

itel

Authentic CX 2024

Your Blueprint for Building
Customer Relationships





Introduction



Businesses today face a paradox.

Despite having more channels, more communication, and more support options than ever, consumers still feel disconnected.

A 2023 consumer study by A/B Consulting showed that nearly half of Americans feel lonely and unfulfilled, especially younger generations. They expressed a greater desire for community and human connection.

That's where Authentic CX comes in.

Today, most consumers **spend over 50% of their time online**, rather than in-person activities. This has led to an epidemic of loneliness, despite having more ways to connect. Because digital connections are not quite the same as human connections and often don't feel as fulfilling.

Which could explain why, despite having automated or self-serve options, Americans overwhelmingly choose to speak to a live customer service representative when contacting a support center – the latest surveys indicate **as much as 69%!**

Consumers today are no longer content with superficial service.

They want **real human connection** and **genuine on-brand experiences** that feel organic and true. And they don't just want your products. They want personal relationships with the brands they love.

So, how do you get there?

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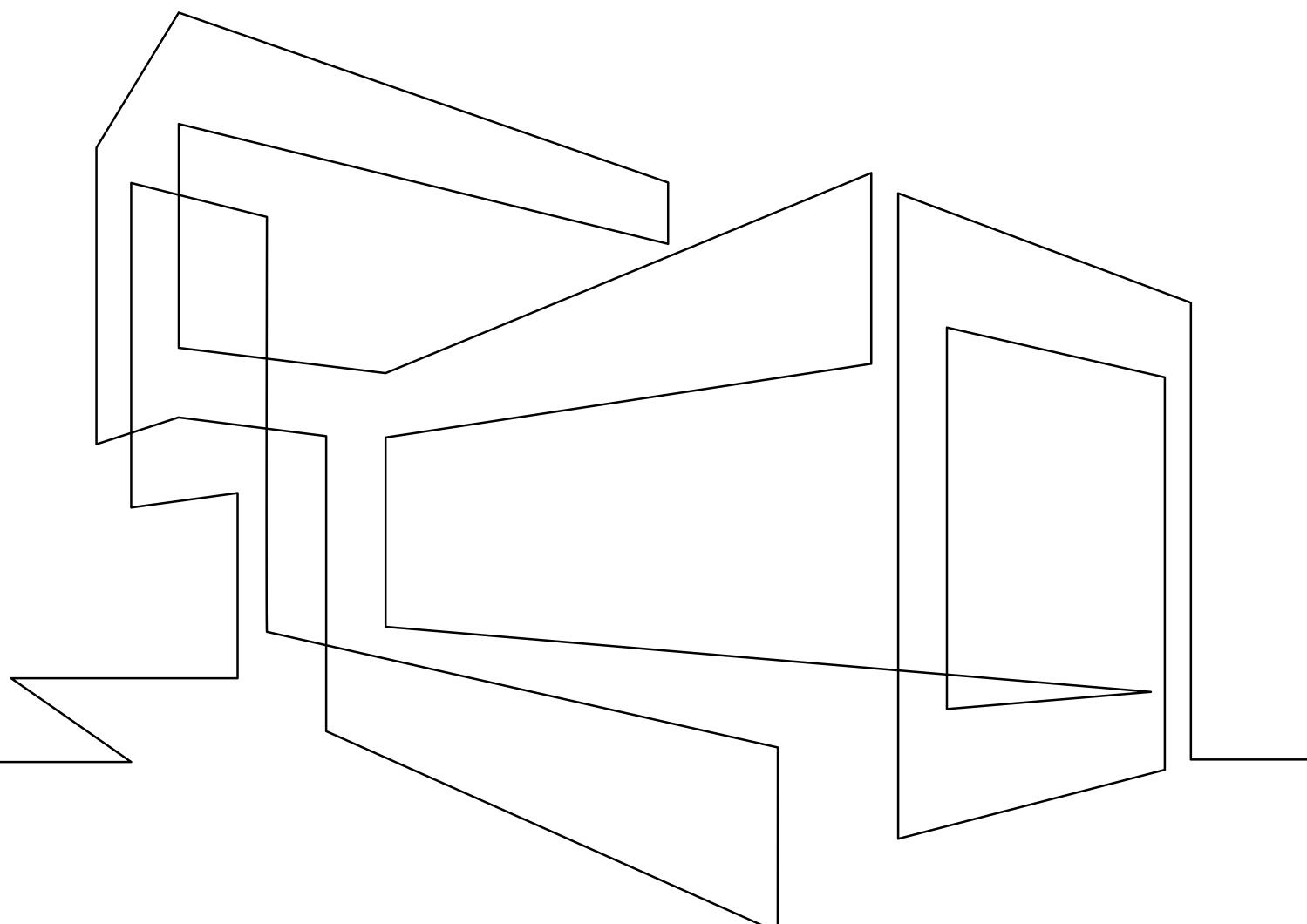
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Our 2024 Blueprint for Building Authentic Experiences

