An Academy Customer Experience Benchmark Observation

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ABSTRACT

How do academies use customer experience (CX) leadership theory? How do they employ and measure it? A content analysis and brief survey was employed to examine a University of Phoenix research center website iteration to define the customer personas of dissertation chairs, its largest customers who utilize the Center for Leadership Studies and Educational Research center for guidance to formulate research studies geared toward publication. These customers (known as affiliates) were also measured whether they believed that implicit promises made were kept, a necessity of purposeful CX strategy. The results revealed that the personas who needed the most publication support did agree that promises made were kept. The study recognized a default CX website version so that enhancements could help transport affiliate customers along the CX continuum based on what they believed was important to their professional development, more interactions such as collaborative webpages.

Keywords: Customer experience (CX) theory, User experience, Persona, Web design, Measurement analysis, Doctoral programs

In 2014, University of Phoenix, one of the most scrutinized universities since its inception in 1976 offering nontraditional students a variety of degree program and new learning modalities, launched a new website to complement its Center for Leadership Studies and Educational Research (CLSER). The purpose of the center is to help practitioner doctoral prepared faculty and students obtain a bona fide research agenda and support them in the research process including scholarship and camaraderie among more seasoned and published colleagues. This study conducted in 2015, examined the content of the first CLSER academy research center website to determine the degree of customer experience (CX) best practices built in as well as survey those affiliated with it to determine their degree of CX expectations met.

A brief survey of the CLSER research center affiliates asked them about their website interactions while obtaining their personas, a requirement for building purposeful CX design. The results of the content analysis provid-
ed insight into the level of perceived promises of research and publishing assistance and whether customers felt such implied website and center promises were kept, another measurement of purposeful successful CX best practices and theory.

Some leading contemporary businesses have turned to customer experience (CX and user experience (UX) as a strategic advantage to help build an emotional connection between prospects and current customers that interact with company messages, people, processes, products, and services. The leaders become different and better for their customers and more profitable and longer lasting than their competitors. The goal of collective customer and user experience is to turn customers into product advocates. The concept involves creating extraordinary valuable and memorable CX so customers continue to interact with the organization.

The continued user experience or UX of the websites, mobile presences and actual products or services are the proof that promises made from the beginning of the CX, regardless if they were implicit or explicit, are kept and clear. However, the literature is void of the academy’s use of CX leadership service initiatives. There are varying ways in which CX has been measured, but no best practice agreement since measuring CX is unlike measuring customer satisfaction and that different variables must be measured for different product offerings and services. These metrics must be the type that customers care about and those turning them into advocates—the primary theory behind successful customer experience integration to be discussed.

It is important to note that CX is not customer satisfaction or pure customer engagement (CE) for engagement sake. “CX involves the connection that individuals form with organizations, based on their experiences with the offerings and activities of the organization” (Vivek, Beatty, & Morgan, 2012, p. 133). Engagement is a construct that for CX is embedded in the creation of purposeful interactions. It is not an idle process. This study is not intended to be a treatise of engagement theory, but rather an examination of the practice of CX in the academy.

**Review of the Literature**

Customer satisfaction is important for the survival of any business and has been linked to measuring a *Net Promoter Score* as Reichheld (2006) has noted. Reichheld focused on measuring gaps in service quality. “This concept led to the popular management adage of needing to ‘delight’ customers by always exceeding their expectations. Service quality’s most popular measure is SERVQUAL, a 22-item scale whose dimensions are: reliability, assurance, tangibility, empathy and responsiveness” (as cited in Maklan & Klaus, 2011, p. 775). However, this measurement does not take into account other important customer experience design factors related to customer persona nor whether the cus-
customer has become a product or service advocate.

Beyond customer satisfaction and Net Promoter Score is to understand what is most important to the customer regarding the interactions. For example, what type of interactions do practitioner doctoral faculty members require to help them become more competent researchers? Doctoral faculty should be actively engaged in striving to be published in specific journals increasing their recognition, contributing to body of knowledge, and improving the reputation of the institution, the goal of distributing knowledge (Bleiklie & Powell, 2005).

