

Chris Wallace Transcript

[00:00:00] **Andy Murray:** Let me start by asking how you got into the field of

[00:00:04] **Chris Wallace:** customer experience. I think I could argue that everybody's in the field of customer experience in, in some way, shape, or form, but for me, I think it really was about the, being, having a career in sales and marketing. I think that the sales side, we've seen sales really evolve to the point where, You're not just talking about the sales methodologies and techniques of old, it really is about integrating it into the overall customer experience, understanding the buying journey, things like that.

[00:00:28] So maybe call me a reformed salesperson that's recognizing the role of CX and of in the modern, the modern era of business. And

[00:00:37] **Andy Murray:** how long have you been in the more proper field of customer experiences as you now practice it.

[00:00:43] **Chris Wallace:** So I would say probably in the last seven to eight years, we've really seen customer experience being the the dominant theme and phrasing for it.

[00:00:51] We have been doing the consulting and the work that we do for the last 12 years. We actually celebrate 12 years this month. We've been doing that, but it really started more on that sales end of things and has really morphed into, it's not just selling it, it selling needs to be broadened into customer.

[00:01:06] **Andy Murray:** Yeah. Got it. Actually you raise a good point. It's a fairly new field. If you think about how it's being described today how would you define it for our listeners? We often call it CX for sure, for customer experience, but what is it not, and why is it important?

[00:01:22] **Chris Wallace:** Yeah, so the way we think about it is we always talk about brand and customer experience and the interplay between those two.

[00:01:27] So we think about brand as the promise or the collection of promises that a company makes to their customers. CX is operationally operationalizing those processes and MA or those promises and making sure that the organization is prepared to deliver on those promises. So we look at brand as what we say we're gonna do, and CX is making sure that we actually have the discipline in place to keep those promises and deliver for the.

[00:01:51] So that's how we see the definition of those two things. Why is it important? The very direct answer as to why it's important is we believe most products and most services are commoditized. And in a commoditized world, the only way to differentiate is through the experience by which you deliver those products and services.

[00:02:09] To me that's why it's so important that organizations are looking. We've got a widget that we sell or we have a service that we offer, but we need to make sure that all the other pieces are there to insulate and support the main product that we offer so we can stand out from our competition.

[00:02:24] **Andy Murray:** That makes sense. And many companies today claim to be customer-centric. But how can you tell if a company is truly focused on the customer

[00:02:33] **Chris Wallace:** experience? Oh, man. That, that, that is a loaded, we could do the whole show on that topic. . Customer centric is one of those things that every executive is gonna tell you that they are.

[00:02:44] But it is certainly not true. I'm gonna tell you how, what doesn't mean that you're customer centric. Having an NPS program doesn't mean you're com customer centric, right? Just having measurement in place is not the, you don't stop and pat yourself on the back. I really do think that organizations need to look at it as really centralizing their whole strategy, centralizing their go to.

[00:03:05] Anything from the way that they do research to the way they do product development, to the way they organize the channels through which they're gonna go to market. If that is not all geared toward making the customer's life easier and better, then I would say you're not customer centric. So just having a survey at the end of your interaction with a customer doesn't make you customer centric.

[00:03:26] **Andy Murray:** Yeah, and I think some people think a customer experience is like what happens in the call. and not really thinking more broadly about that organizationally of all the different places, customer experience really comes into play. Chris, what do you think are the biggest challenges facing companies today in delivering a great customer experience?

[00:03:43] And what I mean by a great customer experience, that more end-to-end view for. All the places the brand touches a customer's life.

[00:03:51] **Chris Wallace:** Yeah. I don't I hate to use a buzz phrase here, they're organizations are set up in silos, right? And, when you think about the silos that exist, you have that whole journey.

[00:03:59] You have that whole buying process, that whole interaction process with a customer. And many cases, it's starting from the first click all the way through to the final delivery is something. And then frankly, the ongoing relationship that you. With that customer and organizations are too siloed.

[00:04:14] So I'll give you an example. We're working with a retailer now, a regional retailer, and we are building them a customer experience process. And it took some convincing for them to recognize the difference between a customer experience process and the sales training that they had of old and the key difference that we told them.

[00:04:35] Your salespeople need to understand and recognize every step along the buyer's journey, and they need to know what their role is in that journey and be. It can't just be when they walk into the store. That's when the journey started. That's not when the journey started. So recognizing how all those different pieces of the journey, whether it's interacting directly with a person or not fit together, and making sure the people in processes that support that.