In this playbook, you'll find the blueprint for building Authentic CX in a multi-channel environment.

Perfect for Business Leaders, CX Directors, or Contact Center Operations teams who want to go from "good" to outstanding CX.

Because authenticity will be even more crucial in 2024, when the global economic outlook may not be as bright as previous years. Brand loyalty will be tested, as households become more discerning when it comes to purchases, and the focus will need to shift to customer retention.

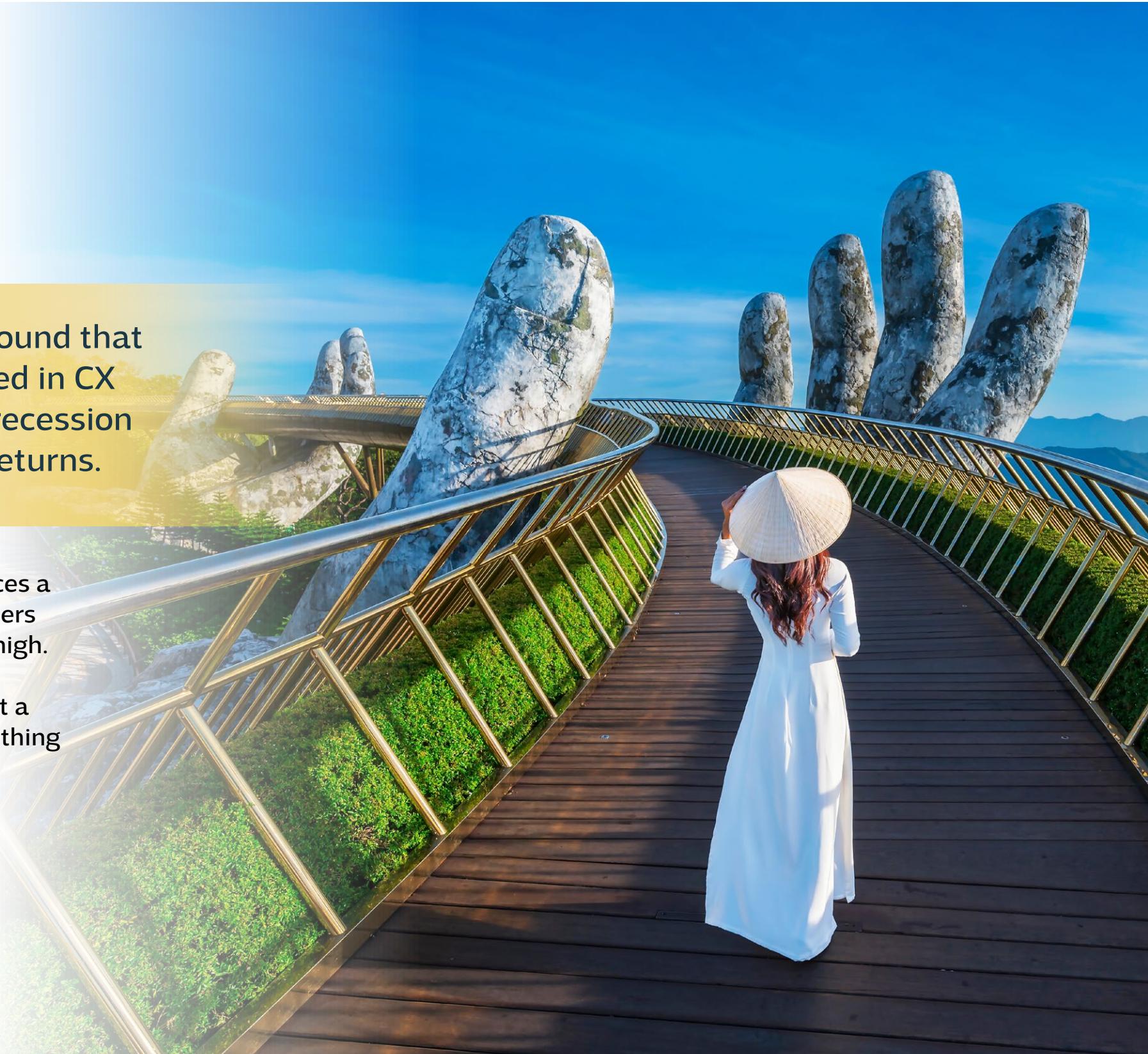
The good news is brand authenticity can progressively strengthen and increase a company's competitive advantage by building trust and credibility with customers. Especially in recessionary times.