Maklan and Klaus (2011) suggest that customers take a longitudinal approach when thinking about their experiences and can believe that they have experience with a company even before making a purchase based on advertising and word of mouth, for example. Experience is the cumulative interactions few studies have documented. “Market researchers need to develop an appropriate measure for the concept of customer experience” (p. 778). Depending on the product or service, adjustments in measuring must be considered.

Maklan and Klaus (2011) investigated the customer experience of those shopping for a mortgage. They developed a measure for customer experience quality. (Using a four-point scale-developing paradigm: categorizing the domain of service, the types of experiences, refining the scale for reliability and validity, and finally providing an explanation of satisfaction perceptions, repeat purchase, word of mouth, and loyalty.) The study culminated in a scale specifically designed for mortgage offering and its customers dubbed POMP, a measurement of Product experience, Outcome focus, Moments of truth, and Peace of mind. “Our findings demonstrate significantly stronger relationships between customer experience quality and loyalty, as defined in this study, than between customer satisfaction and loyalty” (p. 783). As noted later, loyalty can also demonstrate advocacy among products and services.

According to Tucker (2012), customer commitment is most important (as cited in Bean & Van Tyne, 2012). “Measuring a customers’ level of commitment is to gauge what J.D. Power and Associates calls stickiness ...” (p. 4). This stickiness refers to continue use of the company’s products or services based on the interactions with a company along the customer experience continuum. As products and services are offered to help doctoral chairs and students partake in learning how to disseminate and publish their own research, understanding the emotional connection of the customer personas can help create a stronger product or service emotional bond and move the customer to tiers 2 and 3 of the CX continuum (Miaskiewicz & Kozar, 2011).

Earlier experience management researchers have applied a similar stickiness but peculiar term dubbed stickiness. “In the context of experience management, it refers to a limited number of special clues that are sufficiently re-
markable to be registered and remembered for some time, without being abrasive” (Carbone & Haeckel, 1994, para 48). LaTour and Carbone (2014) later noted that with regard to an existing Pizza Hut UK CX study, most participants could not remember a key experience just one week after visiting a restaurant. This current CX academy study also relied on some customer memory but it was not necessary since customers could observe a current website iteration while partaking in a brief survey.

Much research exists on web design and relationship theory as well as user experience (UX) and what comprises better navigation and interactions. For example, Tomiuk and Pinsonneault (2009) found that such theories can be helpful in developing websites which can foster greater customer loyalty. Here, a sample of 305 participants was examined for their emotional perceptions (commercial friendships) among a variety of websites across three industries banking, pharmaceuticals, and insurance. They further broke down these websites based on the type of site community other than those that simply were erected for the purpose to show and sell a product, but for those, “… more closely abide by the norms and behaviours evocative of friendships and/or family relations” (Tomiuk & Pinsonneault, 2009, p. 414).

The results indicated that a sense of caring and genuineness were hallmarks as well as trust. Such emotional connections are equivalent to those needed to foster successful CX within websites or wherever a company is perceived doing business. Thus businesses can capitalize on a purposefully designed website as a formidable customer experience marketing tool. For this study, however, examination of the extent of use of purposeful customer experience in an academic sample can serve as a benchmark to investigate how the components of the CX theory affect the doctoral chairs’ satisfaction of utilizing the University of Phoenix CLSER website and the University of Phoenix Center itself.

Thus, this literature review demonstrates several samples of the breadth and depth of the variety of ways in which there exists disagreement among researchers on how to best measure customer experience let alone an example using academia as a business foundation. The significance can, therefore, be seen as a benchmark CX best practice measurement with the academy as a sample.

