Why Successful CX is about Reclaiming the Human Touch

Strategies and key steps to creating a winning 'Voice of the Customer' (VoC) program in the global CX landscape
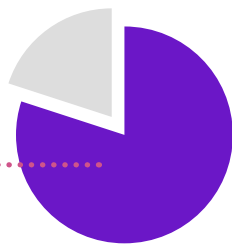
discuss.io

Contents

INTRODUCTION: SUPERCHARGING CX WITH THE VOICE OF THE CUSTOMER

# SUPERCHARGING CX WITH THE VOICE OF THE CUSTOMER

80%

In a 2018 survey of over 6,700 consumers and business buyers, 80% claim the experience a company provides is as important as its products or services.[1]

As the digital revolution increases customer access to goods and services, companies can no longer rely on product or service quality and pricing to differentiate themselves from competitors. Increasingly, companies must focus on improving the customer experience (CX) to get ahead. Fortunately, new technologies provide unprecedented visibility into the buyer and customer journey, signaling to brands different customer behaviors, points of friction, and opportunities for improvement.

DEFINING MODERN CX

The customer experience (CX) is the sum of all interactions that a customer has with a brand over the entire customer journey. Increasingly, this experience incorporates both automated and human interactions across multiple environments.

75%
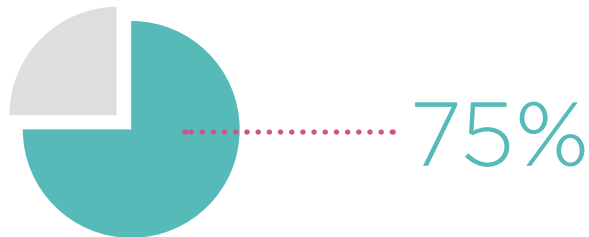
Despite growing adoption of automated customer-facing technologies, 75% of global consumers want more human interaction in the future.[2]

But even in the age of chatbots and Big Data, most brands are not delivering the right mix of interactions to their customers. PwC reports that 75% of consumers want more human interaction in the future, not less; 64% of consumers feel companies have lost touch with the human element of CX as well.[3]

Fortunately, marketers who engage in direct conversations with customers can better address consumer pain points and meet consumer expectations. Using live video, Discuss.io allows employees to engage directly with consumers

and immediately leverage findings to build better CX strategies. As we will find, prioritizing first-hand insights from customers increases engagement adds business value and even improves employee engagement.

RECLAIMING THE HUMAN TOUCH

"The root cause for the success of disruptors is that they listened to the needs of the customer."[4]

Now, both B2B and B2C customers expect brands to understand their wants and needs in advance. Successful brands will master the **Voice of the Customer (VoC)**— that is, they will consistently grasp and act upon what's required to enhance customer experience using input from customers themselves. To do so, they must wholly place customers at the heart of their business—both strategically and philosophically—and remaster the human experience.

3.5x

Organizations that report being "very advanced" in CX are over 3.5 times more likely to have exceeded their top 2018 business goal.[5]

In this new 'experience economy,' CX is only successful when brands build emotional connections with their customers. Emphasizing the customer experience is nothing new. Disney, for example, has invested heavily in CX research to build the experiences in their parks, driving their brand loyalty. Fortunately, we are at the threshold of a world where brands know what customers want and can deliver an ideal product, service, or experience in real time, no matter the environment.

Today's technology enables human interactions to have a scalable and lasting impact, exactly where it matters most. When the team members responsible for customer-facing outputs are closer to consumers, the entire organization wins. Discuss.io helps your key employees make strategic decisions based on their own direct experiences with consumers, not just assumptions based on historical, behavioral, and third-party data.

WHAT IS 'VOICE OF THE CUSTOMER (VOC)'?

Voice of the Customer (VoC) is the process of capturing and analyzing customers' feedback, expectations, and desires as a means to improve the customer experience. VoC programs allow organizations to improve interactions at every customer touchpoint, better reward customers during those interactions, and increase trust in their long-term relationships with customers.

As we will find, direct interactions with consumers are central to successful VoC programs—but you need the right technologies and support to make these interactions truly valuable. Discuss.io provides you with all the support you need to make your VoC program a success. We ensure your teams are comfortable with our unique video platform so you can start hosting consumer conversations and begin sharing insights with your teams.

