The New Comcast: Empowering Employees to Drive a Customer Experience Revolution
CASE STUDY

Overview

CHALLENGE:
Focus 70,000+ employees on customer experience (CX) and empower them to make change happen.

WHAT THEY DID:
Comcast adopted a Net Promoter System to understand and improve customer and employee sentiment and loyalty. To do this, they deployed Experience Cloud, a Software-as-Service platform that captures customer and employee feedback, integrates it with other operational data, provides reporting in real-time, distributes the data and insights company-wide through role-based dashboards, and drives action to improve the customer experience.

TEAM EMPOWERMENT:
Customer feedback flows to the front line every day. That same front line provide feedback and ideas via monthly pulse surveys. Frontline Managers and Supervisors bring the voices of their customers and team members together in regular Team Huddles, where teams review and discuss scores, comments, shout-outs, and ‘Elevations’. ‘Elevations’ are ideas for action; once submitted, their progress is tracked and communicated back to the teams.

OUTCOME:
In the first year of deploying their Net Promoter System, Comcast saw a 14-point improvement in customer NPS and an average 20-point increase in employee NPS across their call centers. And after following through on feedback from both groups, those call centers experienced a reduction of several million incoming customer calls, resulting in a positive ROI on Comcast’s investment in Medallia Experience Cloud within a single month.

HOW THEY DID IT:
The program started with pilots at a small number of locations, including the Beaverton, OR Center of Excellence. Within the first year, 99% of the pilot employee population was trained on NPS and CX, with Supervisors going through additional Huddle immersion training. Huddles are now a staple of Comcast life, with daily Liftoffs to review CX data and brainstorm CX improvement opportunities, and deep-dive team-focused Huddles on a biweekly or monthly basis. A CX Forum has been established to review ‘Elevations’ at every level, from District leadership all the way to the CEO, who reviews the current top 3 ‘Elevations’ every week.
Denny Bray’s smile is infectious. His friendly laugh fills a room, and his twinkling eyes reveal a warmth and generosity of spirit. Having followed a somewhat unusual path—two attempts at an undergrad degree in his early and mid-twenties, both cut short by Navy deployments—Bray now has an impressive resume spanning over thirty years in business.

As an empathetic change-maker, Bray has built a career involving people development, process improvement, and life-changing employee experience. “I’ve always focused on people performance,” he says. “I learned at a very young age that you don’t get anywhere without your employees. You take care of your employees and they will take care of your customers.”

In 2015, Denny Bray made the biggest step of his career yet, accepting a senior director position that would enable him to dig into employee and customer experience where it was most needed.

He accepted a position at Comcast.
Do an image search for “Comcast” and you’ll find pages of vitriol, the unfortunate result of almost 54 years of well-intentioned yet regrettably missed attempts to provide customer service for 29 million customers. Many Comcast customers have stopped believing that anything other than the usually dismal customer experience is possible. Because how can any business of Comcast’s scope—the largest broadcasting and cable provider in the world, the largest internet provider in the U.S., and also the third-largest home telephone service provider in the U.S.—possibly hope to provide a level of service that leaves customers feeling heard, much less delighted? Where do you start tackling a business problem of that magnitude?

As Comcast has learned, you start with your employees.

**TIME TO RESET**

Generating $80 billion in annual revenue in 2016, and almost quadrupling its stock price since 2010, Comcast has achieved remarkable business success in its 50+ years. One metric, however, has consistently fallen short: customer experience. For years, Comcast has languished in the bottom third of customer satisfaction ratings, from J.D. Power to the American Customer Satisfaction Index.

“Let’s call it like it is—we aren’t perfect,” says Graham Tutton, Vice President of Customer Insights. “We have great products, and we have great people, but we also have had a customer service issue and bit of a brand problem.”

Comcast’s growth was mainly fueled by a massive acquisition spree and sustained by an oligopolistic market that gave its customers few alternatives. But with targets drying up, competition is fiercer than ever. Competitors like Netflix, Apple TV, Google and Verizon Fios have carved out a whole new, user-focused landscape.

So two years ago, realizing customer experience was the key to any future sustained success, Comcast reset its goals to include Net Promoter Score® (NPS)*

### ABOUT COMCAST:

$80B in revenue in 2015
28.5M Customers
130k Employees (~70k front line)
70 Call Centers
455 Tech Ops Sites
650 Retail Stores

---

*Net Promoter Score® (NPS) is a registered trademark of the American Express Co.
and made empathizing with and delighting customers their number one priority. It has been a radical mindset shift. “How could we change from focusing primarily on acquisition, operations and finance to bringing the customer to the forefront of everything we do?” says Tutton. A true Net Promoter System—one that incorporates the voices of the customer and the employee into the daily operations of every team member, from the front line to the CEO—was their answer.

