

HOW MANY CUSTOMERS DECIDE NOT TO BUY FROM YOU BEFORE YOU EVEN KNOW THEY EXIST?

Authored by Ed Murphy; published August 26, 2025

Ask most people where customer experience starts and you'll hear:

- When someone submits a support ticket
- When they interact with the company (website, salesperson, store, etc.)
- After they make their first purchase

But here's the truth: customer experience begins the moment your brand enters a customer's mind, often long before they officially become your customer.

Because **your brand is your experience, and your experience is your brand.**

Your brand isn't just logos, slogans, or marketing campaigns. It's the sum of every interaction, impression, and feeling people have about you, from the first whisper they hear to the lasting memories you leave behind.

Consider this:

- **In industries like enterprise technology and complex B2B solutions, buyers spend only 17% of their total purchase journey engaging directly with suppliers.** The rest is spent on independent research, peer discussions, and internal decision-making. (Gartner)
- **Car buyers typically have over 24 research touchpoints before ever visiting a dealership.** (Google Automotive Shopper Study) This applies broadly across all car buyers, although luxury and electric vehicle shoppers often engage in even more research due to higher stakes and new technology considerations.

Before customers engage directly, they're experiencing your brand in ways you might not always see, but that you **can absolutely influence:**

- Reviews and ratings, shaped by the experiences you deliver
- Conversations about how you treat employees and communities
- News coverage and social media buzz fueled by your actions
- Your leaders' public statements and visibility
- Your social media presence and tone
- The trust signals on your website and in your content

All of these are customer experiences, and many happen before a transaction.

Experience Happens Long Before Transaction

By the time someone clicks “buy,” they’ve already formed beliefs about:

- Whether you’re trustworthy
- Whether you align with their values
- Whether you’ll deliver on your promises
- How you make them *feel*

If those early experiences are inconsistent, confusing, or absent, you may lose customers you never even knew you had. They simply choose a competitor and move on quietly.

Brand and CX Are One and the Same

Separating brand from CX is a mistake. **Your brand is the start and the thread throughout the customer experience.**

Every brand signal, from your marketing tone to your social impact efforts, sets expectations for how it will feel to work with you. And expectations are the foundation of customer experience.

Customer experience isn’t just about what happens after someone buys. It’s about shaping perceptions, trust, and emotional connection long before a customer even considers making a purchase.

What This Means for Leaders

If you’re serious about CX, it’s time to rethink your entire playbook.

- **Stop treating brand and CX as separate disciplines.** They’re the same thing. Your brand sets expectations. Your experience proves whether you can keep them. If those don’t match, customers will walk away, often without telling you why.
- **Expose the invisible journey.** Customers form opinions long before they visit your website, walk into your store, or talk to a salesperson. Dig into how they discover you, what questions they’re asking, and what signals they’re absorbing. Map that early journey, or risk losing them to competitors who did.
- **Align your story with reality.** Don’t just craft clever brand messages. Deliver on them, consistently. A brand that makes bold promises but fails to follow through creates disappointment instead of loyalty.

Great CX isn’t an add-on after the sale. It’s a deliberate, strategic effort that starts the moment your brand appears on someone’s radar.

Your brand is your customer experience. Treat it like the foundation it is, because that’s where loyalty, trust, and competitive advantage begin.

Curious where your customer experience really begins? [Let's talk](#). We help companies uncover and shape the moments that happen long before the first sale. 🍷

About the Author

Ed Murphy

Co-founder and President of Imprint CX, a modern marketing and customer experience services company.

Ed has achieved a very successful career by building relationships and providing innovative solutions to meet clients' needs. With over thirty years as a global researcher, management consultant, and business leader, Ed brings his experience, expertise, and passion to every consulting assignment.

To learn more about ImprintCX contact Ed at Ed@ImprintCX.com



ImprintCX is a modern marketing and customer experience services company that seamlessly combines insights, consulting and activation into one integrated offering. The company is powered by sophisticated analytics, deep human understanding and design thinking to help organizations develop and deploy retention and lifetime value strategies for their high impact customers. Collectively, the ImprintCX team has developed and lead hundreds of customer experience transformations for Fortune 500 companies such as Mercedes Benz, Honeywell, Pizza Hut and Walmart.com.