

work[^] different™ 2021

Design the experiences people want next

Design experiences for everyone.
Wherever and whoever they are.



Table of Contents

3	<i>Introduction</i>
8	<i>Design your people's experiences today</i>
15	<i>What will employees expect from their digital workplace experience?</i>
23	<i>Design the research and insight experiences of the future</i>
29	<i>Design and improve experiences at every touchpoint</i>
36	<i>Empower your frontline to level up the customer care experience</i>
42	<i>Set up for success by building strong, lasting customer relationships</i>



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brands on the actions they're
taking to move forward.**

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Introduction



We need to listen to every voice, understand what people are saying, and create a culture of action where every interaction is an opportunity to deliver the experiences people need.”

Zig Serafin
CEO, Qualtrics

The past 12 months have changed everything about the way we work, the way we buy, and the way we interact with the brands. As we look forward to what comes next, it's clear we're not going back.

18 months of working differently will do that.

We learned to work in new environments, buy through new channels, and engage with the world around us in new ways. Employees are putting more demands on employers, whether for new, flexible working arrangements or an overdue focus on inclusion and belonging in the workplace. And for consumers, the digital-first experiences that were once a differentiator are now simply table stakes.

Expectations have grown

For all those employees who felt liberated by being able to work from anywhere and have started migrating out of cities, there are those who yearn for work as we knew it in 2019. And for every customer that's vowed never to go shopping in store again, there is another who just wants to get back out on Main Street.

In 2020 we all learned what we valued most, how much change we could take, and found our own 'normal'. Now, as the world begins to open up and we look to the future, organizations are faced with a historic challenge: how do you continue to innovate, and to meet the expectations of your customers and employees, when everything is highly personalized?

How can we move forward?

How can a people leader foster a sense of belonging in a team that's two thirds remote?

With consumer preferences changing, how do retailers get the balance right between investing in their brick and mortar portfolio and their tech stack?

And how do restaurants evolve to make eating out an experience again when so many have enjoyed a year of home delivery and curated in-home culinary experiences?

These are the types of questions facing every organization as we move forward.

What will the future look like?

The answer will be different for everyone, but the path to getting them is the same.

We need to ask the right questions, listen harder, understand better, and take action at every level to design the experiences people want next.

That's experience management, and we've seen the best organizations perfecting it over the past year.

By asking the right questions, and understanding how customers' and employees' expectations changed, they were able to act quickly, adapting products, services and experiences to meet people where they were.

Sometimes, that meant building entirely new experiences. Other times, it meant updating an existing one.

As we move forward, the experience management (XM) practices learned during the pandemic need to become part of every organization's culture. Designing the experiences people want next, and updating existing experiences to remain relevant require the entire organization to work differently.

Hear every voice

We need to listen to every voice, understand what people are saying, and create a culture of action where every interaction – whether it's customers, employees, or any other stakeholder – is an opportunity to deliver the experiences they need.

Today, more than 13,500 organizations around the world are using XM to transform the way they work. They're breaking down data silos, and centralizing their ability to capture experience data, understand it, and take action.

It opened up new opportunities for innovation as they design the experiences people want next, and enabled them to move quickly to respond to changing needs both from their customer and their employees.

And as we move forward, it's providing them with the uncommon ability to deliver hyper-personalized experiences at every touchpoint to turn customers into fans, employees into ambassadors, products into obsessions, and brands into religions.



Zig Serafin
CEO, Qualtrics

FIND OUT WHAT YOUR PEOPLE REALLY WANT

We spoke to 4,000 employees about going back into the office, what they expect from their organizations, and how they're finding meaning and motivation.

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of work study 2021



SECTION 1

Design your people's experiences today

Design your people's experiences today



Employees are twice as likely to say their personal well-being has improved since the pandemic began, than to say it has declined."

The future of work
study 2021

What will your people want next?

The employee of the future will want and expect to have consumer-grade work experiences. As customers' expectations rise, so do their expectations of their employers. They'll expect the same kind of service in their place of work. They want to be able to choose the benefits that work best for their lifestyles. And they want to be listened to like consumers are, especially at moments that are important to them.