CULTURE SHIFT TO IMPROVE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

The company evaluated and tested software solutions that could embed the Net Promoter System into its operations and selected Medallia Experience Cloud, a Software-as-a-Service platform.

“We did a comprehensive review,” Tutton says. “The top three reasons we chose Medallia are first, street cred—they were one of the first to the game. Second, their platform is simple, and, frankly, infectious once you start getting into the information that comes in. And third, it’s highly scalable—they’ve done large-scale, diverse implementations with many major companies.” In addition, functionalities like a mobile app and Text Analytics put the power of analysis right in the hands of employees, from frontline store managers to C-suite decision-makers, enabling everyone to dig into the “why” of Net Promoter Scores.

But the true challenge in evolving to a more customer-centric model was not to just introduce a new software platform. Rather, it was to leverage that platform to change the culture at a company as big and complex as Comcast. It was not just to collect customer feedback, but also to operationalize it—to adopt, influence, and enable new behavior. “We need to get over 130,000 employees to focus on the customer, not

---

*Net Promoter Score, ranging from -100 to 100, is a metric that gauges customer loyalty and employee engagement. Net Promoter, Net Promoter System, Net Promoter Score, and NPS are registered trademarks of Bain & Company, Inc. and Fred Reichheld.*
only from a cultural perspective, but also a measurement and motivational perspective,” Tutton says. “Almost 70,000 of our employees are frontline: customer care, chat, retail, tech ops. They are the face and brand of Comcast.”

Every employee needed to have customer happiness as a primary goal. “If there’s an outage, instead of ‘How much money will I lose?’ ‘How many trucks do I have to send?’ ‘How many more calls will come in to the contact center?’ the higher priority questions need to be ‘How does this affect the customer?’ ‘How many are affected?’ What are we doing to educate them, manage their expectations, and do right by them?” Tutton says.

But how to do that for more than 130,000 employees, handling over 1 million phone calls and 70,000 truck rolls daily?

“We realized that to do this in a meaningful, lasting way, we couldn’t just expect our employees to change course overnight,” says Tutton. “We realized that it doesn’t start with thousands or even hundreds. It starts with one person, then one team, then one location, and so on, until eventually you have a company-wide, customer-centric revolution.”

A CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE REVOLUTION STARTS WITH EMPLOYEES

To start, Comcast chose a handful of locations to test the new system. Among them was their Sales Center of Excellence in Beaverton, OR, near Portland, where Denny Bray had just stepped into his role as director. He began by selecting one team to pilot NPS. The premise was simple: collect feedback from customers and employees regularly, provide access to the relevant results immediately, and enable action at every level. Customer feedback was to be collected daily, while employees filled out a pulse survey every two weeks. Frontline agents and supervisors would have relevant data at their fingertips, along with encouragement from their leadership to take responsibility and make change.

To operationalize this new listening ability in a meaningful way, Comcast redefined and reintroduced the ritual of huddles—daily 15-minute “liftoffs,” and bi-weekly check-ins that last 30 minutes or more. “Historically, a huddle was a supervisor talking about a topic,” says Mike Fasching, whose team of supervisors was the first to roll out NPS in Beaverton under Bray’s watch. “Now, the supervisor will drop an insight or an issue gathered through Medallia and allow the employees to run the huddle themselves. There is an enormous amount of information exchange as employees brainstorm what can improve the customer and employee experience.” The discussion topics range from customer scores and comments to employee feedback on what’s working and what’s not, from peer recognition to problem solving.
After a month of piloting NPS, one team expanded to two, then two weeks later to four, and then, as Bray puts it, “It was go, go, go.” Within a couple of months, the call center was buzzing with anticipation, and by late 2016, the full Beaverton team had adopted NPS.

In addition to facilitating a behavior shift through huddles, Medallia Experience Cloud enables supervisors to conduct much more targeted employee coaching based on specific customer feedback. With closed-loop feedback capabilities, call center supervisors can quickly get in touch with dissatisfied customers while the agent who originally serviced the customer shadows and learns.

This has evolved one-on-ones from something agents dreaded to something they look forward to—an opportunity for learning, validation, and praise. And on the supervisor side, it allows for a clearer understanding of whether coaching is having the desired effect.