The components to create purposeful CX interactions start with the theory that constitutes its interactions: understanding customer personas related to the particular product or service, the customer emotional buy in of products or services, and tracking the CX three tier continuum, including (i) customer interactions with company messages about its products or services, (ii) customer to product or service advocate, and (iii) User Experience (UX), directly interacting with the company’s products or services via persona behavior (Van Tyne, 2011). This study provided a benchmark measurement
of the perception of promises helping customers achieve their practitioner research and publishing goals using the University of Phoenix CLSER website as well as the Center itself, and whether purposeful CX theory was used to create memorable interactions.

Results

This study operationalized three University of Phoenix doctoral chair personas, A, B, and C that were applied to all of the doctoral chairs that responded. The A persona was defined as those who said that they were employed full-time as an academician in a field related to their doctoral degree and whom have indicated that they had published a scholarly peer-reviewed article. Persona B referred to individuals who indicated that they worked part-time as an academician and who also had a peer reviewed scholarly article published. Persona C included individuals who indicated that they were part-time academicians but had not published a peer-reviewed scholarly article, but whom may have presented at a scholarly conference.

While all three personas must have peer-reviewed publishing requirements as chairs in good standing, CLSER serves each differently since those with more publishing experience may require less interactions and those with less publishing experience more camaraderie, for example. In fact, the results demonstrated that Persona B (part-time practitioners) indicated that they wanted more camaraderie compared with Persona A (full-time practitioners) of a 3:1 ratio and Persona B and Persona C indicated that they wanted more website live interactions compared to Persona A 2:1 (see Figure 3).

With regard to moving the customer along the CX continuum, continued interactions with the organization’s products or services is required. Consequently, while it is presumed that those who simply responded to the survey are in fact continuing to interact with the CLSER, Question 4 asked them whether they planned to submit a scholarship application as either a CLSER fellow or University of Phoenix research funding recipient, their responses while limiting, demonstrated movement along this continuum.

Question 5 asked, With regard to your knowledge and use of the CLSER “Website,” would you say the messages of promises ... of research and publishing assistance has been: very distorted and not accurate, somewhat distorted and not accurate, neither distorted nor inaccurate, clear and meets expectations, most clear and accurate? Three of the 23 respondents did not participate. Ten percent agreed most clear and accurate. Thirty percent agreed clear and meets expectations, and 55 percent agreed neither distorted nor inaccurate while 5 percent agreed that promises were somewhat distorted and not accurate.

These promises included helping them get their scholarly presentation and papers into more publication ready states, allowing them to network with like-minded peers, and conduct meaningful research that can assist them in
reaching their full potential as practitioner scholars. Forty percent agreed the website promises were clear to accurate. This is further broken down by persona in Figure 1. None responded very distorted and not accurate.

Figure 1. Degree of website promises met by persona

When asked whether CLSER department itself (not referring to its website) strived to accomplish such promises of publishing and research assistance, B and C personas compared with Persona A agreed approximately 2:1 that such promises were adequately kept. Question 6 asked, Based on perceived promises that CLSER could assist you in meeting your scholarly and professional development needs, please rate the degree of how well the CLSER department strives to accomplish such promises. These promises were differentiated from the CLSER website. These are based on the perception of the Center itself. Once again, three skipped the question, 20 responded. Of the 20, half agreed that perceived promises were adequately kept. Three responded to well-kept and two very well-kept.

Regarding persona, those with the most publishing experience less likely agreed that promises made were kept. The only explanation for this is that the promises may not hold as much value since these customers are accomplished scholars (Figure 2). In sum, more than 50 percent of respondents in both Questions 5 and 6 agreed that the promises made via the website and the center were generally accurate and were kept.