[00:05:01] are in place. So to me it the biggest challenge is making sure that you don't have a digital team that's focused on, okay, what is our web journey going to look like? And then the people in the call centers or the people in the retail store are completely disconnected from what that digital portion of the journey is.

[00:05:17] Omnichannel needs to start meaning something. It's been a phrase that we've used for years, but omnichannel actually has to be, we understand the fluid nature of that journey, and we're gonna make sure it's all connected effectively.

[00:05:29] **Andy Murray:** We'll get into the omnichannel in a bit, and I think you make a great point there on how that now is the most important area to think through.

[00:05:36] But I'd love to hear your point of view on organizationally. Where do you feel customer experience, expertise, or ownership of driving those processes? Where does that sit inside of a company? Cause I know from my experience my time in the UK with as to, that wasn't an always an obviously

easy question cuz it could be an operations, it could be in marketing for your, you came to the lens of sales into that space.

[00:06:02] Yep. But do you have a point of view that you. It tells you where this really should best reside.

[00:06:09] **Chris Wallace:** This is a hot topic of conversation. I've hosted some webinars for the American Marketing Association, and I always ask this question. It's one of my favorite questions to ask. My point of view is directly speaking, I think that marketing owns the customer relationship and the customer strategy, and I think that if it does not reside in marketing, if the vision for CX does not reside in.

[00:06:32] It should probably be a separate standalone function that works extremely closely with marketing if customer experience lives as an operational function. Too often operations are looked at cost centers and not real growth opportunities for the organization. You mentioned call centers and things like that.

[00:06:51] If it's the head of your call centers, that is the defacto head of customer experience because that's one of your primary channel. I don't, I personally don't think that works unless that reports up through marketing, which it doesn't always. So to me it's either marketing owns it and the chief marketing or chief customer officer owns it, or you have a separate standalone function that works extremely closely at that senior leadership level with marketing.

[00:07:13] **Andy Murray:** My experience has said would tell me that you were a hundred percent spot on and in my case the call centers reported up through operat. , which most of those KPIs were focused on efficiency, how fast you got people off the phone For sure. those things versus, how did it make 'em feel?

[00:07:31] And all the other elements that go into a really excellent customer experience. Now, I had the customer experience team, which was under the a customer organization, which we had marketing and the cx. And I thought it really helpful for it to sit there because I think that as you. The KPIs that get put in place if you're after efficiency, may not always end up delivering the best customer experience.

[00:07:54] For

[00:07:54] **Chris Wallace:** sure. They're often at odds, right? They really are often at odds, and I'll go back to my definition of if brand is making the promises to the customer, and CX is. Putting the processes in place to keep those promises then if they ever need to live in one place or they need to be very closely matched together, in my opinion.

[00:08:12] Yep.

[00:08:13] **Andy Murray:** Yep. A hundred percent. Now there's been some things in the industry lately that I've been staying close to around some pushback against some of the customer experience roles or those departments. Some people argue that investing in customer experience is a waste of money and that companies should focus on other areas such as marketing or product develop.

[00:08:31] In part, I believe, because it's difficult to measure results with precision that you might be able to get in performance marketing. But not always the most precise measure is the most valued measure. But what would be your response to that argument of the area of measuring results and the value of investing in

[00:08:50] **Chris Wallace:** customer experie?

[00:08:52] Yeah. I think to me it really comes back to the question about where it sits, right? And I think if market, if customer experience stands alone, an NPS score or customer satisfaction score becomes the predominant metric that you have to share, then that's it's often hard to correlate. Unless you've got a really good analytics department, it's often hard to correlate.

[00:09:14] But to me, we look at it, I'm gonna go back to talking about my evolution in the cx. We've evolved the selling mentality into a more broad customer experience mentality. And when done we believe that customer experience investments pay off significantly in things like conversion rates and repeat buyers and customer loyalty.

[00:09:35] Typically, those are gonna be things that the marketer and in partnership with sales, marketing and sales care about. So it all depends on what you're looking at, right? If organizations are simply looking at, are scores going up, are our customers. I really think you've gotta make sure you're tying them to the more tangible things that businesses and shareholders care about more frequently, is it driving bottom line revenue?