MEETING EVOLVING HUMAN EXPECTATIONS

47%
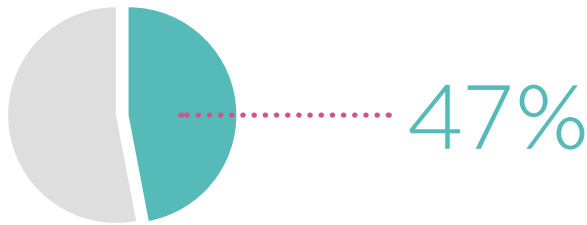
In a survey from SAP and the CMO Council, 47 percent of customers said they would abandon a brand that delivers poor, impersonal, or frustrating experiences.[6]

Now, more companies (25%) claim 'Experience' is the primary way they will set themselves apart from the competition over the next five years over any other factor—including product quality, innovation, mobile, and price. Customers expect personalized experiences and communications delivered in real time and through any channel they prefer. As a result, CMOs are allocating nearly one-third of their budgets to marketing technologies.[7]

PARTNERING WITH DISCUSS.IO FOR VOC SUCCESS

VoC has been owned traditionally by market research and insights—teams that are skilled at understanding market sentiments and delivering recommendations based on rigorous testing. These teams are critical to investing, strategic decision making, and implementing new technologies.

However, customer empathy cannot come from reading a report. It comes from having direct access to real-time, live conversation and relating person-to-person. When CX teams are empowered to connect with consumers directly, they quickly develop a deeper understanding of consumers' opinions, needs, and preferences. This can have a powerful multiplier effect—the conversations make CX teams enthusiastic about the impact of their work, encouraging them to share their learnings with others in the organization. Ultimately, these conversations allow employees to sharpen their creative assets and product positioning, test new marketing communications, and become inspired by consumers.
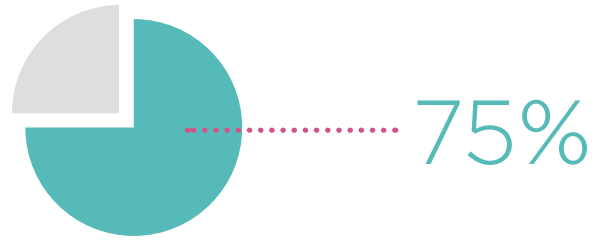
HOW VOICE OF THE CUSTOMER (VOC) FITS INTO THE CUSTOMER JOURNEY

75%

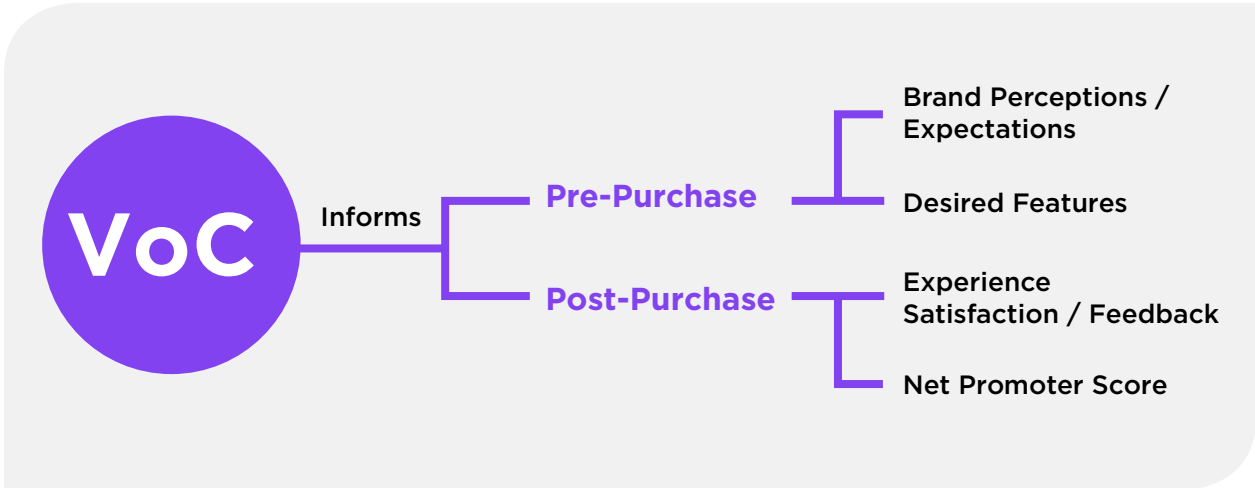# HOW VOICE OF THE CUSTOMER **(VOC)** FITS INTO THE CUSTOMER JOURNEY

While 75% of organizations believe themselves to be customer-centric, only 30% of consumers believe this is the case.[8]

Voice of the Customer (VoC) initiatives are about understanding individual customers on a one-to-one, personalized level. Brands must use their knowledge of individual customers to deliver personalized interactions at every engagement, no matter how customers choose to engage.