Figure 2. CLSER department promises made, promises kept by persona

Question 7 asked what CLSER website improvements, if any, would affiliates feel are needed? Opposed to many new website design techniques calling for less is more with simplistic navigation and fewer words per page affiliates labeled as Personas B and C, those with lesser publishing experience or no publishing experience requested more page details and more interactive opportunities that lead to camaraderie. Those with more publishing experience, Persona A, wanted less detail per page (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. Website improvement by persona
In a separate SurveyMonkey survey, two CLSER stakeholders were asked a combined trio of questions. (i) As a current primary stakeholder of the CLSER website, before your knowledge of this current study regarding customer experience, what would you say was your level of specific knowledge of scholarly or best practice articles and books published about customer experience (CX) versus user experience (UX) theory including the CX continuum, personas, CX, UX communications leading to customer advocates? (ii) name current CX theory authors. Finally, (iii) was your level of CX knowledge used to develop any of the web pages in the current CSLER website published iteration?

Of the two responses received (100 percent response rate), one agreed that while they had some CX knowledge, that knowledge was not purposefully used in the first CLSER website iteration, while a second response indicated he/she was “fairly” knowledgeable. But even when prompted for any CX theory or CX well-known authors, the responses were left blank. Thus, it is not likely CX theory was purposefully employed. Consequently, the hypothesis that the CLSER website was published in a default state was true. Was it a coincidence that approximately 50 percent of affiliates agreed that promises made were promises kept and could that number rise if CX theory is purposefully applied?

The literature review showed that there have been several ways that companies used CX theory to measure it. Ultimately, terms like loyalty and stickiness are interchangeable with advocacy. When customers such as the chairs advocate more on behalf of CLSER, the use of CX can more from its default measure to a more purposeful one.

Methodology

A late 2015 search of scholarly articles regarding customer experience use in the academy showed no significant results. A literature review using terms like customer experience and schools, or institutions, academics, school use and academy to determine CX use in the academy was initiated using the Elton B. Stephenson Company database (EBSCO), ProQuest Digital Dissertations and Theses, ERIC, and Google Scholar. Upon examining EBSCO one study from 2006 using customer experience and schools was noted. However, the study was about holiday shoppers, not the academy.

When applying customer experience with institutes, two studies appeared. The first of which was focused on credit unions and the second of which was on the same topic only two years prior. When paired with academics hundreds of articles appeared, but upon examining the first ten pages, none referred to customer experience together as one term. The term academics was associated with the academics known under the term customers only. When paired with academy only two articles appeared. The first discussed an academy initiative to provide customer experience qualifications to truck driv-
ers. The second article was a report on the launch of a customer experience academy for truck drivers, not scholarly theory associated with customer experience nor theory applied to educational institutions, the nature of this study. The results indicated that no significant customer experience study applied to the academy could be found.

Content Analysis

A quantitative study, such as the content analysis, allows variables to be measured to determine whether the hypothesis can be generalized (Creswell, Clark, Gutmann, & Hanson, 2003). This is a benchmark study to ascertain the level of CX and UX interactions and to make recommendations on how to take the CLSER website that is said to be in a default CX mode, document it, and collect improvements that can be purposefully put back into the site, thus leading to more customer advocates. H1: Using CX theory applied to the CLSER website design and interactions will show a default design, but customers will lead the next CLSER iteration to more purposefully include CX interactions that they deem necessary. Consequently, as these customers continue to become advocates, they can advance their professional life through the development and dissemination of research.

The CLSER website first went online in early 2014 and was not modified until after this study was completed in early 2016. A coding book of definitions operationalized the CLSER implicit website messages and promises by tying them to key words, frequency, and prominence of words posted in the site such as: assistance, honorarium, and scholarship, words that indicated financial, or help available, for example.

Steinhart (2010) studied both implicit and explicit promises as they related to product expectations. Explicit promises are those the company states about a product or service. “Implicit promises, on the other hand, are cues that lead to inferences about what product performance should and will be like” (Steinhart, 2010, p. 1710). While this differentiation is important to note, this study operationalized promises tied to key words aboard the site into one primary category of promises to benchmark their existence and how prominently they appeared.

Corpus Linguistics Content Analysis software was selected as a basic algorithmic tool to parse through CLSER pages to examine the frequency of terms that were operationalized as promises. Such software can parse only those pages on the site that belong to the root CLSER (see the Appendix). While this tool provided the frequency data, like most such algorithmic text analyzers, it cannot readily determine the journalistic prominence of such messages (Budd, 1964).

