How Leading Restaurant Brands Use Technology to Innovate Customer Experience (CX)

"We found that companies with superior CX grew revenues five times faster on average than their competitors with inferior CX."

Forrester Research - September 2019. "Improving CX Through Business Discipline Drives Growth: The Vision Report In The CX Transformation Playbook"

CMX

This guide is designed specifically for leaders within the **Restaurant industry**. It offers insight into how top brands are modernizing their OpEx strategies to innovate CX and drive profitability. Copyright CMX 2021.

CHAPTER 01

Customer Experience (CX) And Why It Matters

Customer Experience – Why It Matters

Why Strive for Better CX?

Because Customer Experience is Everything.

Customer Experience (CX) is now more important than ever. In fact, research has shown that it has become the most important differentiator to drive and maintain revenue growth and will likely surpass price and product as key considerations.

In general, CX encompasses a wide array of business elements: products, services, branding, website, customer care, etc. It's not only what your brand offers, it's also how customers perceive your brand.

CX is influenced by many factors: speedy customer service, friendly and knowledgeable staff, convenience, and product consistency.

Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic not only disrupted business operations and supply chains, it has also drastically altered customer habits and perceptions about environmental cleanliness, sanitation, and hygiene procedures - which also directly impacts customer experience. In other words:

A first-class customer experience is a direct result of superior operational excellence (OpEx).

$**75** billion

Sadly, US companies collectively lose $75 billion[1] **per year due to bad CX. But when customers associate your brand with a great experience, they're likely to be more loyal. And more purchases mean more revenue.**

(1) https://www.forbes.com/sites/shephyken/2018/05/17/businesses-lose-75-billion-due-to-poor-customer-service

Customer Experience – Why It Matters

Restaurant Leaders Face Complex Challenges

Operational Excellence (OpEx) is at a crossroads.

Operational leaders in the restaurant industry must contend with a market in which customers have a dizzying array of choices and continually changing preferences. They need to continue with a steady focus on quality, compliance, and risk management, all while facing tight profit margins.

Moreover, brands that have thrived during the COVID-19 pandemic, have all been able to demonstrate their commitment to safety, while still providing a convenient and enjoyable guest experience. It's no easy task — which is why digital tools have essentially become a mandatory requirement for success.

While customers are the ones who drive your revenue, employees are the ones driving customer experience. The onus is therefore on operational teams to lead the way in terms of how customer experience is integrated into the product and service, permeating operations of the entire business.

Challenges often encountered:

01

Abundance of customer choices

02

Ever-changing customer preferences

03

Effectively managing risk while ensuring quality and compliance

04

Tight profit margins

Customer Experience – Why It Matters

New Challenges Need New Solutions

To address this new reality, quality, compliance, and operational programs must change.

Historically, restaurant businesses have struggled to sustain OpEx improvements over time. Delivering a remarkable customer experience time and time again across tens, hundreds, or even thousands of locations is nearly impossible using traditional methods where transparency and control are lacking.

While third-party audits provide value from an outside view, they only offer a single "snapshot in time". They are time-intensive, and take valuable attention away from running the business in a workplace where unexpected urgencies take priority.

"Train, audit, fix, and repeat" still has its place, but due to infrequency and inconsistency, this approach is a lagging indicator. Above all, it simply isn't effective when a restaurant has a high degree of employee turnover.

Moreover, with the current pandemic, **the ability to adapt quickly is crucial** in order to continually ensure employee and customer safety. Changes need to be communicated rapidly, and implemented efficiently throughout your organization.

To address rising customer demands along with executing on your brand promise demands a new approach to OpEx — one that will leverage **digitalization** and **real-time information** to enable higher levels of agility.

Clearly **digitalization is the solution** for allowing OpEx teams to create and execute repeatable operational routines. With real-time information gathering, analysis, and insights, businesses gain the agility to tailor ongoing programs to address these challenges.

But, a **plethora of technology solutions has hit the market**, creating confusion for the OpEx buyer. Many of these solutions are merely point solutions that don't deliver far-reaching, scalable technology that will work all the way to the retail/franchise level as expected.

> **The secret of getting ahead is getting started. The secret of getting started is breaking your complex overwhelming tasks into small manageable tasks, and starting on the first one.**
>
> Mark Twain

CHAPTER 02

Solutions...
Where To Start?