Work-life balance + well-being

Unsurprisingly, one of the biggest shifts has been the expectation of increased flexibility.

Many people were put into very different work environments and they realized firsthand what they could do, what worked for them, and what didn't work for them. For many, those experiences will make it unthinkable to simply go back to the way work was before the pandemic.



Among workers considering a new role, 80% said that the ability to live remotely was important to them.

*The future of work
study 2021*

Great managers

We know from our [global employee experience study](#) of more than 11,800 people that managers have a huge role to play in employee engagement, well-being, belonging, and resilience. Your people will expect their managers to be supportive and effective. And above all, listen and act on their feedback.

And great managers aren't just crucial for when someone is in post, they're pivotal to getting the right candidates in the door to begin with.



Our research shows that job candidates place more importance on the social aspects of work when choosing a job. In fact, we found that the immediate manager was the most influential factor in candidate decision making. This suggests that even before people become employees, they place a high degree of importance on their future relationship with their immediate manager.”



Benjamin Granger, Ph.D.

XMP, Senior Principal, Qualtrics XM Institute

Diversity and inclusion

We've known for a while that being able to attract and retain talented people, is heavily tied to creating a diverse working environment. In fact, according to a [Zip Recruiter](#) study, 86% of job seekers say how diversity at an organization is an important factor when looking for a job.

This will only become more important to future employee expectations of their ideal work environment. It's also becoming clearer to people that to solve a variety of problems, you need different ways of looking at solutions – not just the same people, with the same education, from the same cultures, and the same backgrounds.



In the wake of a pandemic, calls for racial justice, and unprecedented change, it's even more important for your people to feel they have the space to be their authentic selves. And not only that, but what they're a part of is having a positive impact on the world. It makes sense that these ideals are becoming integral to the employee experience."



Lindsay Johnson Ph.D
XM Scientist, Qualtrics

Bravery and belonging

Belonging is the top driver of engagement in 2021. Your people will expect to feel like they have a sense of belonging in their organization where they feel heard, respected, valued, and able to make meaningful contributions.



Diversity is inviting you to the dance. Inclusion says, “Come on the dance floor!” And belonging says, “What kind of music do you like? We want to play it because we care about you.”



Melissa Thomas-Hunt

Global Head of Diversity & Belonging at Airbnb

But as important as belonging is and will stay, your people will also expect to be empowered to act bravely. They'll expect their organizations to stand by them and support them and give them a voice. This will be particularly important for groups who traditionally haven't felt heard or seen.

What is belonging?

Like food and shelter, belonging is a basic human need. It represents a connection with people or places. Feeling like you can be your unique and authentic self at work – and also connected to those around you – fulfills a core need to form and maintain strong, stable interpersonal relationships with others.

Pride in their organization

Alongside belonging, there's a very real need for purpose. The employee of the future, and arguably of today, isn't just satisfied with a paycheck and healthcare. They'll expect their organization to be giving back. They'll want to feel proud of where they work, as it's a strong part of their identity. Especially for retention and engagement.

What actions can you take now?

- 01 Talk to your customer experience colleagues** There's a lot you can learn from them about creating customer-grade experiences. This is a huge opportunity to upgrade the way that you show up for your employees.
- 02 Listen to your people but let them drive the conversation** We can't anticipate everything. And so it's an ideal time to use more open-ended questioning, and always-on, and passive listening.
- 03 Leverage technology to make the workplace more human** Technology isn't trying to take over the work or the job of human beings. It's trying to automate the things we shouldn't have been doing in the first place so that we can mentor each other and provide the social support that leads to a sense of belonging.

Find out how other organizations such as Cornell University, New York Presbyterian, and MercadoLibre, are creating better experiences for their employees.

WATCH NOW



Cornell University



mercado
libre



NewYork-Presbyterian
The University Hospital of Columbia and Cornell

SECTION 2

What will employees expect from their digital workplace experience?

What will employees expect from their digital workplace experience?

The digital workplace of the future will be about creating experiences that make your people feel connected. There will be far more emphasis on designing for emotion, not just practicality.

Workplace technology will need to ensure every employee, wherever they're working, feels safe, productive, engaged, and included. This means using employee feedback to design the experiences they'll need, not just the experiences leaders think they need.