The learning doesn’t stop there. Because the feedback from both customers and employees gets delivered up the leadership chain, call center directors like Bray are now empowered to track the successes and challenges of their people and to coach as appropriate. “Before Medallia, allocating my discretionary time and efforts was a bit like shooting in the dark,” he says. “It was difficult to identify what my teams were most concerned about and how those concerns differed between teams. Employee feedback would come at me in the form of texts, emails, phone calls, Post-its, you name it. It

“REGULAR HUDDLES

“The huddles are infectious, just like the Medallia platform. The employees feel empowered and know they are heard.”

Graham Tutton
VP OF CUSTOMER INSIGHTS
was chaotic and hard to manage.” Now, with organized, actionable employee feedback data at his fingertips, Bray is able to tackle issues head-on.

In a pulse survey, for example, one agent commented, “Our leaders don’t listen to us and don’t care about what we have to say.” Bray, who reads all the comments from the frontline, quickly sprang into action. He reviewed the team’s trends and comments in Medallia Experience Cloud, came to and participated in the team’s next huddle (in the process making team members feel heard), and then went to work with the team supervisor on a path forward. Could this have happened in the Comcast of the past? “Not even close,” reminisces Bray. “I would only have known there was a problem when I saw the backs of my employees filing out the door.”

**ADDRESSING THE COMCAST BLACK HOLE — EMPLOYEE ELEVATIONS**

Erica Bailey is a sales team supervisor at the Comcast Sales Center of Excellence in Beaverton.

With a no-nonsense style and the capacity to absorb and execute on a dime (“I’m a worker bee,” she says proudly), Bailey has come far in her 15 years at Comcast. Having worked in multiple locations, teams, and roles, she has a unique perspective on the massive overhaul of the last few years. Historically, she says, if she identified a common customer complaint or employee frustration, “There wasn’t much I could do. Basically it was an ‘it is what it is’ culture. It was like yelling into an empty hole.”

Needless to say, she found herself less engaged and lacking motivation, her frustration slowly turning into resentment.

Tutton readily admits that in the Comcast of the past, employee feedback resulted in little to no change. “We used to have what we called the Comcast black hole,” he says. “Most organizations our size have it. Ideas would get raised up the flagpole, and no one would hear about them again.”

Now, when employees—be they supervisors like Erica or frontline agents—identify a change with potentially broad impact, they raise it to management using a case management methodology called Elevations. This allows everyone involved to track the issue, ensure it’s reviewed within agreed-upon time frames, and see what changes result.
EMPLOYEES DRIVING CHANGE THROUGH NEW “ELEVATIONS” PROCESS

Based on elevations, a number of Comcast facilities introduced priority parking spaces for expectant mothers, whether they’re customers or employees.

Retail employees elevated an important issue with the brick-and-mortar experience—Customers felt like Comcast retail stores mimicked pawn shops, with products encased in glass and customers required to wait in line to gain access to the products. In response, Comcast redesigned their stores nationally to be open and interactive. Today, customers encounter a greeter and then can explore products until a rep comes to them. As a result of the redesign, customer NPS jumped 33 points.

In one store, computer monitors were obstructing the view between Comcast employees and their customers as they talked at their stations, making it difficult to form a meaningful connection. Through a local elevation, the store invested in moveable monitor brackets, not only enabling critical eye contact, but also allowing employees to more easily share their screens with customers while working through their issues.

“Now, if you think something could be done a different way, there’s a way to get your voice heard.”

Erica Bailey
SALES CENTER OF EXCELLENCE SUPERVISOR

For example, as the result of an elevation frequently raised by call center agents, Comcast doubled the dollar limit on credits that agents can issue on their own. Historically, credits above a certain limit required management approval, which created a backlog of customers waiting on answers and agents wasting hours on redundant return calls. An analysis of feedback in Medallia Experience Cloud showed that management routinely approved 90 percent of the requests, so Comcast doubled the limit and then tested the change through the platform.

“The total amount of credits given did not increase, and it actually decreased in some instances,” says Tutton. “Agents made our checkbook their own, and managed customer expectations. We were reminded of the importance of trusting our employees and customers.” Employee engagement soared as a result of the credit increase, with Employee NPS (eNPS) jumping as high as 60 points in some locations. “That was a big one,” says Bailey, whose team was directly impacted by the change. “My team’s morale improved...
noticeably just by knowing we had the option to issue more credit.”