Solutions...Where Do You Start?

When It Comes to Solutions, Choose Wisely

Industry experts and leading brands alike are quickly realizing that they need to address these challenges with an **enterprise-class, easy-to-use, agile platform**. Point solutions that can't scale or be integrated into the brand's operating environment - simply don't cut it.

You need a platform that provides the flexibility to **develop and execute a wide variety of audit, self-assessment, checklist, evaluation, inspection, and survey programs.**

These new platforms enable:

· **Company policies, procedures, training content, and media to all be stored and leveraged across different programs and initiatives**

· **The collection and analysis of data in real-time**

· **Actionable insights, with the agility to make program adjustments and distribute them throughout your enterprise, on the fly**

Solutions…Where Do You Start?

What to Look For in a New Platform

Embrace digital by replacing inefficient paper-based quality, compliance, or risk management-based operational programs with agile digitized mobile applications. This allows you to collect information and gain insights in real-time.

Empower employees to deliver the most optimal customer experience possible by digitizing critical operating procedures, protocols, and best practices—embedding them into existing business workflows and making them easily accessible via mobile devices.

Create a company-wide culture of excellence. No matter the size of your organization, effective quality, risk, and brand compliance programs require a company-wide approach. This approach must be anchored by centralized data and content management along with far-reaching scalability that extends to the retail and franchise level for data collection and consistency.
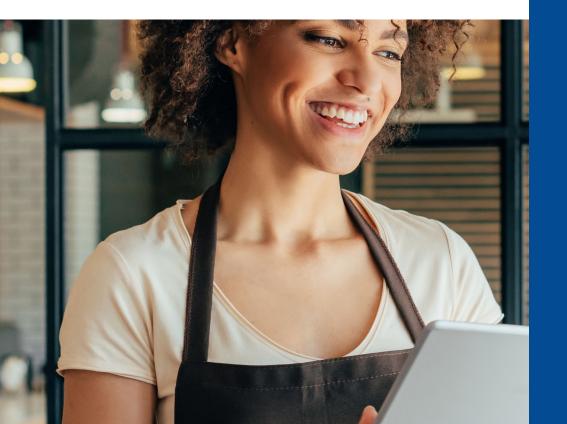
Enables self-service, which minimizes the time, cost, and complexity of implementation and ongoing use. It also allows for adjustments to programs on the fly.

Drives sustainable improvement, eliminates manual tasks and reduces the administrative burden. Intelligent automation and embedded policies, procedures, training content, media, and recommended actions are integrated into everyday workflows. Veterans and new employees alike have all the information and tools needed to do their jobs and continually improve.

Measure success and drives continuous improvement. Knowing that every employee is following Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and executing on the brand promise is the holy grail of OpEx and CX today.

Automatic real-time reporting makes this possible, taking measurements to the next level by providing insights for managers to continuously analyze performance and easily identify where coaching and corrective and preventative actions (CAPAs) are needed.

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"Since the [CMX] technology went live, we've been impressed with how easy it is for our team to evaluate our results and make adjustments to our programs. Activity Studio® **gives us the ability to make updates and implement them to our system immediately. That flexibility and agility is critical when it comes to food safety and quality, which are paramount to Firehouse Subs and our brand mission of excellence."**

Tim Foster,
Senior Manager of Training for Firehouse Subs

FIREHOUSE SUBS

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CHAPTER 03

Tech Requirements – The Must-Haves

10 Must-Have Technology Requirements for Success

Software has become an increasingly important driver in the push towards Operational Excellence and Customer Experience — especially for emerging and global brands.

To operate consistently in a decentralized fashion, there are ten essential technological requirements to look out for.

01 **Integrated Policy Management**

In an age where agility is essential, organizations must be able to swiftly and easily create and update policies, SOPs, and training documentation. This can now be accomplished using rich text editors with document/media storage. In addition, processes must offer built-in flexibility, with the ability to publish content to specific user groups or even company-wide in real-time.

02 **Intuitive, Visual Form Building**

Agility is further enhanced with an intuitive drag-and-drop policy and form-building designer. This makes it possible to easily incorporate any business activity into the platform — from complex audit forms with automated repeat detection to simple checklists and surveys. The ability to link questions and instructions to policies, SOPs, media, and training content reinforces brand standards and promotes best practices. The result? Lower design costs and less scrambling to ensure all bases are covered.