[00:09:57] CX done properly drives bottom line revenue every time. We often say that organizations get worried that if they sell better, that their customer experience is going to go down. So sales up, CX down and most people who have been professionals in the customer experience space know that if you do customer experience, CX goes up and sales go up at the same time.

[00:10:19] So I think organizations need to recognize that it's about revenue and just get away from some of the touchy feely metrics that just confuse people. Yeah,

[00:10:28] **Andy Murray:** I couldn't agree more. When I went to Asta, we ended up most of the bonus the whole bonus structure was based on half profit, half sales, and a little bit of slider mix.

[00:10:37] But if you work in stores or home office, but we put in. Another metric in the bonus side to that was a CPS customer promoter score based on till receipts and surveys. And was it precise? No. Was it clearly actionable in every element? No but having that in the bonus scheme really did cause everyone to start putting, a lens on how can we affect it?

[00:11:01] How can we get more precise? How can we look at it? And one of the things we found, Which was maybe not intuitively obvious, the best correlations we had to growth were related to removing dissatisfiers, that those dissatisfiers were really issues. That, and knowing where those were and breaking that down with more granularity was super important.

[00:11:21] And that's just one way we did it. From your experience, how can companies improve their ability to listen to their costume? And better understand their customer's needs, whether it's the dissatisfiers or the things that they love and promote.

[00:11:34] **Chris Wallace:** I think there's a couple of different layers to it, so I think that organizations have gotten much better at the customer listening portion of it.

[00:11:42] And I think that there, there's two things and really our unique perspective on the world is the role of the frontline people, right? The frontline employees, the people who engage with the customers. We believe very strongly that a missing part of the understanding of the customer is talking to those people in the trenches and finding out what is the customer behavior, what are you seeing from them?

[00:12:02] What are the preferences? So we built a tool, a platform called In Front that's really designed to take that missing piece of the equation, which is the frontline perspective. And add it into the marketer's toolkit to say we understand what our customers think of us before they transact with us through market research.

[00:12:20] We understand what happens after through customer experience research, but the during piece is a little bit of a black box, so to speak. So we believe that listening to the front lines and bringing that point of view in is really critical. Another thing that's really interesting that we found through our own research is frontline team members.

[00:12:38] Are three times more likely to have confidence representing their products, their services, their brand, if the organization is sharing customer research with them on a regular basis. So I'm almost asking, I'm answering your question reverse, but one of the things that they can do to better deliver for customers is be sharing the data that they have about customer preferences, customer needs with their frontline people.

[00:13:03] Share the data you. , if it just drives strategy and it just drives the way you're doing CX measurement, it drives your campaigns, whatever the case may be on the marketing side, but you're not actually equipping the frontline teams with the latest information you have about customer preferences, you're missing a huge opportunity.

[00:13:20] So empowering them with the data in turning it around, using it internally, we see as a great way to really drive better interactions with customers.

[00:13:27] **Andy Murray:** I love the fact that you guys are focused on providing technology that really does improve the customer experie. Unfortunately the rise in technology also has enabled cust many brands and retailers to automate that experience or take the human touch element out of it.

[00:13:43] Chatbots and so on and so forth, which I'm sure with chat, G B T and all the other generative AI tools you might be able to get a little closer to what feels like a human touch, but I love your perspective on the importance of the human. . And how do you balance that with the technology interactions?

[00:13:59] Because we all want, per, we all wanna feel like we're having a personalized interaction. But this, the technology that we have today can pretty

much have you be like an Amazon go, right? No. Nobody in the store. And I'm not sure how customers feel about that. What's the data telling you?

[00:14:14] **Chris Wallace:** So there there's the data and there's the anecdotal evidence that we see.

[00:14:18] Okay. And I actually started this year, I posted a video on social media early this year where I talked about what I felt was one of the biggest themes heading into 2023. Every category that we work in now, we're not working with off the shelf consumer package goods and things like that. We're working with, call them higher consideration consumer purchases.

[00:14:38] But what we are finding is consumers have through digital. They have access to almost infinite choice, right? They have infinite choice, but what we're finding is through JD Power Research and other data that we're tracking, what they crave is advice. They need advice. They have all the options in the world, but they're no closer to a decision that they feel good about until somebody can.

[00:15:04] I'm the expert. Trust me, I've got this. And yes, there are technology tools out there that can help from a decision engine perspective. You input a couple of things. I think that can help you narrow some of your decision making from the front end and cross some things off your list. But if you're making a larger purchase or you're making a purchase in a category that you're not frequently making purchases in regular.

