WORK IN UNISON WITH YOUR OUTSOURCING PROVIDER

Outsourcing is not just about removing a process, task or service from your business, it is more about aligning brand values with your provider

By Georgina Smith

I f you outsource any part of your business, whatever the reason, you are entrusting your brand, and its values, with it.

Outsourcing has typically been used to cut costs and gain efficiency, however the expectation should go above and beyond these factors. Through accurate selection, when choosing your supplier, you can reinforce your brand through a synergy and reach shared objectives.

A committed outsourcer will work with you to develop your brand, improve processes and create the brand experience your customers expect.

Initial planning

Through the initial stage of outsourcing, it is important to look for a supplier that will work with you to identify the triggers causing a reason to outsource, whether it is due to compliance, infrastructure or capacity requirements. These triggers can be used as a foundation to create an overall understanding and follow the customer journey. This enables the outsourcer to provide continuous improvements, and embed brand values to achieve benefits, not only to the organisation, but also to your customers.

Understanding your customer journey when evaluating an outsourcing opportunity will help to ensure you are not committing the common mistake of creating a structure that is too rigid to support all business requirements, or one which is inflexible to change.

Developing a successful outsourcing project is dependent on selecting a supplier that will go beyond expectations through brand alignment and embedding culture within their business to help you achieve your goals.

During the outsourcing lifecycle, attention should be paid to developing a value-based relationship, structured to address each stage, from proposal to contract and implementation.

Understanding each touch point, as well as workflows between relevant departments within the client's organisation, is pivotal to developing a strategy to help reach intended outcomes for any outsourcing project. To ensure smooth processes, it is essential to use an outsourcer with effective methodologies to efficiently control the project amongst the relevant departments using clear communication.

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Evidence that the outsourcer is using relevant technologies is important. However, to ensure innovation and a competitive edge, it is essential that the supplier demonstrates a programme of continuous investments in technology to cater for evolving client needs.

The most successful and sustaining outsourcing relationships are built around the concept of value exchange, sharing knowledge, open communication, building trust and reconciling differences between organisational cultures and operating procedures.

For the client to understand an outsourcer's commitment to a project, the supplier can show willingness from the offset through seconding staff to the client's organisation. This can support learning and training prior to the outsourcing going live, and is evidence of the commitment to the project.

Understanding is key

The client should look for an outsourcer that understands and believes in its values, in order to build them into their business and deliver brand excellence. To build this culture into the organisation, client involvement through use of branding and mirroring of client KPIs help integrate the outsourcer into the client's business. Likewise, regular presence of the client on the outsourcer's site, spending time with their operational team and delivering steady input about strategic focus can also make a big difference.

There must be a mutual understanding between the servicer and the client in understanding what is to be attained from the project to represent it within the outsourcing services. If your service is heavily built on customer service, then this needs to be maintained through your supplier. For example, if you have excellent customer service

history, but the outsourcing agency lacks the knowledge or authority to deal with the tasks in hand, they could be placing calls on hold and transferring one to the next. You then run the risk of damaging your reputation for customer satisfaction.

When outsourcing any function of your business, it is important to design a structure that takes into account how each individual and their processes affect customer experience. If customer retention is a key measure, then the outsourcer needs to understand what the criteria is for directing the customer back into the business.

Standardised, rigorous agent training should take place in accordance with the client's requirements and brand values

Clear knowledge of each person's level of authority is a significant factor in smoothing processes and should be driven through effective mapping of the customer journey at the start of the project. This can be managed through a good mix of cultural training from reinforcing existing supplier training plans and incorporating training provided directly from the client. Creation of bespoke agent scorecards can also align brand values and deliver positive customer outcomes.

Moving to delivery

Once you have completed the stages of understanding the requirements from all parties and mapping out an effective strategic process to achieve shared goals, the outsourcer can begin to provide a constructive delivery of service.

Standardised, rigorous agent training should take place in accordance with the client's requirements and brand values. Through dedicated training

resources and documented processes, you can ensure there is a consistent and equal level of understanding across the board.

An element of the client delivering training to the supplier needs to be integrated within the plan as the client evolves, for example, business changes, new products, or customer segmentation that need to be addressed by the outsourcer. A combination of the two training approaches will ensure a clear, accurate, and dedicated team can carry out a trusted process on behalf of your organisation.

Effective testing is required to make sure all processes and workflows are up to and fit for purpose. Through working with the client, the outsourcer should demonstrate that they have appropriate controls in place, such as management reporting, speech analytics and performance scorecards. Areas highlighted from this data can be used to identify tactical opportunities for service delivery.

If all these elements are considered, outsourcing can deliver businesses with a great partnership to build on their success and provide greater efficiency. Outsourcing can offer cost-effective access to specialist capabilities and provide flexible and effective strategies.

Delivering a successful outcome requires thorough understanding and a trusting relationship to be able to work together, improving outcomes and providing a rewarding experience for both parties. **CCR**

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AN OUTSOURCER'S CHECKLIST

♦ Understand brand and culture.
♦ Map customer journey in full.
♦ Set project goals.
♦ Create flexible structures.
♦ Encourage risk-reward sharing.
♦ Embed the client within the supplier's business.
♦ Use dedicated training resources with appropriate accreditations.