Budd argued that information located more toward the front of newspapers and on the top fold was the most prominent or most likely to get read. Thus, for this study, the CLSER website promises made starting on its home page and those terms found closest to
the home page based on left column menu navigation were viewed as most prominent. Those left-hand menu items from the top of the web page down regardless of screen resolution were labeled more prominent than those that further down or those that would require scrolling down respective of various customer screen resolutions. On Monday, July 27, 2015, the TextSTAT by Corpus software was used to identify 23 CLSER web pages that were coded with “center-leadership-studies-and-educational-research” in their root page name designations.

A total of 2,775 different words and numbers also were found within the CLSER site via the software. For example, the word “and” was the most popular at 831 instances. A total of 1,348 words were only denoted once on the site. For this study, the words that can intrinsically motive scholars to more affordably perform such scholarly activities and that equate to a promise of fundamental support (from conception through publication) were operationalized. These included: funding (1x), financial (50x), scholarship (59x), fellowship (25x), stipend (0x), opportunity (3x), opportunities (8x), as well as words that were deemed to encourage prospects to start the process such as: apply (0x), applying (1x), assist (0x), assistance (0x), help (0x), contact (3x), email (2x), e-mail (0x), start (0x), call (41x), and questions (0).

The CLSER website home page contained no terms shown above. This page real estate included several left-hand column menu items and to the right a welcome page from the research chair. During this time, the left-hand column menu items were identified from top to bottom as: Blog, Calendar, Call for Fellows, Center Leadership, Active Research Projects, CLSER Research Agenda, CLSER Research Fellows, Recommended Conferences, Forum, Talking About Research, News (Newsroom was the news for all the University of Phoenix research centers), and Publication/Scholarship. A page was operationalized as such as any Universal Resource Locator (URL) that had to include a root name in its title and was followed by a forward slash typical of web page design.

If the order of the menu items is an indication of the prominence of terms identified above only the term scholarship and call could be observed and compared to other menu item offerings it was lowest in terms of its prominence. However, since Call for Fellows was the third menu item and 41 instances of that word were found within its pages, one can conclude that the call for fellows was the most prominent of all words selected to track. The call for CLSER fellows was more prominent than terms that could lead prospects to more general University of Phoenix scholarships.

The purpose in delineating these terms was to document their frequency and prominence. Did stakeholders purposefully include them based on CX theory knowledge? Did registered doctoral chair affiliates believe that the promises based on the terms were clear and well kept? Participants had the opportunity
to view the CLSER website while taking a survey.

**Survey Design**

The sample represented CLSER University of Phoenix doctoral chair customer affiliates furnished from the research chair. Affiliates have editing capabilities such as posting a biography, adding a blog, or in gaining access to other website areas not for public consumption. According to Riffe, Lacy, and Fico (2005), “the value of research using a convenient sample should not be diminished” (p. 102).

Affiliates were asked if they believed that CLSER website perceived messages of promises of research and publishing assistance were adequately kept. Secondly, they were asked about the degree to whether the CLSER as a department could assist them in meeting their scholarly and professional development needs, via a SurveyMonkey survey. The survey also garnered the persona of the customer. The survey was sent to 121 affiliates (the total number of doctoral chairs that had registered with the site) via an email link inside a CLSER research chair September 23, 2015 welcome message. Based on the SurveyMonkey design no participant could be allowed to take the survey a second time from the same Internet Protocol (IP) address. A total of 23 affiliates responded, an approximately 20 percent response rate. A second SurveyMonkey survey was targeted to CLSER website stakeholders to determine whether they had CX theory knowledge and whether that knowledge was purposefully built into the site design. Two were sent and two responded.

