

CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE IN THE AGE OF *CORONAVIRUS* REPORT

DEALING WITH UNCERTAINTY, CHANGING CUSTOMER NEEDS & BEHAVIOR
WHILST BUILDING RESILIENCE INTO YOUR CX CONTINUITY PLAN

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INTRODUCTION

In March of 2020, IQPC Australia worked in collaboration with Customer Experience (CX) leaders across the globe to provide the community with a holistic set of responses on the key issues CX divisions and contact centres are facing right now.

The insights gathered here relate to the challenges faced amidst the spread of COVID-19 and the innovative solutions and new approaches CX leaders today must consider to counteract and de-risk their customer strategies at this highly challenging time.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The start of 2020 saw the CX industry poised to develop new modes of customer insights, stronger employee communication platforms and unified brand strategies. However, the outbreak of COVID-19 has introduced new threats and barriers to the CX community today, as well as a shifting of priorities that were not there one month ago.

A global recession sparked, retail and industrial production saw historic drops and mass buying recorded unprecedented customer behaviours. CX analysis is also seeing extraordinary patterns in customer interactions and changing customer journeys - what we thought we knew about our customers before COVID-19 is now rapidly changing and has placed customer channels, teams and strategies under significant strain.

Contact centres in particular are experiencing a huge spike in call volumes - in some cases more than double - while online queries have soared, creating overwhelming challenges and stress for agents working from home.

There remains uncertainty today as to when the virus pandemic will subside and the extent to which it will continue to impact businesses.

However, amongst the outbreak and societal panic, an expectation remains that brands will continue to come through for their customers.

At this time there is a real need to provide timely, empathetic and critical customer support and communications. This could also make way for innovation in how you deliver customer experiences that matter most. Especially during a global crisis.

This report is a practical guide for business leaders and CX professionals looking for ways to adapt and respond to the outbreak of COVID-19 and safeguard their experience delivery models.

IQPC Australia's Customer Experience in the Age of Coronavirus Report captures the state of the global CX market post-outbreak. We determined, with the help of industry leaders across the globe, the capabilities required to achieve business success during these challenging times.

This report will take a deep dive into how the virus has impacted different industries, discussing the changes to various operating models, as well as a step-by-step guide on how to put in place a business continuity plan for those struggling today.

THE BRANDS WHO COMMUNICATE AND HELP THEIR CUSTOMERS TODAY WILL BE THE ONES THAT CREATE LONG-TERM LOYALTY - SOMETHING ALL CX LEADERS HAVE AN EVEN BIGGER OPPORTUNITY TO DIFFERENTIATE ON DURING AND POST-COVID19.

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**THE NEW RULES OF
CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE:
CHANGES, IMPLICATIONS &
IMPACT**

PANDEMIC PROOF YOUR CX PROGRAM

In these unprecedented times, businesses are having to rethink even the most basic of operations. Experience management leaders are able to play a critical role in helping their organisation adapt and better deliver what is required in the midst of major health and economic uncertainty. Kiri Burgess, InMoment's Senior CX Consultant, noted there's three important shifts to consider for any CX program to adapt to COVID-19:

1. ADJUST SURVEY INVITATIONS AND EXPAND YOUR QUESTIONS

Pretending life is business-as-usual will not be relatable to your customers right now. Survey invitations should be tweaked to acknowledge that this is a difficult time, assure your customers you are here to help them, and remind them that we are all in this together.

Adding new survey questions is an option to further gauge your customer's experience at this time. If needed, work with your CX Partner when making changes to your survey. "They can provide best practice advice around the revised survey structure, new question wording and ensure any potential changes to historic survey data (due to survey changes) is well managed" says Kiri Burgess.

2. START OR CONTINUE TRANSACTION-BASED SURVEYS

In times of crisis, it's important to understand which type of surveys your business should continue or start, and which surveys to consider suspending. In most cases, businesses should start or continue to send transaction-based surveys as customers are still interacting with the business on a regular basis. They will be a source of quick, real time feedback from customers into what you are doing well and what you need to improve, while also providing a fast way to close the loop, ensuring you are touching base with customers that need your assistance the most right now.

