



Insight

# Journey Mapping: Turn Pain Points into Tipping Points to Drive Customer Engagement

*By Mary Carter and Deanna Peiffer*

## Overview

Many organizations undertake journey mapping as a way to boost customer experience and engagement. Accurately identifying and mapping key interactions, pain points, and moments of truth is critical to understanding the quality of your customers' journey. Effectively implementing solutions that address pain points and improve satisfaction can be especially challenging. Without guidance, companies stall in their efforts to improve customer experience.

This paper offers suggestions to overcome the obstacles that slow progress in improving customer experience and to enable organizations to implement companywide initiatives. With proper mapping, companies can turn indifferent customers into customers who are appreciated, empowered, and engaged.

## Why Journey Map: Consumers Expect More

Today, personalized and highly targeted messaging focuses on perceptions, habits, motivations, and public interest. Consumers expect more from the companies they patronize. They want to be respected, understood, educated, and offered quality products and services that deliver value. They want products and services that are fast, easy, affordable, and delivered by knowledgeable, friendly staff.

Companies founded on the principle of customer centricity meet these expectations every day. They raise the bar for other companies.



**Better Business Results**

Our clients see results through their journey mapping efforts, including:

- Greater customer loyalty and retention
- Better word of mouth, increased referrals, and earned new business
- Improved customer service
- Lower cost to serve customers
- Enhanced coordination and efficiencies across the organization
- More effective communications with customers, leading to more engagement

As market dynamics shift, organizations such as utilities, government agencies, and health insurers are under increasing pressure to become consumer centric. They are struggling to catch up and capture market share. They are learning to analyze, transform, and improve their customers' journey.

Companies that take consumerism to heart and make strides to transform the end-to-end journey can achieve empowered, engaged customers and, ultimately, better business outcomes.

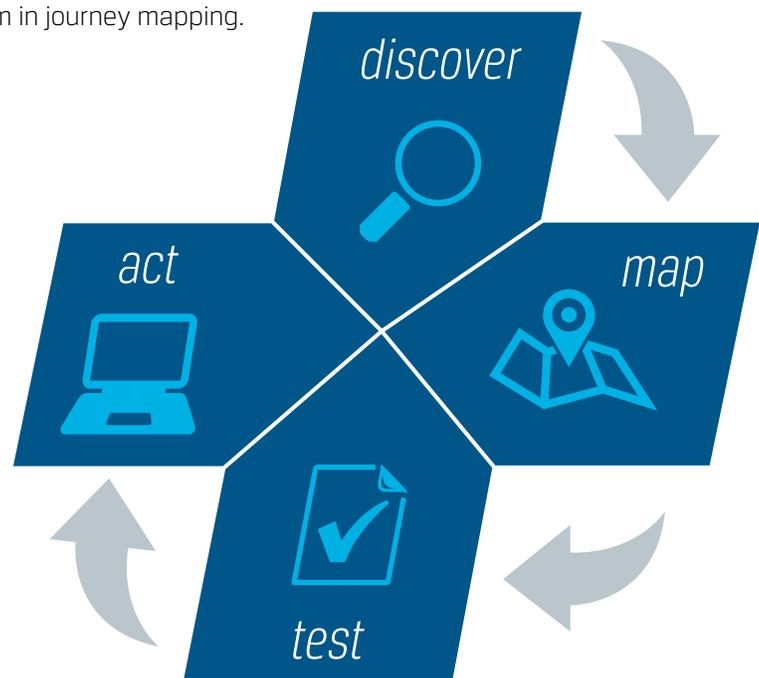
**+TIP**

ICF Journey+ is a proprietary process that improves customer engagement and satisfaction. It enables companies to transform and measurably improve a customer's end-to-end journey. It goes beyond journey mapping to the implementation of action plans. It uses a broad range of capabilities such as business consulting, data collection and analysis, traditional and digital marketing capabilities, user experience, market research, and staff education and training. **Tips are proven need-to-knows when conducting journey mapping.**

**Better Experiences Start Here**

Transformation of a customer's end-to-end journey impacts an entire organization. Breaking down siloes early is an important strategy. So is involving "company cheerleaders" and "customer champions." They are energetic, motivated, and open to making improvements. They collaborate across the organization to problem solve and serve as your customer's "voice."

Engage them in journey mapping.



## HOW WE DO IT: JOURNEY+ DATA ANALYSIS

Many companies already have segmentation data on customers. But for those that do not, we use our Strategic Intelligence Management System (SIMS) to efficiently collect, process, stitch together, and clean the multiple client and non-client datasets required to more accurately define customer segments.

Example: One of our clients uses SIMS to create customer profiles by demographics, lifestyles, and media preferences. The client prioritizes marketing outreach in counties and zip codes that meet or surpass defined thresholds for price competitiveness and service coverage. This analysis enables us to develop "bring it life" representations of actual customers so our client can better "step into its customers' shoes" and identify unmet needs and pain points.

**1: Discover.** Collect and analyze information on your customer's existing journey. Use market research findings, status reports, satisfaction data, and publicly available information to identify interaction points. Conduct interviews with stakeholders and subject matter experts throughout your organization. Look behind the curtain and determine what is really going on between the customer and your brand.

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**+TIP:**

**Include cross-functional staff.**

Throughout the process, include individuals from each relevant department and at each level of the organization. A thorough representation of your staff will ensure a more accurate perspective of the customer journey.