[00:15:27] We look at it as the human becomes the, okay, I recognize that you have this whole gamut of choices. I'm gonna help understand your individual situation, and I'm gonna help you whittle that down. The information is causing paralysis in a lot of the sectors that we're looking at. Banking home good, know, home manufactured goods cable and telecommunications.

[00:15:48] They have all the information. They just don't know how to sort it out. The technology that we've. Is not getting people closer to feeling good about that purchase unless they truly have an expert saying, based on your needs, this is what you need to fill that need. That's what we're seeing as the big trend is advice is what's needed.

[00:16:06] Finding technology that's able to pro provide scalable advice. We haven't found it yet. That's interesting.

[00:16:12] **Andy Murray:** And it sounds again, with generative ai there's an opportunity to get, one step closer as that becomes, More accurate and what it can recommend. From your opinion, what is the most important aspect of great customer experience?

[00:16:25] Is it speed? Is it convenience or lack of, taking the friction out? Or is it the personalization side of, gosh, these guys really know me. Or is it something else?

[00:16:36] **Chris Wallace:** I think it's ease. I'm gonna, I'm gonna take the shortest path. I think it's ease, but I think in terms of what organizations need to do in order to.

[00:16:43] Deliver that easy process to take that friction out, you really need to understand your journey will, right? That, I think that's one place. When you talk about what does it mean to be customer centric, starting to measure customer experience without having a very clear understanding of all the touchpoints that you have.

[00:16:58] Digital, human, otherwise with your customers to meet organizations, spending the time and investing to know that journey. To me, that's the first step. So ease, but with a very deep understanding of what your customers face. We work in an industry where with a category where senior leader in that category told us we have not meaningfully improved the customer experience In our segment over the last 25 years.

[00:17:23] Think about that. We have not made a meaningful upgrade in the customer experience in 25. It's because they have not put the time in to truly understand what those touchpoints are. Yeah. That's

[00:17:34] **Andy Murray:** so good. I, reflecting back on my grocery retail experience, we had a in-store program around fresh that we talked about, like this 200% freshness guarantee really important.

[00:17:44] It's a great thing to market behind. But unfortunately no one had actually tried to execute that process. And a person on my team, A fairly new hire really said they went and got some fresh produce and they wanted to test out how do I get this guarantee? Go to the website 15 clicks later, trying to find the freshness guarantee.

[00:18:04] And where one would almost imagine that friction was put in there on purpose to lower redemption, right? But we saw this big disconnect. And if

you're shouting about that idea of a freshest guarantee in store, shouldn't you make that a prior. Being easy to find online, but those are two different, two different departments, not even, connected at all.

[00:18:23] Trying to drive that. Is that, does that sound like an unusual experience in your experience or is it a common problem?

[00:18:30] **Chris Wallace:** I think that I think that goes back to the silos, like you said. I think that's the difference between somebody looking at it in terms of how customer centricity is maniacally focused on how we can make things easier, remove that.

[00:18:43] operations is looking at it as a cost center. If somebody redeems that, then it's gonna hit our bottom line. It's going to, there, there's gonna be some disruption on the operation side of things. So burying a guarantee like that is, is a classic example of we wanna do right by the customer, but somebody else's bonus in a different way.

[00:19:00] It, it doesn't surprise me. What it also makes me think of is how many grocery operations have gotten self-checkout? How many people I end up in the self checkout line are like, oh, I'm so glad to be in the self checkout line. You have to ask yourself, who do we do this for? Do we do this for the customer?

[00:19:16] Do we do this for ourselves? And I think if your answer is were doing it for ourselves gotta spin that around. The companies that truly go the extra mile and say, no, we have to do this because it's right for the customer. They're the ones that are gonna win. They win every time.

[00:19:29] **Andy Murray:** I couldn't agree more with that.

[00:19:31] You, know, I had a conversation. Couple weeks ago with a CMO of a larger CPG brand. And one of the things he said to me that I found was quite surprising is that we would desperately, give our it to find out how our customers really and they would use the word consumer, but how our consumers really feel like the true understanding of sentiment and there's no way to really get that for them at scale.