03 **Automated Scheduling**

The ability to set and monitor recurring schedules for programs and activities eliminates key pain points associated with ongoing OpEx initiatives. With automatic scheduling, managers can also ensure their teams understand — and are working toward — important organizational goals. Nothing falls through the cracks.

04 Shift Management

A proper platform should allow you to set up and define shifts and dayparts with assigned activities and apply rules for these activities like start/end times, intervals between activities, and activity rollover or expiration periods. Locations should be able to turn shifts off, or override settings to match their location-specific activities.

05 Equipment Management

Restaurants should have the ability to add, remove, and rename pieces of equipment specific to their location. This allows you to dynamically create specific questions and activities that relate to the equipment in each location.

06 Flexible Workflows

Flexible and automated workflows are OpEx game changers, providing the ability to configure repeatable business processes and operational routines. Settings for role-based user assignments, notifications, reminders, escalations, and report distribution also ensure effective program execution.

07 Powerful & Actionable Insights

With features such as data visualization, KPIs, and reports, every level of the organization can gain access to program status and actionable insights. You should also be able to measure performance against defined program goals. Without this knowledge, businesses don't have a clear understanding of where to make adjustments and how to manage for success.

08 — Optimized for Mobile Devices

To create a stronger focus on the customer, today's restaurant employees must have the ability to work untethered — to perform activities online or offline as they go about their work. A mobile-optimized design can enable their success using native apps for Windows, iOS, and Android.

09 — Integrated IoT

Connectivity is key for OpEx initiatives to reach their full potential in an enterprise or retail environment. This allows data insights to be brought together and communication to flourish. The platform you select should enable you to seamlessly connect with Bluetooth Low Energy devices including barcode scanners, temperature probes, digital scales, and other IoT devices and senor networks – all of which improves the speed, consistency, and accuracy of data collection.

10 — Closed-Loop Corrective Actions

Technology administrators must be able to define the protocols for addressing and reviewing CAPAs and recommended actions, and at the same time have the ability to enforce timeframes to respond based on criticality. With these capabilities, continuous improvement becomes infinitely more manageable and measurable.

CHAPTER 04

Here's How Leading Brands Are Doing It

Restaurants Are Turning to Digital Technology to Improve OpEx and Make for Happier Customers

These days customer experience is as important as product price and quality. And digital technology is a major driver of customer experience.

What's the secret to great customer service? Is there a specific strategy that you can follow to draw more customers and optimize customer experience management?

Discover what several leading brands are doing to provide the best customer experience and how they are leveraging digital technology throughout their operations.

Firehouse Subs

Challenges:

- Providing the highest level of excellence at every location, a mission that becomes both more important and more difficult as its franchise network scales

- One of the greatest challenges the fast-growing restaurant chain faced, was how to ensure brand consistency and quality control across all its locations

Solution:

With **Activity**Studio®, Firehouse Subs has digitized their SOPs and can now measure and track restaurant performance and compliance more easily. This gives senior management greater visibility into the performance of individual restaurants and as well as issues or trends occurring across locations.

Read the full client story online

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As we approach 1,200 locations, I couldn't even imagine trying to keep an eye on brand standards and food safety without a platform like ActivityStudio® in place. And for our corporate staff, be it at the executive or vice president level, to have this level of visibility into our opportunities and our strengths and areas that need improvement has been invaluable.

Rich Goodman,
VP of Operations Services for Firehouse Subs

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A&W Canada

Challenges:

- Fast-changing regulations that influenced how restaurants needed to operate

- Communicating changes to the organization's SOPs to 1000s of employees across more than 1000 locations, in a timely manner

- Ensuring and maintaining compliance across all 1000+ locations for daily SOPs

Solution:

With **Activity**Studio®, A&W Canada was able to easily create customized daily checklists for cleanliness and sanitation and introduce new operational assessments as needed to help their restaurants improve their operations and to deliver a great guest experience. Thanks to the CMX digital platform, they were able to quickly implement and measure new safety measures and updated operational guidelines across all their locations.