A McKinsey analysis found that companies who excelled in CX during the 2008 U.S. recession generated 3X higher returns.

In fact, when asked what influences a brand's likeability, 90% of customers ranked "Authenticity" extremely high.

But what is authenticity? Is it just a marketing buzzword or is it something more real?

It's Real.



Successful Examples of Brand Authenticity

SUCCESS STORY #1:

Just look at **Dove's Campaign for Real Beauty**, the first ever to feature and celebrate real women of all shapes, ages, and sizes. Launched in 2004, one of its viral ads generated nearly 135 million views, and within a decade, company sales nearly doubled, to over \$4 billion.

SUCCESS STORY #2:

Retailer, **Zappos**, built its culture around 10 core values, one of which is to always "wow" customers. So much so, that every single employee must go through the same training program as contact center reps, to fully understand customers and how to deliver the genuine "Zappos" experience. This approach allowed the company to reach a value of \$1.2 billion in just 10 years.

Authenticity Starts with a Blueprint...

Authentic human connection only happens when your customer experience aligns with your brand messaging, your culture, and the values you represent.

Our job as a CX company is to connect brands with customers, and in our experience, the best results happen when you focus on building authentic customer relationships through meaningful interactions that aren't fluff, they're authentically on-brand.

It's a lot like the process of building a house.