[00:19:57] Obviously you've got customer surveys and such, but how, any thoughts on how a company or brand could get a real empathetic understanding of what's on the minds of their customers and where their heads are

[00:20:08] **Chris Wallace:** really at a at it's tough. I think that the one thing that we hear I don't know that I'm gonna have a clear solution on that.

[00:20:16] I can say that what we're hearing a lot of is the phrase survey fatigue just comes up all the time, right? We're. That constantly. And to me, I would say that a combination of your, again, I'm gonna go back to customer experience and marketing, working closely together, but brand tracking and customer experience data being looked at simultaneously to really understand.

[00:20:38] Cause I think a lot of times with brand tracking studies, it really is about how cu how customers, how consumers feel about your. but to look at a macro level with some of the brand tracking that brands do, and then on the micro level with the individual transaction data, I think you can start to get a picture or at least a decent picture.

[00:20:55] I don't know that it's more surveys. It is my short answer. I don't know that there's a place to add a survey in and a lot of these transactions that's really going to get you anything other than you're gonna capture the person who had the really great experience or the person who had the really poor war.

[00:21:08] And

[00:21:09] **Andy Murray:** probably keep your eye, it's probably gonna feel more anecdotal listening, social media, finding the dis dissatisfiers, finding where you're getting the one reviews and paying attention to those. Cuz those, if a person who'll give you one review probably loves you at some level, but they, are really disappointed in you.

[00:21:22] Cuz that takes work to do that. And I think sometimes we just wanna look at the fives.

[00:21:27] **Chris Wallace:** One thing I will say real quick though, tonight Yeah. And I'm gonna use your grocery store example cause I think it's a great one cuz everybody can relate. You wanna know what customer sentiment is or where customers are having challenges.

[00:21:37] Talk to the people that work your customer service counter in grocery stores. Not necessarily the registers, but talk to the people who work the customer experience or the customer service counter. and see what people are coming up to them with. What are the complaints? Are they complaining about the produce department?

[00:21:50] Are they complaining about the carts? Like those are the people that the tip of the spear in terms of understanding what's really on customer's minds. Yeah, that's

[00:21:58] **Andy Murray:** great advice. You're starting to touch on something that is really important to customer experience, at least has been in my experience.

[00:22:04] And that is, Company culture, and you can have a brand promise that delivers a clear customer experience you're after. But if the company culture doesn't support that it's gotta be integrated in the culture. You ship your organization to the customer in your work with companies to help them with customer experience.

[00:22:23] How much of your work is toward. Colleague training upskilling, thinking about or analyzing that space in order to get to the outcome side you want on customer

[00:22:35] **Chris Wallace:** experience. And that's a big part of our focus. So we talk about, we're at the intersection of employee experience and customer experience.

[00:22:42] And we I wouldn't say that our firm is either one of those two disciplines. Because I think employee experience is a very broad, you think about the Venn diagram of those two things coming together and we really are in that sweet. , but we really look at it as how can you put team members in a position to drive great outcomes for customers?

[00:23:00] And the frontline teams we've worked with, and we're probably, we're in the high hundreds of thousands or low seven figures of frontline people that we've worked with across the globe. All frontline employees want is the opportunity to be put in a position to be successful in serving their customers.

[00:23:16] That's where they get a lot of. People can say it's pay and it's spiffs and it's benefits and it's breaks, and things like that. They just want to feel like when they have the opportunity to serve a customer, they're empowered to do a good job and they can make that customer happy. So we really look at it as understanding their perspective and putting them in a position to.

[00:23:37] To deliver that experience, to have an input into the experience. That's where we see the magic happen. So we I think it's an oversimplification to say happy employees drive happy customers. I don't believe that's true

actually. I don't believe people can be happy where they work and not necessarily drive a great experience for the customers.

[00:23:56] I really think. Put your people in a position to drive great outcomes for customers, and you're gonna have happy customers and happy

[00:24:02] **Andy Murray:** employees. This gets back to where it's gotta also be strategic imperative. So from my experience operationally at retail, store hours are everything, right? That is, that's more than gold, right?

[00:24:13] Is the hours that are allocated. And people would be amazed at how precise a retail order retailer can get in allocating and analyzing hours, right? It's easy to track, easy to. and when hours get pushed really hard, the customer service counter is almost looked as a buffer group that you could dip into to put them into stocking shelves or other pieces.