Businesses may wish to consider suspending time-based surveys in the current climate. These surveys are not prompted by a recent transaction, but are sent at a particular time of year (for example) and can usually be suspended with minimal disruption to a company's business.

3. EXPAND TEXT ANALYTICS CATEGORY SETS TO INCLUDE COVID-19 TAXONOMY

Speak with your CX partner about adding a new text analytics "COVID-19/Coronavirus" category to your program. By setting up alerts for these keywords, it may provide new closed loop feedback alerts required (customers that need to be contacted) or provide insights into new opportunities and innovations not thought of before the recent crisis.

The NRMA, an Australian member organisation, is using information sources across the entire business to monitor and make decisions, one of these is the Coronavirus text analytics category. The VoC team is updating senior management twice a week, calling out references to COVID-19 within VoC trackers including critical areas of the business like roadside assistance and Thrifty car rentals. The team has also built a specific "Coronavirus" dashboard to monitor comments as they come through. Overall, the tool acts as a cross-check to ensure that opportunities to serve the customer better during this challenging time are not missed.



IT'S TIME FOR EX TO WEAR A CAPE

We hear it time and time again, from many organisations: “Our people are our difference.” “Our people are our biggest strength.” “Our people matter most.”

Kiri Burgess, InMoment’s Senior CX Consultant, emphasises how important it is to keep an employee experience perspective during this time.

Beyond the economic impact, everyone is personally dealing with their new reality. Who will homeschool the kids? How can consumer-facing employees keep themselves safe and healthy? Do they have what they need to continue to deliver to customers during these changing and challenging times?

Companies need to do more than just empathise - they need to ensure safety, security, and confidence for their employees. Making sure employees are enabled and empowered to do a good job, while maintaining their physical and mental health, is critical.

A great resource for businesses right now are employee listening tools such as pulse surveys. Employee pulse surveys are designed to give timely, relevant, and actionable intelligence addressing the experience and challenges employees may be having during the current global COVID-19 pandemic.

A large Australian insurance company worked with Team Managers to launch a daily employee pulse survey to all employees across the organisation. The survey was designed to very quickly understand how COVID-19/Coronavirus is affecting each team member and how they can best help on a daily basis by asking questions such as “have you been diagnosed with COVID-19?” and “how is self-isolating going for you today?”. The survey enables a view of feedback by individual, department and state to help with quick action planning.



The results of employee pulse surveys should lead to insight that is unique to each client’s employee experience and promote a high level discussion about the two or three most important things that can be addressed in each organisation.

As important as it is to overcome the current challenges, as many people say “this too will pass”. It will be those businesses listening, learning and adapting quickly for employees and customers that will be best equipped to recover from the impact of COVID-19.



IT WILL BE THOSE BUSINESSES LISTENING, LEARNING AND ADAPTING QUICKLY FOR EMPLOYEES AND CUSTOMERS THAT WILL BE BEST EQUIPPED TO RECOVER FROM THE IMPACT OF COVID-19

Kiri Burgess
Senior CX Consultant
InMoment

FURTHER RESOURCES

Upcoming Reports

JUNE	SEPTEMBER	NOVEMBER
CX ANZ: Customer Experience Post COVID-19 State of the Industry Report & Survey: Navigating the new landscape	2025 Roadmap: Future CX Strategy & Innovations	Customer Contact Playbook: Practical toolkit

CX Network & CCW Digital Resource Centres

CHATBOTS IN CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE: EBOOK

RETURN ON INVESTMENT IN CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE: TREND REPORT

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www.customercontactweekdigital.com/customer-experience/whitepapers/special-report-customer-contact-vision-for-2025

<https://www.customercontactweekdigital.com/customer-insights-analytics/articles/will-coronavirus-lead-to-more-security-fraud-you-bet>

<https://www.maritzcx.com/au/lp/managing-the-customer-experience-in-a-time-of-crisis/>

<https://www.maritzcx.com/blog/general/what-does-customer-experience-look-like-in-the-world-of-coronavirus/>

<https://inmoment.com/blog/4-keys-to-successful-customer-communication-in-the-coronavirus-era/>

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