STEP 1



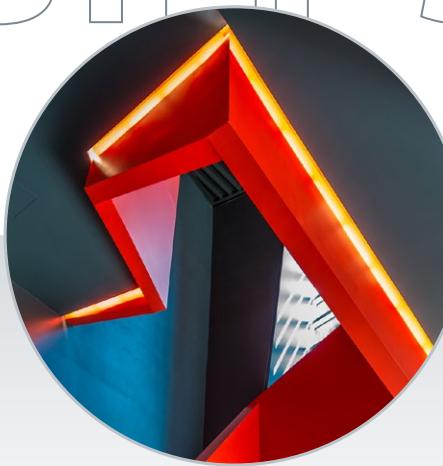
LAYING THE FOUNDATION

STEP 2



BUILDING THE FRAME

STEP 3

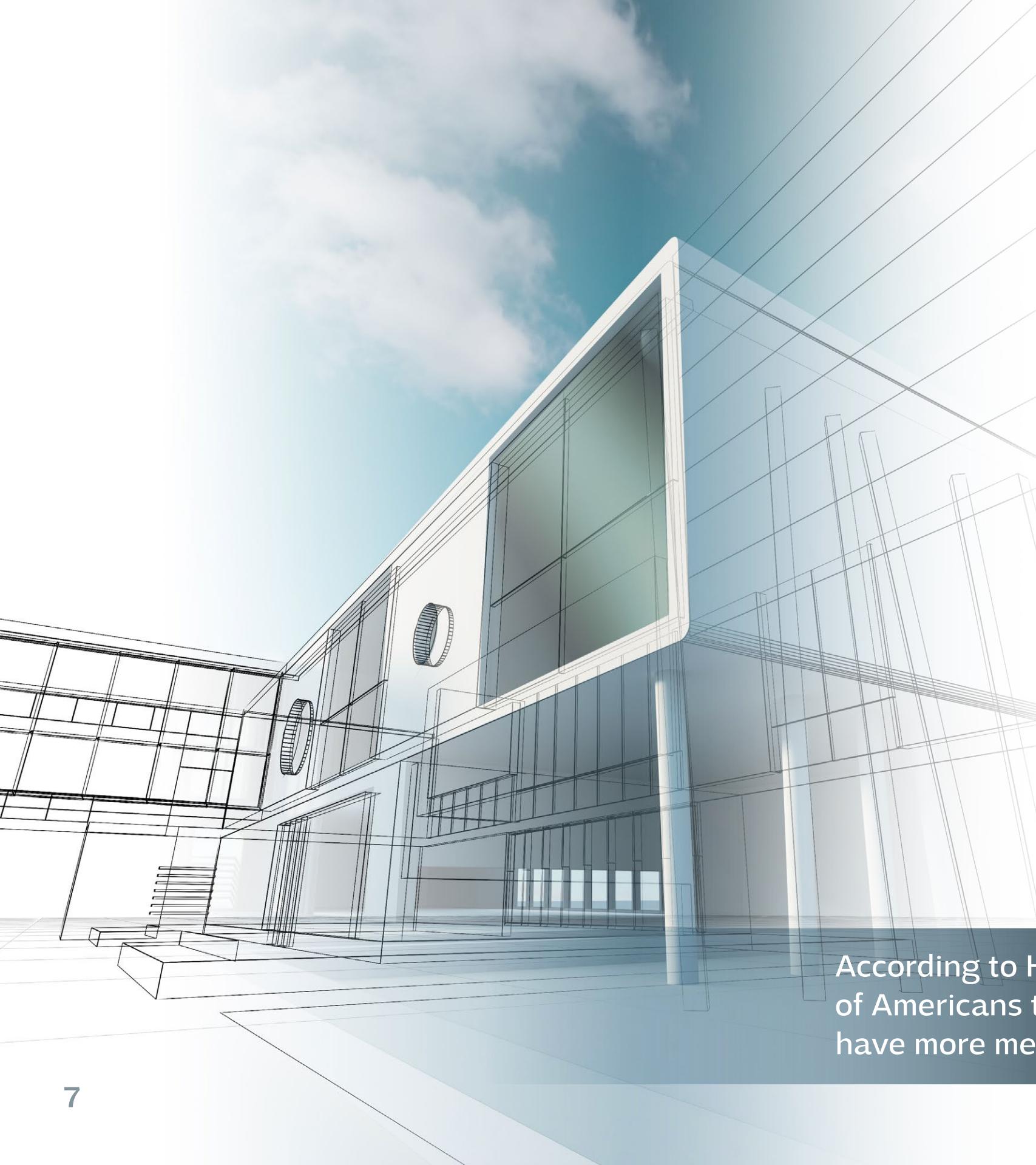


FOCUSING ON FUNCTIONALITY

STEP 4



ADDING FINAL TOUCHES



Laying the Foundation

Data Insights into Customers

If you want to *really* connect with customers, you must first understand them. Surveys, contact center metrics, and direct agent feedback can help you gather as much information about your customers as possible, from audience demographics to perceptions about your brand.

Then, ask yourself: Does the data point to any inconsistencies between how customers perceive my brand and how our brand perceives itself?

If you believe you're delivering 5-star service, yet all you're receiving are 3-star reviews, there's clearly a mismatch.

According to Havas Media Group, only 47% of Americans trust brands and 66% want to have more meaningful brand experiences.

This common perception problem, called Self Bias, could explain why consumer brand trust is at an all-time low, even as brands see themselves as more trustworthy.

Authentic connections only happen when business actions align with business messaging.

If you promise your customers fast, reliable support, but your Average Handle Time is long and Issue Resolution scores are low, then clearly, you're not delivering on that promise.

Data is the only concrete way to determine if that alignment has happened.

If your desired results do not match your actual ones, this likely points to a crack in your CX foundation. Data analysis can help you spot where the friction is happening in your customer journey, so you can repair it.

Journey Mapping

Journey mapping is another way to build a solid CX foundation.