[00:24:33] And if you don't have the hours allocated to deliver customer experience, no matter what the ambition of the customer experience person at the desk is, they've been called to go unload trucks or stack pallets or move things around in the store you've just killed. Your culture

[00:24:49] **Chris Wallace:** from the top.

[00:24:51] For sure. think I'm gonna give you an example that I think ties a lot of these concepts together and some people might be able to relate to this. I grew up my whole life being a big baseball fan and a baseball player. Okay. That was a big part of my family, family's, upbringing.

[00:25:05] Upbringing in my brothers. And I recently went to buy a bath for Christmas for my son, a baseball. and anybody who's bought a little league bat over the last couple of years knows that it's quite a journey. Okay. And there's infinite select. . I know the sport, I know the game. I know generally what I'm looking for, but there's infinite choice.

[00:25:27] And I'm gonna actually call out a brand specifically that I'm a big fan of Dick's Sporting Goods. Okay. Going to Dick's Sporting Goods. And they have Infinite choice in that store. There's so many different things to choose from. There's all the different labels of which league gets certified by and things like that.

[00:25:43] But when my son and I walk into that store and we're looking at things off the. if you don't have that allocation to drive customer experience. I

stand there and I look around the store for somebody and I don't find anyone, or I have to find somebody with a walkie talking. They have to call somebody with the expertise.

[00:25:59] But at Dick's, I happen to be there looking. I wandered over toward the batting cage that they have in for people to try it. And there's an associate there saying, can I help answer any questions about these ballots? And I know what I'm talking about, generally speaking, but I still needed that person's guidance and.

[00:26:16] Dick's made sure that person was there right place, right time, to be able to assist me. So that's where you get into, and again, this is a purchase that I should be able to go and grab something off the shelf. But when I'm spending \$400 on a bat, and yes, that's how much they cost, I wanna make sure that I get that decision right.

[00:26:32] I need advice, I need a person, Dick's, make sure that they're

[00:26:36] **Andy Murray:** Excellent. I love that story. That's great. And I love shopping there too, by. Tell me how, what you think the role of technology, like digital screens and, some of the things there do you see that as something that adds to the customer experience or distracts or is that for the company purpose to drive advertising messages in-store?

[00:26:52] And what do you feel like the role of technology is in the in-store shopping in

[00:26:56] **Chris Wallace:** space? Yeah, I think that the I think a lot of times the technology, and I'll be very candid on this, I think the technology. More shiny objects that make the store look futur, futuristic, and cool, and make you feel like it's a good job in experience rather than actually getting you closer to making that decision.

[00:27:14] Let's be honest, everybody has the technology that they need in their pocket, right? When you think about being able to look and we know people are going into stores and they're looking at something on the shelf and they pull out the smartphone and they're looking on Amazon, or they're checking walmart.com or Target dot.

[00:27:30] To see if they have it, if it's a cheaper price, whatever the case may be. So I look at it and say, it's, it all depends on what your concept is, right? I

believe that there are there are retail concepts that are starting to emerge where even for big purchases, they're going to smaller footprint stores.

[00:27:48] and they are doing like the digital mirroring and things like that where they don't necessarily have every size in the store, but you can pick out a style and you can do the virtual mirror, that type of thing. I think if it's really helping to maximize the cross section of where the location of the store is, the size of the footprint of the store, and being able to put something in the customer's.

[00:28:09] Digitally that they can't necessarily have in their hands physically. I think it has a place if you have a bigger store and you're relying on technology or putting technology in there, I personally believe it ends up being more of a distraction. And let's be honest, if you ask the IT team what the uptime is of a lot of that technology, a lot of times it's not even working.

[00:28:27] So I think that people have to be honest with themselves. Again, why are we doing this? Are we doing this to make it look cool? Are we doing it because it actually makes the experience? In rare cases, did it actually make it easier? People are just gonna grab their phone?

[00:28:40] **Andy Murray:** Yeah. I will say something that's probably pretty provocative, but I don't believe customers enjoy pulling out their phone in a physical shopping trip experience.

[00:28:50] And they do that when they've reached a point of friction that they need to do it. It's not that they want to do it, and I think we get it wrong when we think that the. The mobile apps and what we're doing with the phone. We want the customer out with their phone, and I just think it's just, it's, they're doing it to solve a problem.

[00:29:09] And if you solve that problem, maybe in a design way of in-store experience, or make sure the navigation is more clear, or the experience is more helpful to the customer, what they're really trying to accomplish, maybe they don't need to pull their phone out. And do you really want 'em to pull their phone out?