The technology enablement gap

90% of CIOs think their people are tech enabled, compared to just 53% of employees ¹

¹<https://www.pwc.com/us/en/services/consulting/library/consumer-intelligence-series/tech-at-work.html>

A work experience that suits their lifestyle

Employees have been able to prove to themselves and their employers that they can be as effective at home, as they are at work. The future of the workplace is highly personalized to individuals.

They'll expect to choose how they interact with workplace technology, as well as their organizations overall. They'll want a work experience that fits around their lifestyle, not the other way around. This includes well-being initiatives and work-life balance.



Any kind of gap that causes an employee to feel there is something not optimized for them to do their best work signals that they work for an old-fashioned and outdated organization. The experience really matters."



Brad Anderson

Head of Product and Services, Qualtrics

Continual listening

Employees will expect their leaders to listen and act on their feedback. This means IT leaders need to look holistically at their technology landscape and understand, in addition to the transactional listening that they have in place, how do I do better personalized listening?

It's critical that you ensure your people feel good about the relationship they have with their digital workplace and IT, and that the tools and technology you're providing are meeting their expectations.



IT leaders no longer have the roadblocks that they would have faced before Covid-19. They're at the table and have a clean slate to decide how best to interact with and understand employees. Now is the time to redesign these experiences. What's the way that best serves our overall purpose and helps drive the business objectives?"

Matthew Burgon

Employee Experience Solution Strategy, Qualtrics

Feeling included no matter where they are

For those workplaces that decide to still offer physical workplace locations, there is likely to be a hybrid mix of teams – with some in office spaces and others working remotely. Your people will expect to have an equivalent experience to the employees that are on site. IT leaders and workspace leaders will need to design an experience that flexes with the needs of the individual and their circumstances.



Tech leaders have a huge opportunity to partner with HR and the rest of the C-suite on these initiatives to drive business outcomes like employee resilience, productivity, and the top and bottom line.”



Brad Anderson

Head of Product and Services, Qualtrics

Better personalized listening

IT and workplace leaders should look to the channels employees are already working in – and with the end-users audiences that matter. This is about IT getting the “complete picture” via experience data – and combining traditional O-Data (operational metrics) most often associated with IT/tech experiences like usage, downtime, SLAs, etc, with X-Data (experience data) such as how teams feel about their digital workspace/tech experience and how to design and improve those experiences.



Technology leaders need systems in place that provide continuous, updated views of what their most important constituents are thinking, feeling and saying about the digital workspace experience. And systems that enable quick and precise action when any gaps are detected – to keep your talent engaged and thriving.”



Brad Anderson

Head of Product and Services, Qualtrics

People-centred technology

People-centered digital workspace experiences will be a differentiator in a post-COVID world. Employee tech will no longer be about saving time and increasing efficiency for the organization. Instead IT leaders will just focus on saving time and increasing efficiency for the employee, as well as how outcomes such as:

- + Higher job satisfaction/well-being
- + Better work quality
- + Employee attraction/retention
- + Improved connectivity/collaboration
- + Increased feelings of belonging

What actions can you take now?

- 01 Start with a clean slate** Now is an opportunity for IT leaders to reimagine the processes and procedures that didn't work before. Design new ways of working that don't have to be perfect right now, but can be steadily improved upon.
- 02 Reassess your talent needs** Whether that's hiring new people, realigning people, or developing existing resources so that they have the skillset to understand the experience mindset.
- 03 Understand your end-users 100%** Gather as much X-Data as possible to unlock the complete picture to understanding the digital workspace experience of your employees – without it, you're flying blind.

**Help your people to succeed
with IT experience management**

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SECTION 3

Design the research and insight experiences of the future

Design the research and insight experiences of the future



Solutions are always dependent on the right diagnosis of the problem.”

Mary George Opperman
VP & CHRO, Cornell University

For market researchers, 2020 was catastrophic yet transformative, demanding rapid change and adaptation in order to survive and thrive. As we move from crisis response to future planning, what does the future of market research look like?

Research is in the middle of a new phase where the skills we've used before (like being able to translate marketing issues into research design) need to be paired with powerful technology, alongside newly-learned 'hard skills' like data science and 'soft skills' like storytelling.