Planning Your Authentic Customer Journey

Once you know what your customers expect, it becomes easier to plan how you will deliver that authentic on-brand experience. In other words, consider:

- How many rooms (channels) will you need and what kind? Voice? Email? Social?
- What will be the “flow” of the floor plan? What’s the path from discovery to purchase?
- What stairs & hallways (consumer touchpoints) will connect each stage of the journey?
- How much will be automated versus human powered?

Journey mapping can be very helpful because it allows you to visually “map out” a diagram of your customer journey. That way, you can ensure that every stage is authentic to your culture, your messaging, and your brand personality.

Mapping allows you to step into your customers’ shoes, to see your brand through their eyes.

If you haven’t journey mapped, or you haven’t done it recently, now’s the time to start. By revisiting your map every year, you can optimize the efficiency of your workflows, identify common pain points, or determine the best times to position sales offers. You can also identify the moments that really matter to your customers – the ones with emotional load.

Because 70% of customers’ purchases are driven by emotion, not rationality.

Deliver the right message, at the right time, and you could win yourself a lifetime customer.



Building the Frame

After laying a solid foundation, it's time to put plans into action.

Building Your CX Framework

This is a critical step. Execution counts as much as design if you're going to build lasting relationships with your customers. You may not want to go it alone, especially if you want to focus your efforts on R&D, your core operations, or growth plans.

How to Find Authentic CX Partnerships

Like a renovation project, the contractor you choose makes all the difference. An outsourcing partner will be the architect, and ultimately, the builder of your CX operations. From capacity planning to ramp strategies, talent acquisition to resource allocation, they will build the framework, and they'll also be accountable for results.

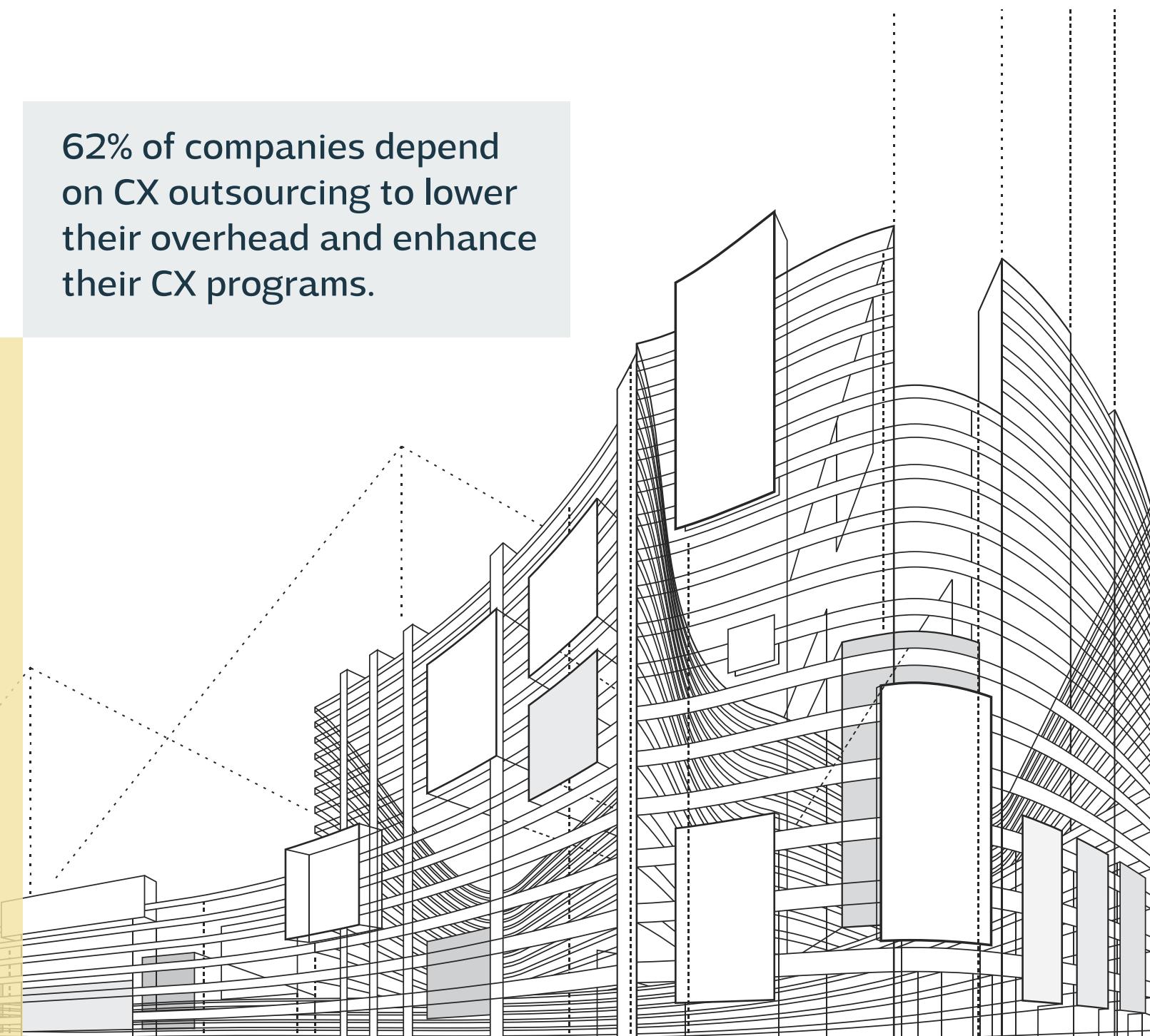
You may wonder, can an outsourcer authentically represent my brand? In fact,