VoC — Informs — **Pre-Purchase**
- Brand Perceptions / Expectations
- Desired Features

Post-Purchase
- Experience Satisfaction / Feedback
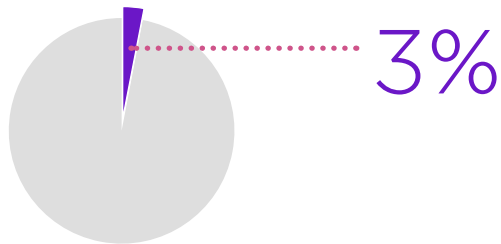- Net Promoter Score

CX leaders know that integrating VoC early and often is the linchpin to the success of any CX program. Brands can only succeed in these areas by collecting insights from every customer interaction, and utilizing that data in comprehensive ways to improve marketing campaigns, sales meetings, customer service calls, and online brand engagement, among other forms of engagement.

SUCCESSFUL VOC INCLUDES HUMAN INTERACTIONS

3%

Only 3% of U.S. consumers want their experiences to be as automated as possible.[9]

Increasingly, marketers are discovering that simply collecting customer data on a secondary basis is not enough. Employees must interact with customers directly and clarify in real-time through conversation to deliver the experiences their customers want now and in the future.

"Even as technology improves and automation becomes more prevalent, most American consumers still prefer human interaction. People engage with apps, self-service checkouts, websites and the like. But the second something goes wrong, they want to talk to a person, stat."[10]

According to PwC, 82% of U.S. and 74% of non-U.S. consumers want more human interaction from brands in the future in the future."[11] As a result, the technology supporting human interaction must be part of any VoC strategy and employed seamlessly across platforms.

INFUSING VOC THROUGHOUT THE CUSTOMER JOURNEY

Today, successful CX programs include VoC as its feedback mechanism in a CX program. VoC may include social listening, open-ended quantitative research, and traditional focus groups among its methods.

At Discuss.io, we've found the biggest impact comes from live interactions and building empathy with customers. That's why Discuss.io takes Voice of Customer capabilities to the next level by adding in the Face of Customer as well.

Upon facing consumers for the first time, CX professionals often find their preconceptions shattered. Even though the initial conversation is with only one person, it often prompts the team to reevaluate their thinking, leading to a better, more consumer-centric strategy. And if consumer conversations are inserted as regular components of the creative and innovation workflow, misinterpretations and preconceptions will be limited. With every conversation, understanding of the consumer continues to form, often prompting more research, experimentation, and success.

THE CX TECHNOLOGY AND CAPABILITY LANDSCAPE

THE CX TECHNOLOGY AND CAPABILITY LANDSCAPE

75%
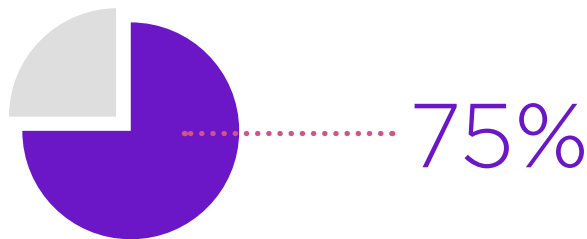
According to Gartner, three-quarters of organizations increased customer experience (CX) technology investments in 2018.[12]

In 2020, customers expect marketing to be personalized, contextualized, and dynamic. The digital economy has brought consumers an innate understanding of the capabilities of digital technologies and how companies can employ them to consumers' advantage. As a result, CMOs are increasingly partnering with CIOs to adopt new, CX-focused tools powered by emerging technologies and the employees who understand them.

But while most executives claim CX is a priority, they have not formalized it as an organizational discipline or strategy. To succeed, customers must elevate CX alongside core business priorities—including finance, IT, and sales—and prioritize it for funding, training, technology investment, and executive support.

CRITICAL EMPLOYEE CAPABILITIES

Central to the success of any CX program is the ability to take data and insights and to put them to action to improve the customer experience. That means that the workflow needs to be as frictionless and cross-functionary as possible.

With so many players in the CX landscape, how can company leaders ensure that they all work together? Here are four strategic priorities and related capabilities all organizations should consider when preparing employees for CX success:

Sensing
Collecting latent **data** about users to **uncover** and encode underlying customer sentiment embedded in reviews, **behavior** and even physical characteristics.