Read the full client story online

We're now beginning to expand our use of Activity Studio® even further by making use of the platform to perform daily operational routines. With this expanded use, we are able to easily pivot as needed with the ever-changing regulations related to the pandemic, make updates on the fly, and roll them out quickly as part of our Operating Standards.**

Tina Parsons,
Director, Guest Experience for A&W Food Services of Canada

Buffalo Wild Wings

Challenges:

Manage and maintain high quality standards, food safety, guest and employee health and safety across all 1,250 locations.

Solution:

Buffalo Wild Wings digitally manage company operating procedures and protocols, execute audits, self-assessments and checklists using CMX's **Activity**Studio®. With an intuitive self-service interface, the team is easily able to develop and execute programs, ensuring all sports bars are compliant and operating with consistency.

Read the full client story online

"

I don't know what we don't use Activity**Studio®** for anymore. We use it for food safety, we use it for mystery shops, checks for execution... we're using it across every channel

Drew Roberts,
Director, Brand Ops Performance for Buffalo Wild Wings

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Checkers & Rally's

Challenges:

Over the last few years, Checkers & Rally's has expanded with 80 new restaurants and 34 new franchises. Such rapid growth inevitably brought the need for better systems. To ensure a great customer experience, they needed a way to create as many efficiencies as possible across their nearly 900 drive-ins.

Solution:

ActivityStudio® provides the basis to enable improved speed, accuracy, product quality, and the ability to deliver the optimal employee and guest experience.

Read the full client story online

> What used to take hours can be accomplished in minutes. And with one platform, we have one system and no silos. ActivityStudio's® user experience and user interface is cleaner and has a better flow, and it's incredibly easy to use. Our decision simply came down to ActivityStudio® and CMX as a partner, being a better fit for our business.

Danielle Williams,
Operations Services Manager, Checkers & Rally's

Sizzling Platter

SIZZLING PLATTER

Challenges:

Addressing the "new normal" (brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic) was a challenge for Sizzling Platter—one of the fastest-growing restaurant management groups in the world. These challenges included employee wellness checks and additional sanitation routines across 500 Sizzler, Red Robin, Little Caesars, Dunkin Donuts, and Wingstop restaurants in 15 US states and Mexico.

Solution:

Within weeks of launching **Activity**Studio®, Sizzling Platter was able to use the platform to perform employee pre-shift wellness checks and ensure health and sanitation routines were being executed.

They also use **Activity**Studio® to reduce time-intensive tasks surrounding the company's site evaluation process, which includes more than 204 questions along with the collection of photos and attachments.

Read the full client story online

ActivityStudio® gives us a user-friendly, yet powerful platform to digitally transform our operations, quality, and safety efforts.

Isaac Morton,
Vice President, Information Technology, Sizzling Platter

Elevate Your OpEx Game
for Better Customer Experience

Customer Experience is everything. And as you can see, leading brands are using digital technology to improve operational excellence, and ultimately deliver a remarkable customer experience.

You too can leverage digital transformation to help keep your customers and staff happy, and your business thriving.

Want to learn more? If you've read this far then you're clearly interested in stepping up your OpEx game!

We've modernized OpEx across many brands in the industry like Chick-fil-A, Arby's, Checkers and Rally's, Burger King, Buffalo Wild Wings, Firehouse Subs, and Taco Bell to name a few — so get in touch to discuss how we can do the same for you.

Or visit our website to learn more about our revolutionary OpEx solution, **Activity**Studio®, where you can also access webinar replays, PDF guides similar to this one, or request a demo of CMX1 on a date that best suits you.

Get in touch

> The routines we've automated with CMX have been our restaurant quality and food safety assessments. We believe that part of the continuous improvement processes is regularly self-assessing your performance. Programs are comprised of multiple assessments that are developed at the Chick-fil-A Support Center, and then made easily accessible for restaurants to use today. And team members can access them to perform daily quality food safety checks to really ensure that their processes and systems are in place to serve great food and safe food.

Aaron Clark, Senior Project Specialist, Restaurant Food Safety Team at Chick-fil-A

TODAY´S LEADING BRANDS TRUST CMX

CMX

We're living in a digital era in which <mark>customer experience is everything</mark>

In this new era, OpEx will play a central role in fulfilling a brand's promise all the way to the organization's most important customer touchpoints.