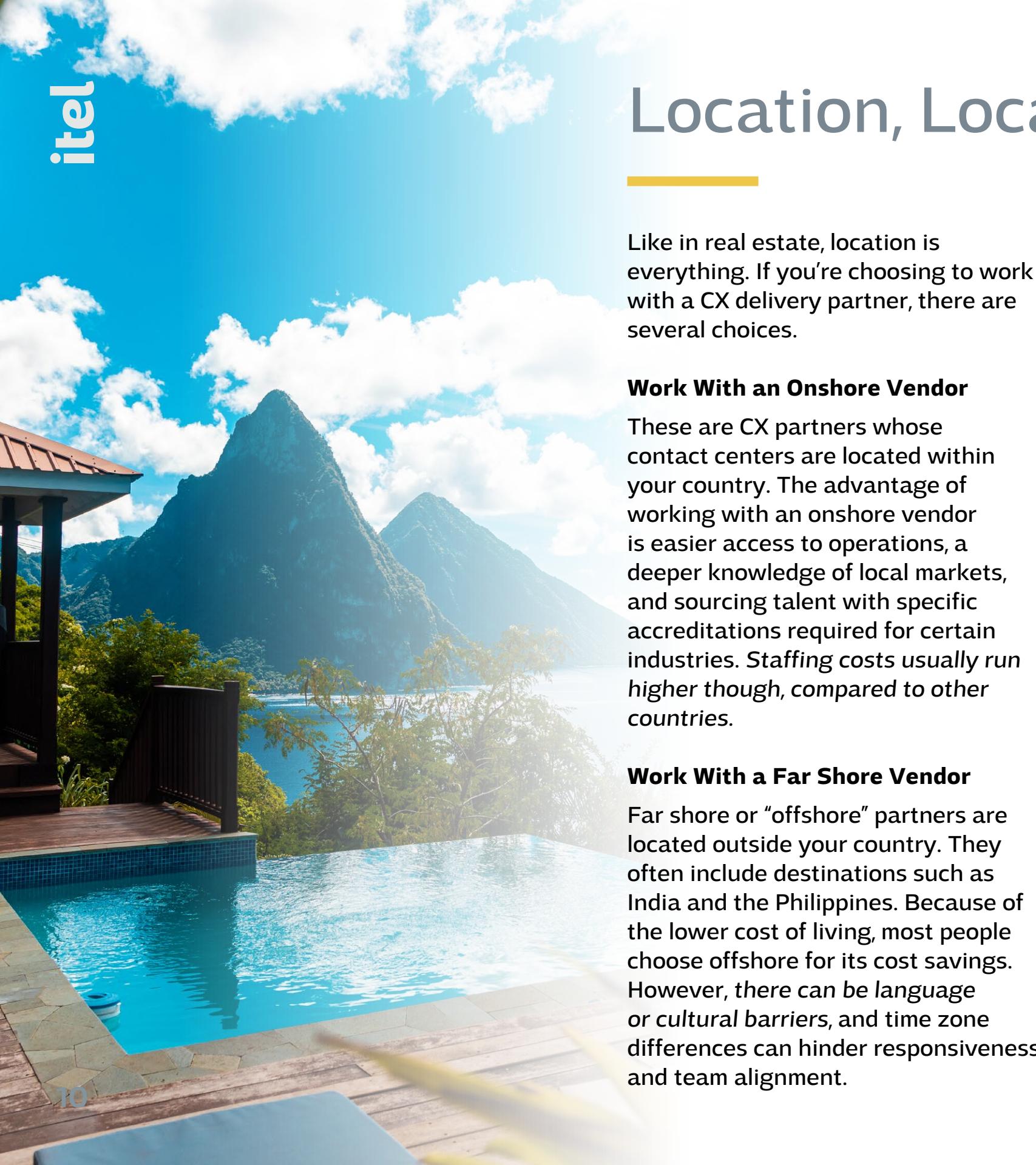
outsourcers can be great allies in developing a genuinely on-brand experience.