Acting
Driving technology behind deep CX **personalization**; deploying a variety of **strategies** to engage prospects, nurture customers, and build **brand loyalty**.

Deciding
Making **decisions** based on gathered data. Software in this category provides **analytics** and actionable **insights** to optimize strategy and maximize results.

Managing
Enabling companies to holistically **manage** customer experiences and interactions. Focusing on **simplifying** management of these complex processes.
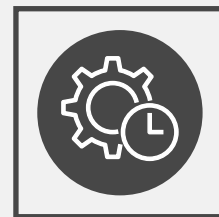
CX-ENHANCING TECHNOLOGIES

While it's exciting to have so much data at our fingertips, it's not always being used correctly or it's being used to draw incorrect conclusions. Data doesn't speak for itself. Business leaders need a coherent approach to CX people and processes; but also, an integrated technology ecosystem that leverages the full potential of experience data.

CX professionals must integrate insights from data analytics with insights from direct consumer conversations. These insights help CX teams build empathy and understanding, identify unknown customer pain points and KPIs, and develop new strategies that they might not have known to look for or measure through data analysis.

## INCORPORATING THE VOICE OF THE CUSTOMER (VOC)

To understand the "Why" of customer behavior, business leaders can supplement data with the actual voice of the customer as part of their employee and technology investment strategy. At Discuss.io, we know that integration is critical to not letting information slip through the cracks. That's why we integrate into your existing tools and workflows, and similarly allow them to integrate into ours as well.

Leveraging video recordings of direct consumer conversations allows CX teams to keep the voice of the consumer alive long after the initial interactions have completed. Key functionalities within the Discuss.io platform help teams leverage insights from the interactions indefinitely as well. These assets have already accelerated and simplified winning CX activities for B2C companies.

Live conversations give CX professionals the opportunity to probe and clarify, uncovering levels of complexity and often uncovering deeper challenges and pains. At moments of high importance, these conversations illuminate real customer problems which, if solved, have the opportunity to substantially differentiate your customer experience and business..
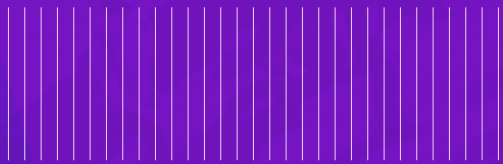
MODERN CX CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

MODERN CX CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

32%

In 2020, CMOs and CIOs will collaborate more than ever to align their companies' marketing and business with broader CX strategies. They are embracing new opportunities to shape the customer experience, but also encountering barriers to progress they must overcome to survive.

KEY CX CHALLENGES

In many organizations, CX remains only marginally effective. Here are **three key challenges** afflicting CX leaders and their companies today:

Siloed data and operations.

CX programs are rarely elevated above the department level. As a result, marketing, sales, customer service, and other customer-facing teams lack consistency in the tools and strategies they employ to learn from and improve customer interactions. With their own processes and approaches, they fail to share and exploit critical customer information and insights that could create more consistent and desirable experiences.

Reactive policies.

Most CX programs continue to focus on improving upon past interactions rather than anticipating new ones and exceeding customer expectations. These companies set themselves up to be ripe for disruption.

Unscalable technologies and processes.

Expanding CX programs across an organization for cross-functional involvement has traditionally been challenging due to a lack of scalable solutions. As a result, solutions remain siloed or don't get the cross-functional buy-in to be successful.

65%

Most U.S. consumers (65%) find a positive brand experience to be more influential than great advertising.

KEY CX OPPORTUNITIES

Fortunately, barriers to transforming the customer experience are now lower than ever. Here are **three key opportunities** CX leaders can leverage to deliver experiences customers seek out and enjoy:

Elevating CX priorities is becoming good business.

Business leaders are realizing that there are real payoffs to providing better experiences—up to a 16% price premium on products and services, plus increased loyalty, PwC reports.[13]

CX technologies are more approachable, scalable, and effective.

Automation, intelligence, and cloud infrastructure solutions mean CX leaders struggling to manage and act upon customer data can adopt and scale CX-enhancing technologies with fewer integrations and cost barriers.

Smart technologies are enhancing real-time customer interactions. CX-optimized digital platforms and AI-driven tools that assist both customers and employees are turning service interactions into opportunities to delight and drive long-term brand loyalty. As brands increasingly supplement human interactions with smart technologies, CX leaders are poised to reinvent the human-to-human CX experience.