According to Joely Gardner, Ph.D. and CEO of Human Factors Research, the best method to measure customer experience is to, “Look at factors relevant to your customers” (as cited in Bean, 2015, p. 27). “The more you understand as to what matters to your customers’ interactions with your business, the more opportunities you will find to make the customer experience better” (Bean, 2015, p. 28). When measuring customer experience set aside customer retention or return on investment (ROI).

**Operationalizing Personas**

Customer personas for this study were operationalized as follows. The persona is how the doctoral chair and student see themselves as academicians and how others might perceive them in this role. Persona represents the personality often based on emotion of the types of customers that represent a company’s products and services (Miaskiewicz & Kozer, 2011). For this study, three personas of doctoral chairs and students were operationalized.

Persona A are those CLSER affiliate chairs who indicated they work as a full-time academician in the discipline of their doctoral degree and have published a peer reviewed scholarly article. They typically do not need as much support in terms of understanding the research and publication process. Per-
sona B are doctoral chairs who chose the scholarly profession to help their careers either in the private or academic sectors, indicated that they work part-time utilizing their doctoral degree discipline, and also have had a peer-reviewed scholarly article published. They may require more assistance since their time is shared with other positions or adjunct teaching assignments.

Persona C are doctoral chairs who indicated that they worked part-time as an academician and who perhaps chose the scholarly profession to help their careers whether private or academic and would need more assistance in learning how to disseminate meaningful knowledge and have not had a peer reviewed scholarly article published, but may have presented. These customers graduate and go back to a largely private sector nonacademic job or one that does not require the dissemination of knowledge to a broader range other than their day-to-day duties. They remain doctoral chairs in good standing to allow them to gain scholarly publishing experience. They may have pursued their doctorate for vanity and likely not intended to contribute to the scholarly community other than the culmination of their dissertation. By virtue of having no peer-reviewed publishing experience, Persona Cs would need more publishing and research assistance of any of the personas.

To determine the persona, responses to both Questions 2 and 3 were combined via hand-tabulated using an Excel spreadsheet to divide the 23 respondents into their labeled persona. Since SurveyMonkey retained individual data, it was relatively easy to first parse out all the responses then assign them within the spreadsheet. Inter-coder reliability was tested by having a colleague at a local college conduct the same technique having been provided SurveyMonkey access.

Question 2 had four choices of which participants could select all that applied: (i) full-time professor/academic administrator, (2) full-time in doctorate field, (3) part-time faculty/chair or administrator, and (4) employed in a different field other than academia. Any of the full-time choices would be the first step in denoting Persona A. Part-time faculty where grouped into Persona B as well as working in a different field. If response was “Primarily employed in a different field than doctorate,” that participant was grouped into Persona C.

Question 3 had five choices or as many as applied. If those who were categorized in Question 2 as Persona A, that category would only continue if they had indicated they had a peer-reviewed paper published. The same constant was used for Persona B. However, those deemed Persona A or B in Question 2 but that responded to Question 3 with only having presented at a scholarly conference or did not have a scholarly article were bumped down to B or C, respectively. If they were already labeled Persona C in Question 2, but now indicated that they had a peer-reviewed scholarly article published, they were now categorized into Persona B. The personas are solidified based on
responses to Questions 2 and 3. The results indicted 7 affiliates labeled Persona A, 11 Persona B, and 5 Persona C.

The interaction with the company’s products or services at any stage of the continuum is understood to be built on deliberate, memorable, and positive emotional experiences. “Experiences with a strong emotional connection can create long-lasting customer relationships and fanatical advocates. The customer’s connection with the experience is not solely based on logic. It can be a customer’s personal reflection of the company and the brand.” (Bean & Van Tyne, 2012, p. 77).

Summary

Measuring customer experience judicially depends on a company or institute’s leadership, culture, products or services and has varied in methodology. “When looking at a topic like customer experience within a business, it’s first important to establish what a customer is” (Simson, 2013, para 2). For this CX benchmark observation, the customer is doctoral chairs who strive to contribute to the dissemination of knowledge in their scholarly discipline. Little, if any studies have examined the academy’s use of CX theory as a vehicle to purposefully interact with the customer.