[00:29:25] I think they, they do. That's not necessarily because I don't think they want to. Now that's just anecdotal, but I'd love to hear your thought on that.

[00:29:34] **Chris Wallace:** Yeah. If they're taking out their phone, the likelihood that they're cross shopping you goes up significantly. Yeah. And

that's not necessarily what you want, but I think that becomes the rub of how you're using the technology in the store if you're a larger store.

[00:29:45] We've talked about places like Dick's Sporting, cuz that's a larger store. It's not always easy to find something. How they integrate technology. I can't say that I can pick out one brand that I think does in-store technology extremely well. Yeah. Yeah. It can, I'm curious if you have one that you would reference.

[00:30:02] **Andy Murray:** I would have to go into Europe. I think the European retailers are doing a better job at understanding how that technology can work. There's a company called Out Formm that I track. I know some of the guys that work there, but they're doing more with. In apparel with in-store mannequins that are digital that could let you look at a lot of different outfits and things of that nature.

[00:30:22] But in large extent, I thi and I think electronic shelf labels that can, communicate and give you, accurate pricing that's up to date, that's a helpful technology. And we're starting to see, yeah, some prototypes there. I know Walmart's working on a few stores I've seen in their prototypes with electronic shelf labels and I, okay.

[00:30:38] That's brilliant. That's a, that's a. I do get, I do see the challenge of uptime from a lot of the technical displays, whether it's been unplugged or they, I know they have in-store radio, but they turned it down so low because it annoyed the associates, right? So there is a lot more to that whole conversation of what's really gonna work and what's sustainable.

[00:30:57] What looks good, in a prototype store may not look good, two years later if the staff hasn't bought. , what that, what they're trying to accomplish, and they really care about it. So that gets into the culture side. Yeah. What companies do you admire for, we've talked a lot about the challenges but what about any brands or retailers out there that you admire?

[00:31:15] For their great customer experience

[00:31:17] **Chris Wallace:** and what they're doing. Yeah. So I would say that, we've touched on a few of them. I think that there are there, there's brands that I admire for different reasons, right? I think that the when you look at the, I wanna go back to your your question about culture and your reference to culture, and we look at it and say the brands that really are doing this well are

the ones who are integrating it into their day-to-day operation and really how their people feel and.

[00:31:40] And that's where I'll call out some of the best examples people talk about all the time, the Patagonias of the world, right? What, who, what their brand promise is and how they operationalize that through their culture is probably second to none. I'm also a big fan of Southwest and the way that they've done that integration of the line I always use is American Airlines, if they try to tell a joke the way that Southwest flight attendants have been doing for years, somehow it's not.

[00:32:05] right? It if America or Delta tries to do it, it's not funny. But somehow Southwest has really built that culture of people really care. It's that genuineness and authenticity that frankly, I think the best brands, they're hiring for it too, right? They know who they wanna be and they don't wait and try to indoctrinate people into it.

[00:32:21] They're finding people that believe those things before they, they even show up and interview. I think that to me, I'll call out those brands because I think they've done the best. Of integrating who they are as a brand into their people processes and their people policies. Yeah.

[00:32:36] **Andy Murray:** That's good.

[00:32:36] That's great. I love those stories. I find that sometimes true. I tell a joke it's not funny and. My wife will tell the same joke and people laugh. So I don't know, I don't understand what's going on there, but does she

[00:32:46] **Chris Wallace:** work for Southwest ?

[00:32:48] **Andy Murray:** No, she probably could. The so I'd be remiss if we didn't ask the question.

[00:32:52] Tell me about interview your company and what problems do you solve for your clients?

[00:32:59] **Chris Wallace:** Yeah, we. Interview was really designed from the ground up after years of I call it trial and error if you will, but been an entrepreneur for a long time. But interview was really the outgrowth of, know, my business partner, Diana Finley and I taking some time to look at the work that we've done and really look at where we sought organizations struggling.

[00:33:19] And we're typically working with larger enterprise, either B2C or b2, b2c. What we found was, I'm gonna go back to the word silos. We just found there really is a chas in between marketing and the frontline channels. And you can say sales, but I, it's not just sales, it's customer service. It's any technical roles, it's delivery people, anybody that interfaces with a customer, there is a disconnect between the marketing vision and those people who serve the customers every.