73%
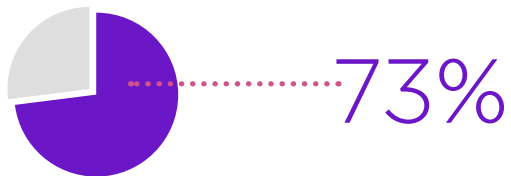
73 percent of global respondents say that a positive experience is among the key drivers that influence their brand loyalties.[14]

Even at large companies, CX teams must connect with consumers in real-time and in all their target markets. Discuss.io's video conversations and market research tools make it quick and easy to recruit participants, conduct one-on-one and group conversations, and share findings across the organization, no matter its size.

SIX STEPS TO ROLLING OUT A SUCCESSFUL VOICE OF THE CUSTOMER (VOC) PROGRAM

6 SIX STEPS TO ROLLING OUT A SUCCESSFUL VOICE OF THE CUSTOMER (VOC) PROGRAM

A successful Voice of the Customer (VoC) program begins with establishing organizational readiness, modern CX understanding, and a roadmap for the integrations and internal preparations required to realize tangible objectives. Consider the following six steps as you look to begin rolling out your own VoC program.

1 ESTABLISH ORGANIZATIONAL READINESS

Determine how long it will take to roll out a successful VoC program, which team members should be involved in the pilot, and how much time each user and stakeholder must allocate for its execution. Create new measures of success for the program and your employees—such as improving call center experiences rather than reducing call times—and be prepared to reward them for their improvements. Identify potential detractors to your VoC program and create strategies for getting them on board.

We've created an organizational readiness assessment to help you determine where gaps exist. After completing the assessment, we'll work with you to create a program that works for your organization.

2 UNDERSTAND MODERN CX THROUGHOUT MULTIPLE DISCIPLINES.

Develop a customer journey map and identify all the channels through which customer interactions happen—web, mobile apps, social media, physical locations, and others. Develop strategies and identify both technologies and metrics for improving the customer experience through these channels. Metrics should align with core business objectives, and may include increasing satisfaction scores or driving repeat purchase.

3 SECURE EXECUTIVE MANDATES AND SUPPORT FOR NEW CX INITIATIVES

Work with cross-functional leaders to get organizational buy-in. Make your case for a VoC program as a cornerstone for larger CX efforts. Demonstrate how VoC amplifies and achieves your companies' priorities.

4 OUTLINE YOUR STRATEGY, BUDGET, AND PROCESS REQUIREMENTS FOR EXECUTION

Work with IT teams to set up technical enablers and incorporate automated intelligence to optimize strategies and employee activities. Invest in key partnerships and technologies you'll need to ensure your VoC program is a success. See 'Your VoC Program Strategic Checklist' for specific details.

5 RUN YOUR PILOT VOC PROGRAM

Ensure customer interactions through the pilot yield data tied to unique consumer IDs so you can improve your programs with an honest VoC approach. Check in with your partners to optimize performance. Run your pilot with a small group to work out the details before rolling out to the larger team. Leverage the Discuss.io-provided support documentation in order to ensure ease of adoption.

6 MEASURE, IMPROVE, AND EXPAND.

Using built-in metrics, define the pilot's successes before communicating them to other teams and company stakeholders. Identify areas for improvement before realigning your strategy to deliver on your originally established measures of success.

CASE
Study

CASE STUDY: ENABLING UNILEVER'S CONSUMER-CENTRIC STRATEGY

Unilever

Discuss.io has a successful record helping companies roll out successful VoC programs. When Unilever used Discuss.io to recruit and host conversations on our live video platform, our end-to-end solution enabled 30 team members to engage directly with consumers over the course of two weeks. The team members were able to hear first-hand how consumers went about the shopping process.

Following the workshop, the team compiled a highlight video of the findings, allowing the insights to be shared and repeatedly viewed across the organization. In this way, leveraging the video recordings allowed them to keep the voice of the consumer alive long after the workshop and influencing future decision-making.