The results of this study indicated customer experience is a result of a default state. However, with more focus on the personas and creating purposeful interactions customers stand a higher chance to interact and will likely continue moving along the customer experience continuum. This movement can be tracked by documenting the number of visits on revamped CLSER web pages where more details per page and more interactive webinars and chat rooms have been requested by those who need more human interactions, Persona B and C customers with less publishing experience. Thus, a pilot of redesigned webpages tested on the various personas would prove beneficial.

In the case of the University of Phoenix affiliates, a fourth persona, age, might be prudent. It was later discovered a higher degree of employed chairs over the age of 70 exists. Personas can also be based on generations to align experiences that they would find more meaningful. There is little doubt that most Generation X and Y as well as Millennials are much more community centric minded. For institutes with these customer personas, a strategic CX interaction strategy will require insight to what they find most valuable to support their research and publishing goals.

Instead of relying on a survey interaction, the personas could be obtained upon affiliates or customers who establish a website account as a requirement of their profile. A logarithm could be created that tracks the number of logins and visits to each page to track the continued interactions, but only in websites where logins are required or areas such as webinars, chat rooms, or where blogs can be posted.

The limitations of the study are
noted from the small sample, but as a benchmark, the results demonstrate how personas and movement along the CX continuum show the efficacy of properly measuring CX theory and in an academy example. The part-time practitioner nature of the customer affiliates has an overall effect on interaction since many work full-time either in another more prominent academia role or outside their dissertation focus.

With regard to the content analysis, website menu items are an indication of the prominence of terms identified as promises such as scholarship and call (call for scholarship) which were lowest compared to other promised terms. Adding a left-hand column menu item specifically with these terms should increase interest. Since the hypothesis that CX theory built into the CLSER website was not purposeful, this documentation does suggest that professional lives of the center customers should continue to advance with the aid of CX humanistic interaction design improvements they requested with more detail on web pages and more opportunities to interact via webinars. Thus, the propagation of scholarly research can likely mature faster than with no strategic CX theory applied.

Bleiklie and Powell (2005) believed that individuals have a strong role in knowledge creation in industry as well as education. If the main purpose of the CLSER is to create knowledge, then bolstering the interactions of the prospects involved in the process should be considered a valuable measurement of all stakeholder’s success. While this application examined the use of CX with doctoral chair customers, the efficacy to employ CX can extend to student, staff, and faculty at all levels. No matter how rigorous higher education programs become, understanding the student and faculty customer empirical experience can have a profound positive effect on the customer lifecycle.

During a cursory observation of the CLSER website, it was noted that a workshop dubbed Knowledge Without Boundaries, to help affiliates of all personas as well as students transition their dissertations to publication, was among several interactive methods offered both on-ground and in webinar format. Tracking doctoral customer usage via more quali-quanti research methods should prove beneficial in documenting the types of interactions they like most. Consequently, future researchers should apply a more quali-quanti approach as most notably described by Kaden, Linda, and Levinson (2009) to the promises made, promise kept question to begin measuring more ways in which the experience has benefited the specific user beyond moving them along the CX continuum.

Higher education staff and faculty should understand how to create meaningful student interactions leading to loyalty and the stickiness (sticktion) that builds institution advocates. Measuring this is yet another good indication the CX theory is in play. With competitive 21st century schools regardless of their for-profit or nonprofit status, open access or competitive admissions, or retention strategies, students and faculty
represents the valued customer. Institutions that recognize the importance of CX thus stand poised to better differentiate themselves so that promises made are promises kept. The website needs to facilitate the crowning achievement of delivering extraordinary customer experience that leads to advocacy. How this advocacy at a doctoral research center should be displayed or defined is open for exploration.

References


APPENDIX
CLSER Identified Pages

Dr. Erik Bean a fellow at the Center for Leadership Studies and Educational Research (CLSER), University of Phoenix.