True CX partners will focus on building an actual rapport with your customers, instead of just "answering calls". If you want to gauge their abilities, look for the following traits:

- Do they take time to really understand your business, your culture, and your customers?
- Do they understand what "success" looks like to you and how to effectively measure it?
- Do they confront challenges proactively instead of reactively?
- Are they continually investing in training, productivity tools, and talent development?

62% of companies depend on CX outsourcing to lower their overhead and enhance their CX programs.





Location, Location, Location

Like in real estate, location is everything. If you're choosing to work with a CX delivery partner, there are several choices.

Work With an Onshore Vendor

These are CX partners whose contact centers are located within your country. The advantage of working with an onshore vendor is easier access to operations, a deeper knowledge of local markets, and sourcing talent with specific accreditations required for certain industries. Staffing costs usually run higher though, compared to other countries.

Work With a Far Shore Vendor

Far shore or "offshore" partners are located outside your country. They often include destinations such as India and the Philippines. Because of the lower cost of living, most people choose offshore for its cost savings. However, there can be language or cultural barriers, and time zone differences can hinder responsiveness and team alignment.

Work With a Nearshore Vendor

Nearshore partners are usually located in bordering countries, near enough to U.S. and U.K. head offices to share similar time zones and cultural values, yet more affordable than onshore vendors. Here, you can often access wide talent pools of native English speakers with desirable skills. With shorter flight times, onsite visits are also easier.

If Authentic CX is your aim, you'll need to ensure that your delivery location has familiarity and affinity with your brand and target markets.

Latin America & the Caribbean have really gained recognition as regions that offer "the best of both worlds", giving incredible value while delivering high quality BPO services and cultural alignment. Explore some destinations...



JAMAICA



HONDURAS



SAINT LUCIA



BELIZE



GUYANA

Focusing on Functionality

In architecture, design is one thing, functionality is another.

Having a great CX strategy, without the means to make it come to life, is like having a stunning house where all the interior fixtures are broken.

How well your CX “house” functions is directly tied to employee experience (EX). A disengaged, dissatisfied employee cannot give that exceptional on-brand experience. If they try to “fake it”, it will feel false or forced (and customers will know the difference).

Only an engaged employee can deliver Authentic CX, because they’ll be truly excited to represent your brand. They’ll do anything within their means to help customers and deliver outstanding service. That passion will also drive organic brand advocacy.

Engaged frontline agents can become your most driven brand ambassadors. They’ll be more eager to solve customer problems quickly and efficiently, and they’ll be more likely to position your products and services in the best light.

In fact, studies have shown that for every \$12 invested per hour in employee experience, companies gain an extra \$18 per hour in profit – a return of 150%!

That’s because organizations with engaged workforces are generally **21% more productive**, and **22% more profitable**. That’s what we call the EX- CX factor.



Caution: 1 in 3 customers will leave a brand, even those they love, after just one bad experience.

Authentic EX = Authentic CX

Ultimately, the aim is to deliver a customer experience that is unique to your brand and true to your values. For that, agents need to really live the brand. How is that done?