And although the insights are important, it's how they can be translated into action at scale that will be critical to the future success of an organization.



When we think about the work of Insights professionals, a lot of it is asking people what they want, but we have a lot more tools we can use. Such as strategic foresight training.

So we've been asking what does it look like when we see different trends overlapping? What does that actually mean for our business? What does it mean for our future products?”

Steve Wengrovitz
Head of Research, UberEats

The right tech will be critical

Investment in technology is a given, but it has to be value-proven tech. Market researchers will be looking to technology to help them keep pace with demand as the volume and variety of market research data will only keep growing.

Now and in the future, technology plays an important role in bringing data from disparate sources together, and helping market researchers to collate, analyze and communicate their findings. It's also a part of the everyday fabric of collaborative research, with online panels supplying data and remote working critically dependent on functions like IM and video calls.



The faster, the better

Our [2021 Market Research Global Trends](#) found that speed was near the top of most research leaders' priority lists. They require insights faster, because with the rulebook torn up, business leaders need that data-backed knowledge to help them build new strategies and make decisions.

To do that, organizations need to put market research at the very heart of their operations, which will sit at the heart of business.



Research is coming to the forefront as a strategic leading indicator for organizations. They need to know what to do next, and quickly. Being able to understand customers and the market alike, as well as having 'always on' access to information to help design new experiences means that researchers are increasingly looking to develop these capabilities in house."



Lisa Khatri
DesignXM Solution Strategist

The importance of humanity

While there's a widespread appreciation for market research technology, it won't replace human abilities any time soon. We're going to see a blended approach where technology, and in particular automation, takes on some of the heavy lifting and enables data to be processed and analyzed at scale.

Human intelligence and perception will work hand-in-hand with those tools.

Human creativity will be needed to apply lateral thinking – the ability to pivot and reframe ideas and to challenge assumptions – and storytelling to communicate ideas in a compelling way.



We're seeing more people wanting a highly personalized experience, but at the same time they don't want to see things that they already know about. We're actively trying to solve the problem of giving people relevant content, but also not pigeon-holing them."

Kitty Xu, Ph.D.

UX Research Lead, Pinterest

Integration and a single, central platform

Rather than working in silos, research will become more deeply connected to other areas of the business, reflecting a more holistic approach. We're also seeing strong demand for integrated market research, with tools and systems that plug directly into various sources of data rather than requiring information to be imported or exported.

What actions can you take now?

- 01 Adapt** The organizations that can adapt and do it at speed will thrive.
- 02 Demonstrate value** Market research has traditionally been seen as a cost center – it's critical to establish market research as creating value for the organization.
- 03 Get the tech to work for you** The technology should do the legwork, freeing you up to apply the human element and inform organizational strategy.

**Learn more about the future of market research.
Download our 2021 market research global trends.**

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SECTION 4

Design and improve experiences at every touchpoint

Design and improve experiences at every touchpoint

Start designing and improving brand experiences at every touchpoint

As brands navigate 2021 and beyond, reputation will be more important than ever. What brands say and do, matters – so it's vital they anticipate customer needs against a backdrop of societal changes and find ways to meet them across every channel.

Continuously listen to your prospects and customers

Spend time in your competitive environment and listen to your audience in any way they can communicate. As markets continue to evolve quickly, keeping a pulse on upcoming trends, opportunities and threats will be critical to staying relevant in the mind of consumers. Try different methods of listening everywhere, and use analytics software to turn that data into real-world action.



There's a huge difference between doing something and not doing something. Either solve that problem no matter how small it might be, or find another way to add value."



Luke Williams
Distinguished Principal, XM Institute

Think journeys, not transactions

Start by asking 'what is the customer trying to accomplish, and why?'. Then design a journey map that focuses on these needs, to deliver the right experiences even before they interact with your brand. Then design experiences online and in-store that match those expectations so when they do interact with you, you're ready.

Friction and pain drives negative word of mouth, so be aware and seek to address the parts of the journey that shouldn't be broken. Customers should be able to easily get what they want, so make it as frictionless as possible, across every channel.