Powering VoC programs in the world's largest companies:

Pepsi Lipton   telenet

essity   Mondelēz International

BAYER   PEPSICO

CONCLUSION: THE FUTURE STATE OF CX

THE FUTURE STATE OF CX

—

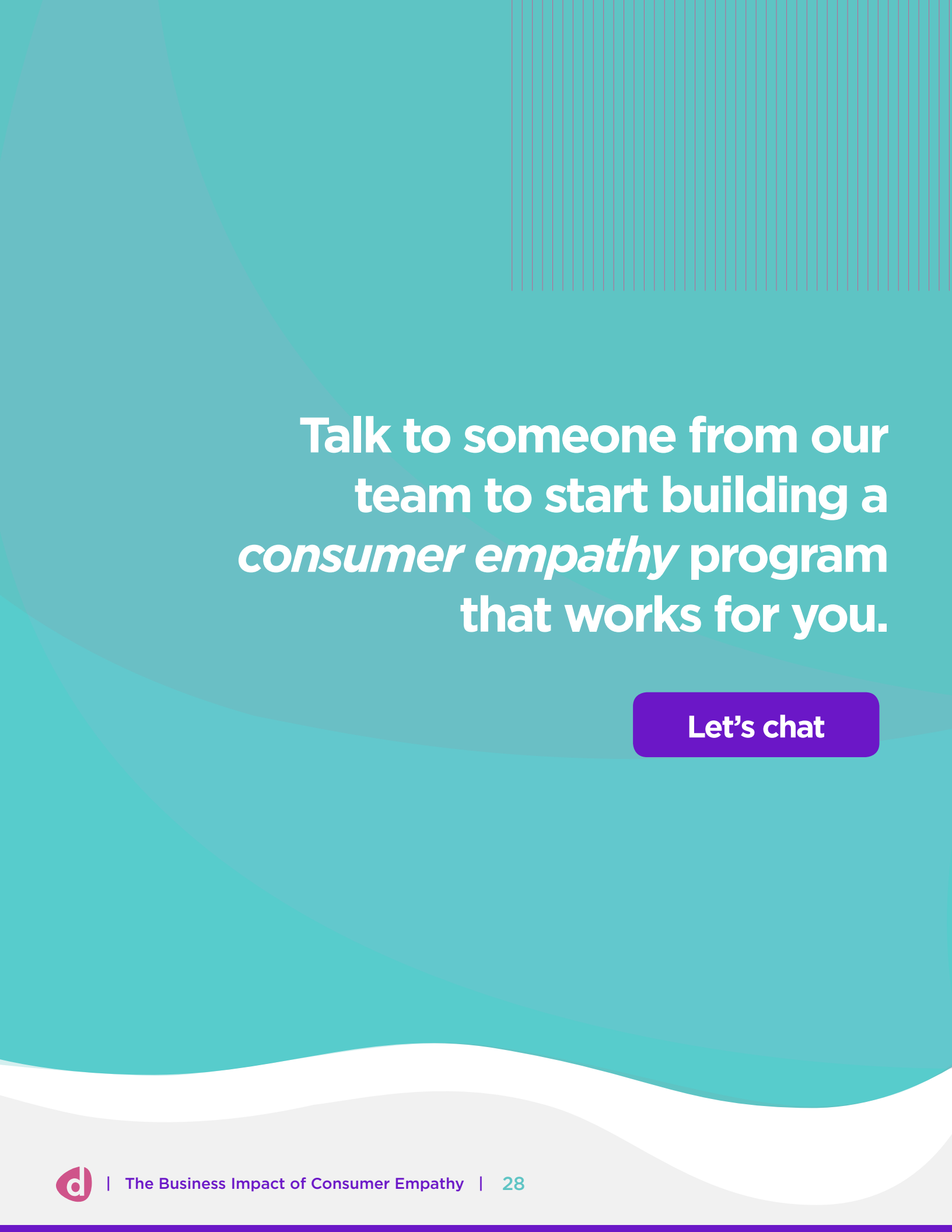"Listening to the customer is the single most important facet for any business strategy... brands are no longer inert, robotic corporations but are now readily choosing to interact with their customers letting them know 'we hear, value, and understand you.' The world of voice of customer continues to grow rapidly simultaneous to improvements in technology."[15]

In today's endless marketplace, brands must put their customers in charge to remain competitive. That means not only listening to them but empowering them through direct interactions and opportunities to influence how brands that impact their lives.

Data analytics have made predictive capabilities and real-time CX evolution possible for brands. But brands must develop a more nuanced understanding of customer behavior and preferences to capture loyalty. This can only be achieved by incorporating and scaling the 'human touch' customers continue to seek out— real conversations that drive customer satisfaction, brand loyalty, and business success.

Talk to someone from our team to start building a *consumer empathy* program that works for you.

Let's chat