Building Authenticity into Your Employee Journey

Sourcing talent. Draft a persona of your “ideal” contact center candidate. Then use hiring software or behavioral assessments to gauge people’s attitudes and interests. For instance, say you’re hiring a tech support role for a gaming company. Who knows players better, or their concerns, than other avid gamers?

Share the brand. Onboarding shouldn’t just involve learning systems, scripts, or compliance. Trainees should know why they’re selling the brand- its vision, guidelines, and messaging. Share its origin story or case studies. Get people excited to represent it. For instance, we like to

customize our workspaces with brand specific wall art, so you feel the brand once you step in.

Create space for agents to “own” the brand. Employees who feel a sense of ownership for a brand’s success will naturally deliver authentic, on-brand experiences. Create a space where agents can ask questions, offer solutions, and celebrate their successes or share best practices with other agents and supervisors.

Find Connecting Moments

Also, it’s important to train agents to find those “connecting moments” in every customer interaction. It may be small personal touches, like asking people about their day, using a customer’s first name, or simply reiterating people’s concerns, to show you’re listening. Anything to make the interaction feel less transactional and more relationship driven.





Adding Final Touches

No architectural design would be complete without those extra finishing touches that add durability and reliability.

Finding the Right Balance Between People and Tech

From performance management systems to cybersecurity, the tools, and technologies you choose will act as the “glue” that holds your CX operations together.

Two-thirds of business leaders are already investing in automation and AI technologies, hoping that it will help manage costs and drive new efficiencies in their CX operations.

But if an AI bot or self-service feature gives a bad response, unsatisfactory results, or feels robotic, could it do more harm than good?

AI can gather and analyze historical data, spotting patterns and consumer trends much faster. It can even give prompts and recommendations that help to enhance human-to-human interactions.

As a CX company, we already use AI to enhance our agent’s performance, with tools like 100% call auditing and customer sentiment analysis.

However, only human beings can build those genuine human-to-human connections.

The critical thing is to map out what parts of the CX journey could benefit from AI or automation. What workflows could be improved? What simple inquiries could be automated, so agents are reserved for high-value tasks?

But be mindful of not placing efficiency *before* experience. After all, customers like fast service but they also want meaningful interactions with brands.

You might be surprised to hear that technology is not at odds with maintaining brand integrity. It’s all about finding the optimal balance between people & tech.

Maintaining Consistency & Quality Over Time

So, you've created a strong foundation, focused on internal functionality, and added tools that enhance the quality and authenticity of your CX. But that shouldn't be the end...

Keeping Authenticity on Track
Brand authenticity isn't a one-and-done thing. It's easy for messages to get diluted over time, or for complacency to creep in. To maintain consistency and quality across every channel, organizations will need to adopt a culture that values continuous learning and improvement.

However, according to recent surveys, only a third of organizations offer regular retraining of frontline employees and less than a fifth carry out tailored 1:1 coaching.

Regular performance monitoring and quality coaching need to go together with opportunities for ongoing

learning. After all, identifying an issue with performance is one thing. Then you need to resolve it by offering targeted, individualized feedback and retraining if necessary. We call that finding opportunities for improvement.

Yet over 30% of companies struggle to find streamlined systems that can deliver that kind of effective feedback.

That's why we only work with trusted tools that allow us to provide real-time interaction with agents, individualized learning, and performance visibility all in one system. This allows us to coach during a call, not after and gives supervisors better data insights, so they can tailor their feedback to each agent's goals.



CLICK HERE

To read our Case Study about itel's cutting-edge performance management system

Customer and business needs are ever evolving, and so should your journey towards Authentic CX.

Conclusion

In 2024, authenticity will be everything. It's how businesses today can differentiate themselves in markets saturated with over polished influencers, obvious advertising, and cliché messages.

But, it doesn't take a herculean effort to build lasting connections and strong relationships with your customers. You can start right now, by following our 4-step blueprint. All you need is a clear vision of your brand and its messaging, and the courage to represent your true self.

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More About itel

Itel is an award-winning customer experience partner that specializes in nearshore and onshore CX delivery in service locations across the Caribbean, Latin America, and the U.S. Through a combination of voice and non-voice solutions, strategic planning, and CX innovation, we help clients build brand authentic experiences and long-term relationships with their customers, all delivered through a flexible, geo-diverse delivery model that can evolve with your business.

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