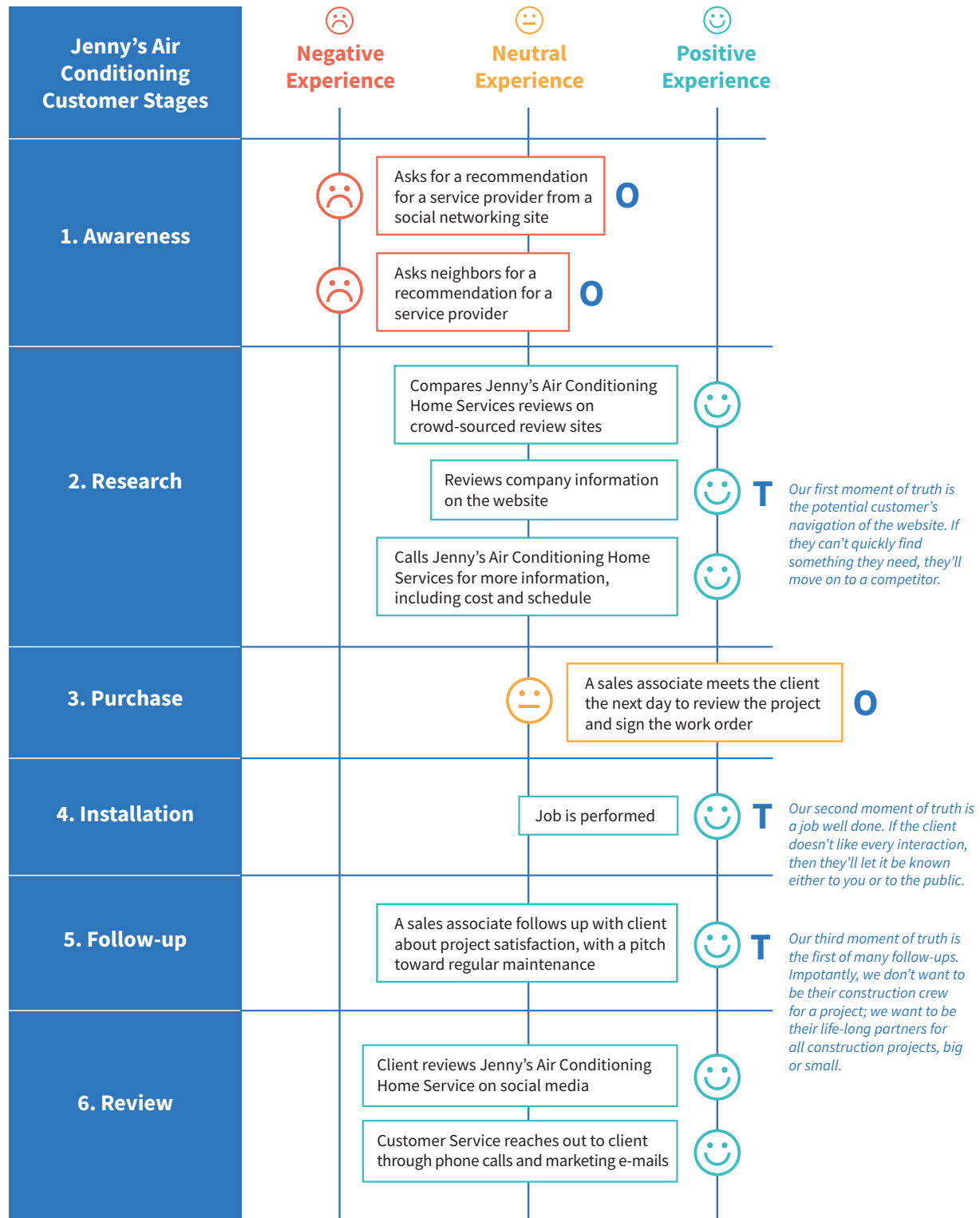
**Method 1:** You can map out the customer experience in a line, with different shapes including detail about each step. If you choose to use this mapping method, pay special attention to opportunities and action steps as well as “moments of truth,”<sup>3</sup> or pivotal turning points along the customer’s journey that impact whether their overall experience is positive or negative.

**Tip:** Highlight your customer experience map with red, yellow, and green to signify areas that require additional attention. Example below:

# Customer Touchpoints

**O Opportunities and action steps**

**T Moments of truth** are the critical steps in your customer experience. These are your top priorities. Get them right, and you can earn customer loyalty. Get them wrong, you earn a poor reputation.



**Method 2:** You can map the cycle of your customer in a circular format with detail inside each circle.<sup>4</sup> The example below references the pattern of Jenny’s HVAC customers. You may want to go back and review that example before you begin.



## **PART 4 | What do I do about it?**

You’ve spent the time understanding the typical purchasing experience of your customer and mapping that experience.

If not covered in an “opportunities and actions” part of your map, what are up to three customer-centric action steps you will take to improve a customer’s experience with your business?

## EXAMPLE: JENNY'S AIR CONDITIONING HOME SERVICES

<b>Next Steps</b>
<p><b>1.</b> <i>We've taken all client criticism to heart and implemented new policies based on past feedback, just to avoid any gray areas. For example, we had a client who was unhappy because our technicians entered her house with their shoes on. We apologized, and now all technicians cover their footwear in elastic, plastic bags before entering a residence, to avoid similar complaints in the future. We apologized to the original client and offered her two free maintenance checks to save the relationship.</i></p>
<p><b>2.</b> <i>Typically, for residential AC maintenance, we have a technician go out the next day and service lasts less than four hours, so from initial phone call to completed repair, it usually takes 24 hours. We have proactive communication, so typically at least four points of contact: the initial call, the notification of arrival, communication during the service, and a follow-up from our office. The client has constant access to help. To improve this process, we'd like to improve our marketing efforts to be more proactive and tailored to a customer's needs, including providing new information on the products they've bought and addressing any upcoming warranty expirations.</i></p>

## MY BUSINESS

<b>Next Steps</b>
<p><b>1.</b></p>

Next Steps
2.
3.

**Conclusion:**

Customer centricity is all about trying to understand what it is that the customer wants in a product or service. Using a customer experience map can allow you to relate to your customers at every step along their journey with your business and find areas that can be strengthened in the process. By gathering information about the customer’s experience and their perceptions of your company, you can make it more likely the customer will choose you over another business.



*Disclaimer: The business appearing in this work is fictitious. Any resemblance to an actual business is purely coincidental.*

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<sup>1</sup> Mary Claire Mandeville, How to Close the Gap between Your Brand and Your Customers, 60 Second Marketer (Jan. 3, 2018), <https://60secondmarketer.com/blog/2018/01/03/close-gap-brand-customers/> (accessed March 27, 2019).  
<sup>2</sup> James Allen, Frederick F. Reichheld, Barney Hamilton & Rob Markey, Closing the Delivery Gap (2005), <http://www2.bain.com/bainweb/pdfs/cms/hotTopics/closingdeliverygap.pdf> (accessed Feb. 2, 2019).  
<sup>3</sup> Neil Davey, Nine Sample Customer Journey Maps—and What We Can Learn from Them (July 30, 2018), <https://www.mycustomer.com/experience/engagement/nine-sample-customer-journey-maps-and-what-we-can-learn-from-them> (accessed Feb. 25, 2019).  
<sup>4</sup> Customer Experience Mapping, Mind Tools, [https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newSTR\\_85.htm](https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newSTR_85.htm) (accessed Feb. 25, 2019).