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**2: Map.** At this stage, consider these three steps.

- First, create a baseline map of the customer's journey by plotting each interaction in sequential order. This "journey map" serves as the visual representation of the path(s) customers take when they engage with your brand. In your map, be sure to include those touch points consumers have before they become your customer. Think advertising, social media, and word of mouth.
- Second, using segmentation data, develop personas or customer profiles to make your customers relatable. Be a storyteller and describe a day-in-the-life of each persona as he or she interacts with your brand. Detail adds richness to the story and enables your staff to imagine what a customer feels at each touch point or interaction.
- Third, validate the journey through a workshop with your cross-functional teams. Tap into your customer champions across the organization. Break participants into workgroups, each walking in the shoes of a persona and using the map. Use color-coded sticky notes to capture pain points, points of delight, opportunities, questions, and changes to the process.

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**+TIP:**

**Keep maps simple.**

Maps should be easy to understand and follow, so keep your design simple. Avoid too many images and use readable font size.

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**3: Test.** Your workshop helps to develop hypotheses. To know the customer's experience for sure, you must ask directly. Rely on market research to validate customer pain points. Customers are likely to surprise you with perspectives you would not have expected.

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**+TIP:**

**Use customers' input to prioritize what to fix first.**

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#### HOW WE DO IT: JOURNEY+ EDUCATION

Through consumer research discussions, a healthcare client learned that its members did not feel understood or respected. ICF assisted in implementing an action plan to develop a customer experience exhibit that included photographs, quotes, and experiential information for each customer segment. Brought to life through audio and video, "personas" told one-minute, day-in-the-life accounts of their ups and downs in dealing with their health plan. The exhibit traveled as part of a roadshow to dozens of locations to educate staff on the importance of recognizing customers as individuals with real needs, feelings, and concerns.

**4: Act.** Reconvene your cross-functional teams and assign customer-confirmed pain points identified through research. Have the teams brainstorm solutions and then develop a mini-business plan for each solution. Tie the action plans together through one enterprise roadmap that prioritizes next steps.

Note: When developing action plans, do not forget accountabilities. Who is going to do the work? More importantly, who from leadership needs to be involved to approve and support the initiative?

#### Implementation: From Whiteboard to Onboard

As team members come to the end of their journey mapping and action planning, they will be motivated and excited about new opportunities. Do not lose this momentum.

Develop a leadership presentation that summarizes findings and solutions for addressing pain points. Because you involved leaders early in the process and kept them abreast of your efforts, your findings will be of interest. Discuss recommendations on how you will tackle the action plans.

Here are some pointers:

- **Get customer champions enlisted early.** Let them know you need their expertise to effect change. Provide them with talking points so they can help educate colleagues and generate interest around the initiative.

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#### +TIP:

#### Use customer quotes to overcome staff defensiveness.

When staff members seem defensive or resistant to acknowledging pain points, rely on the research. Use customer quotes if necessary. Your customers, not you, have identified the pain points. Every employee has a responsibility to help fix them.

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- **Socialize your entire staff.** Work with Human Resources to develop a training plan to educate the staff on pain points and solutions.
- **Form action teams.** Using your champions and other interested staff members, create teams to oversee the implementation of action plans. Ask them to review the action plans and develop business cases for why the change needs to occur. Be sure to include team members from across the organization and at varying levels. Diversity brings more balanced perspectives and allows teams to more easily problem solve and educate one another.
- **Set realistic goals.** Prepare a matrix that helps you prioritize "quick wins" from long-term investments. Quick wins require less effort and investment to fix and will help to alleviate a pain point immediately.

- **Gain buy-in.** Each action team should work closely with a "sponsor," typically a representative of leadership. This individual can be helpful in getting business cases developed and approved, and has the power to remove the obstacles that can slow progress.

**+TIP:**

**Consider the cost of NOT making change.**

Factor in the cost of NOT making a change. How many customers could you lose and what would be the cost to the organization? If they migrate to a competitor that delivers a better experience, those customers could be lost forever.

- **Name a director of customer advocacy.** Or better yet, form a Voice of the Customer Committee. This individual or governing body can ensure that company decisions are evaluated through the lens of the customer.

An improved customer experience is not a once-and-done activity. It requires realistic goal setting, ongoing tracking and monitoring of metrics, and minor program tweaking to ensure goals are being met and customers' needs are addressed.

## A Win-Win

When customers are satisfied, you are rewarded. Earn happy customers by successfully moving ideas for journey transformation from the whiteboard, through the boardroom, and into their day-to-day lives. Leadership and staff involvement ensure that every employee is working toward a common goal. Staying on top of and adapting to customer preferences and needs over time creates satisfaction and engagement that lead to better outcomes for your business.

### About ICF

ICF (NASDAQ:ICFI) is a leading provider of professional services and technology-based solutions to government and commercial clients. ICF is fluent in the language of change, whether driven by markets, technology, or policy. Since 1969, we have combined a passion for our work with deep industry expertise to tackle our clients' most important challenges. We partner with clients around the globe—advising, executing, innovating—to help them define and achieve success. Our more than 5,000 employees serve government and commercial clients from more than 65 offices worldwide. ICF's website is [icf.com](http://icf.com).

## About the Authors

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