Give your customers choice

Brands have to fit into people's lives, not the other way around, so let customers interact with your brand in ways that suits them. Whether it's directly or passively, this freedom of choice is only possible if your brand is accessible online as well as offline.

But make sure the experience is consistent across every channel. Whether it's in-store, online or alternative customer care channels, set expectations and communicate them clearly to your customers. That way they know what will happen when they interact with that channel and you'll limit any uncertainty and pain that may come with it. Taking this proactive approach will help you ensure the actual experience and expectations are closely aligned.



Think of your brand as an enabler, or a venue for manifesting one's latent needs."



Franck Sarrazit, Ph.D.
Senior XM Scientist, Qualtrics

Go above and beyond to create extra value

Customer expectations will only continue to rise, and no matter how extreme those expectations are, companies will figure out ways to meet them. But brands can truly differentiate themselves by finding ways to exceed those expectations.

Map a predictable customer journey, understand the underlying need behind the expectation, then figure out how to meet that underlying need and more. Take this opportunity to be proactive and create value for the customer that gives them reason to return.



*As customer aspirations become familiar,
the ceiling becomes the floor.”*



Luke Williams
Distinguished Principal, XM Institute

Stop adhering to your own benchmarks

Markets are competitive so stop adhering to your own benchmarks and find ways to differentiate your brand. Focus on the ecosystem of category companies that deliver on customer needs, and choose where and how to compete. Then analyze your insights in that competitive context, for example NPS means nothing on its own but it gets really interesting when you compare it against other category companies. How do you fare? Where do you need to improve? Keep the big picture in mind, it will give you really valuable insight into how you're performing.



What actions can you take now?

- 01** Keep a continuous pulse on your brand and customer needs
- 02** Create a holistic view of your brand - including employees and customers
- 03** Set a goal and build a culture of action so that everything you do has that goal in mind

Find out how bravery is essential to every brand as we enter a new era in 2021, where organizations aren't just reacting to what consumers want now, but designing the experiences they want next.

[**DOWNLOAD NOW**](#)

SECTION 5

Empower your frontline to level up the customer care experience

Empower your frontline to level up the customer care experience



The contact center is the human face of your brand promise."

Léonie Brown
XM Scientist

Customers expect to be able to interact with brands where they want, and when they want. They want highly personal experiences, and their problems to be solved as quickly and easily as possible. And frontline agents are responsible for making this possible. They are the last line of defence and key to rescuing unhappy customers – and yet despite their influence, agents are not always viewed as indispensable. Improving customer loyalty, engaging your frontline and delivering consistently high levels of customer service begins by recognizing the true value your frontline agents provide.

Judge agents on what they can control

If your metrics don't encapsulate the value your agents provide, then change them. Focus on what your agents can control and give them the freedom to solve customer problems. Balance a longer resolution time with greater ROI. Solving problems might take longer but you can be sure your agents are actually adding value to the customer relationship and ultimately making a real difference to your organization.

Ditch the script and learn from your customers

Agents who are empowered and have the training to succeed don't always need to be given a script. Instead give them a vision for the phases of the customer journey, touchpoints to focus on and methods for closing key milestones cohesively. This will give agents the power to dictate where the conversation goes by listening and learning from the customer as they're servicing them. It creates a more personal, authentic experience and gives agents the autonomy they want because they aren't required to follow a set of predetermined actions.

Optimize your digital support

Customers want to solve their query as quickly as possible, and often digital self-serve channels are the best way to do that. Customers are satisfied, whilst keeping the cost to serve low. At the same time, agents are set up for success because they're free to focus on priority issues.



The goal is to be so good that customer care is the primary source of differentiation vs the competition."



Luke Williams
Distinguished Principal, XM Institute

Turn managers into coaches

The view that there is little career path as a customer service agent is one that should be actively challenged. In fact, from understanding customer needs to uncovering product issues, or even knowing how to improve a customer's day, they are one of the single most important components of a successful business. Incorporate customer and agent feedback and create a coaching plan that makes agents more engaged, empowered, and teams more effective. Your agents are how you improve experiences at scale, and your managers are the guiding light who should facilitate this.