Another elevation involved a situation in which customers who had signed up for autopay were having their cable service unexpectedly shut off with no explanation. Customers assumed it was an issue with Comcast’s service, and management struggled to find the root cause. But call center agents, having dealt with these frustrated customers daily, identified the real issue and elevated it up the chain—it was actually a matter of billing schedules. Autopay sign-ups took over a month to process, and when customers didn’t pay their next bill manually, Comcast billing assumed they were delinquent and service was suspended. In response to the elevation, Comcast focused on reducing the processing time and solved the issue.

“We saved weeks, if not months, and a significant dollar amount, by focusing on the right solution to the autopay problem, rather than chasing what we thought was at the core of the issue,” says Tutton.

Comcast still has a long way to go, but its NPS program is having a clear impact on employees. The “Black Hole: is gone, and with

“Employee NPS has become an incredibly powerful tool that our employees are embracing because they see things getting done.”

Denny Bray
Comcast Cable Customer Care (Beaverton)
the new system in place, there’s a sense of trust felt company-wide.

**THE BEGINNINGS OF A NEW COMCAST**

The NPS program is likewise starting to have an impact on customers, with Comcast’s average customer Net Promoter Score up by 8 points year-over-year. And the world is taking note; as one nationally syndicated consumer rating service observed, “Something awesome is going on Comcast.” In the 2016 American Customer Satisfaction Index, Comcast tied for the largest gains in video customer satisfaction. “As NPS has climbed,” says Tutton, “we’ve reduced incoming customer calls by several million [Comcast receives a million a day]. When you account for the cost per call, the payback on our investment in Medallia [Experience Cloud] was realized within one month.”

But this is just the beginning of a long journey. “We expect this to take three years at least, realistically five to seven,” says Rodrigo Lopez, SVP of Comcast’s Western Region, who has been at the helm of the retail changes in Oregon. “We’re moving away from a compliance culture—do this, do that, check the box—to a new behavior, where employees ask themselves ‘How do I engage with the customer? How can I be empathetic with a situation whether it’s good, bad, or indifferent? How do I manage expectations, and ensure they will be met?’”

When Comcast introduced Medallia Experience Cloud, a number of employees greeted it with skepticism. Said one member of Lopez’s organization: “I’ve been at Comcast for years, and every year there would be a new initiative. Nothing ever changed.”

This time is different. “The Elevations process and team huddles are straightforward concepts and we’ve been doing them in some form or fashion for the last 54 years,” Lopez says. “But now, with Medallia, we have a platform for holding everyone accountable. Is it perfect? No. But it’s light years ahead of where we were; it formalizes and gets a customer focus into people’s DNA.”

“We are in the middle of a massive transformation. We’re listening, we’re innovating, and we’re starting to see real results.”

Charlie Herrin
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT OF CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE
And Erica Bailey? In a matter of months following the implementation of Medallia Experience Cloud, Bailey not only saw a shift in her team’s morale, but felt it herself. “NPS has changed my life,” she says, laughing. “Not only do I pay better attention to the customer service I receive elsewhere—restaurants, hotels, stores—but now, I have a voice here... I feel like a valued individual. I can contribute to improving our customers’ experience and my team’s experience.” She pauses. “Now that my team is empowered, they see me as their ally. I’m no longer as stressed by the end of the day. I’m actually a happier person.”

And any outsider can tell. Spend five minutes in Bailey’s weekly huddle and the affection and trust her team members feel towards her is obvious. They laugh, they dig into issues, and they care deeply about each other.

Lopez sums it up best. “There’s no better feeling,” he says, “than to see your employees getting happier, your customers getting happier, and your business results getting better”—a triple play, so to speak.

And the best part for Comcast is that this is just the beginning.

“I’m actually a happier person”

Erica Bailey
SALES CENTER OF EXCELLENCE SUPERVISOR
“I look back on 2016 with pride and enthusiasm. This is a special company, with a team I am delighted to work with, executing at a high level. We’re pleased to report another year of strong financial and operational results, which reflect our focus on innovation, investing in the business and putting the customer first.”

Brian Roberts
CHAIRMAN AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER OF COMCAST CORPORATION
About Medallia

Medallia® is the Customer Experience Management company that is trusted by hundreds of the world’s leading brands. Medallia’s Software-as-a-Service application enables companies to capture customer feedback everywhere the customer is (including web, social, mobile, and contact center channels), understand it in real time, and deliver insights and action everywhere—from the C-suite to the frontline—to improve their performance. Founded in 2001, Medallia has offices in Silicon Valley, New York, London, Paris, Hong Kong, Sydney, Buenos Aires, and Tel Aviv. Learn more at www.medallia.com.