Differentiate yourself from competitors

What does the future of customer care look like? Simple. To be so good that customer care becomes a primary source of differentiation between you and the competition. Whilst there are metrics to track everyday success – how much you've grown customer lifetime value or lowered the cost to serve – this doesn't necessarily get the whole organization rowing in the same direction. Create a vision that will, and you'll set higher standards and compete in ways that you want to, rather than have to.



78%

For 78% of customers, a single contact center interaction can permanently change how they feel about a company

What actions can you take now?

- 01** Fix your metrics system and ensure it is consistent with the value your agents generate
- 02** Reimagine the employee that you currently hire versus the way you want to handle problems in the future. Hire the skills for the level of care you want to provide
- 03** Be adventurous - experimentation is one of the fastest ways to generate new ideas and innovate

Find out how to improve agent effectiveness, to increase retention and improve customer satisfaction.

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SECTION 6

Set up for success by building strong, lasting customer relationships

Set up for success by building strong, lasting customer relationships

Accelerated digital transformation and a society glued to their devices has meant that customers are no more than a click away from learning about new products, services and brands – and shopping elsewhere. As a result, brands are seeing how fragile loyalty can be if their behavior and actions don't match customer expectations. The key to building long term loyalty is to create an emotional connection with customers. Take steps to uncover and fix broken experiences across every channel, and make the experience valuable to the customer. Companies that consistently deliver poor experiences and don't take this proactive approach will struggle to build loyalty moving forward.

Create personalized, one-to-one experiences

Whereas before personalization meant targeted offers, customers now want it across the entire experience. If businesses are to do this successfully they need to focus on providing one-to-one experiences at a mass scale, using data and automation to create this connection efficiently. Understand customer wants, needs and what they expect from you, and look for key opportunities to improve every experience. Personalized experiences create more engaged customers and increase revenue, including a [10-15% boost](#) in sales-conversion.

Make the experience as easy as possible

The public health crisis ramped up digital transformation across the board and if your business isn't accessible on the channels your customers use, you're at a huge disadvantage to your competitors who are. Customers want to be able to interact with you where they want, when they want; and yet brands are failing to meet this expectation. You can change that by breaking down organizational silos, unifying data and using it to design experiences that your customers want.

A large, bold, blue graphic of the number '78%' is positioned on the left side of the slide. A thin vertical blue line is to its left, extending from the top of the percentage down to the source text.

of customers shop across multiple channels and devices and nearly all expect consistent omnichannel experiences; and yet only 13% of customers say brands are meeting this expectation

Source: [Chainstorage.com](https://chainstorage.com)

Give customers every opportunity to provide feedback

Meet your customers where they are and collect real-time feedback in the moments that matter in the relationship (anniversary, pre-renewal etc). Rather than waiting for insights from a static, point in time survey, this constant customer pulse allows brands to proactively fix problems and improve the experience quickly.

Create an end to end view of the customer journey

Align cross-functional stakeholders on a common view of the customer and their journey and create a single vision around what you want to achieve. With no common view of what the journey looks like, you can't have a common goal. With no common goal, brands are resigned to working in silos making retaining customers even harder.

**25%**

of organizations will integrate marketing, sales and customer experience into a single function by 2023

[Source: Gartner](#)

Deliver on your brand promise across every channel

Emotional connection - where customers feel important and valued - is what is going to drive loyalty moving forward. As customers look to brands to lead on wider social issues and connect on a deeper level, what a brand says and does matters more than ever. Use your brand values as a compass to ensure that connection with the customer is natural and authentic.

**83%**

of customers suggest that they're more likely to purchase from a brand that they have an emotional connection with

[Source: Newsday](#)

What actions can you take now?

- 01** Continuously collect feedback across the customer journey
- 02** Understand feedback by journeys, segments (i.e. VIP customers, loyalty customers, new customers) and channels (web, app, instore, support)
- 03** Embed all of this X+O data into dynamic customer profiles and empower you to deliver more personalized experiences

Find out how to improve customer loyalty, grow revenue, and measure the success of your actions with this step-by-step guide.

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WANT MORE EXPERT INSIGHTS?

Get how-to sessions from iconic brands on the actions they're taking to move forward.

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