[00:33:48] that's what we built. Interview to, to bridge, bridge that divide between marketing, the marketing strategy, and the frontline channels who execute. So that's the ethos behind the company. I mentioned earlier our in front platform is really our secret sauce and helping organization, helping marketers, customer experience executives.

[00:34:07] Hear the perspective of their frontline teams in a scalable way

[00:34:11] **Andy Murray:** that can be analyzed. Can you break that down? Yeah. Can you break that down for me? I'm intrigued. Tell me how does that work?

[00:34:18] **Chris Wallace:** Yeah, so what we're essentially doing is we've taken a market research process or market research principles, and instead of applying them to the external buyers, the external.

[00:34:28] We're taking very similar structures for studies and questionnaires, and we're applying those to the frontline teams. So we're asking them essentially market research wants to identify where consumers are going to see value, right? Do they see value in what you're putting out there? What messages might resonate with them around value?

[00:34:46] We are un, we're trying to understand the people who have to talk about those products and services every day. What's their perception of value? What's their perception of customer? What's their perception of the competi? We're trying to give brands a glimpse when one of their people is face-to-face or phone to phone, whatever it is with a consumer, what are they likely to say?

[00:35:07] What is their mindset? So we're giving them very deep analytics on what this frontline population what mindset they bring into their interactions with customers. And again, we talk. Brands have the data from before an interaction, they have it after. We wanna give them that glimpse of what's happening during, and that's what in in front is designed to do.

[00:35:27] We truly believe we're taking the voice of the front lines and elevating it into something that can be used truly as business intelligence for big brands. And what kind of results are you seeing? Yeah, first and foremost what we're seeing is if you listen to your front lines around how value is being transacted or talked, and you find gaps and you have very clear information around the messages that are resonating or not resonating, you can quickly react and provide them the support that they need.

[00:35:54] It could be anything from an email that goes out to a quick one sheet or a video. We talk about. A lot of times we're myth busting, right? There might be one perception that the front lines have around this new product introduction. You learn that from them. You can bust that myth and guess what? We are in the business of getting people to say, oh, okay, now I get it right.

[00:36:15] It's not full on training. It really is about those quick light bulb moments, but until we understand their mindset, we can't clear that path. So what are the results? The results are increased conversion that we talked about before. A lot of times we're working around new product and service introductions, so increase.

[00:36:32] Ticket size, order value, all of those things go up and we always get asked this. And the answer is absolutely yes. Does it drive employee retention? And the answer is yes. If you listen to your people and identify places where they need greater support and they need you to, be the cavalry who can come in and really help them and have their back, they stay longer.

[00:36:52] That's not that hard of an equation to underst. , but we're seeing very tangible business results simply by building this feedback loop with your front lines. Yeah,

[00:37:01] **Andy Murray:** I love that, and I can see the connection back to if your frontline employees know you really care about what the customers think.

[00:37:08] Even just putting this technology in sends a message of what's important and that you are trying to listen and trying to learn, and it makes their jobs more valuable. And I can see that attachment. . One last question, Chris. We do a lot of work with the University of Arkansas customer-Centric Leadership Initiative.

[00:37:23] And so we speak to a lot of students and graduate graduating students. What advice would you give to someone who's interested in pursuing a career in cx and what skills or qualities do you think are essential for success

[00:37:36] **Chris Wallace:** in this? I'm gonna go back to what I said before around what I think is the fundamental building block of good customer experience, which is journey mapping.

[00:37:42] So a maniacal focus on the journey mapping would be one place I would advise people to, to invest some time and really understanding. The second place I would say is I guess maybe this is more of a piece of advice than it is a skill, but the really understanding. How technology plays a role in enabling the journey, not replacing it or outsourcing it or whatever you want to call it.

[00:38:06] I really think that organizations struggle and they silo their technology people from the operations and the CX folks, and I think that really taking a critical eye to what is the technology enabling versus what is it replace. . I think that any good strategist, the human interactions, I don't believe are going to go away.

[00:38:24] We saw during the pandemic that e-commerce went way up, and guess what? The pandemic subsided somewhat, and people are back in stores. They need that advice. They want that interaction. So understanding the role of technology and being critical about the role of technology would be sort of my second piece of.

[00:38:42] **Andy Murray:** That's great advice. That's great advice. Any any question I didn't ask that you saw on your mind you'd like to talk about that's important in this space?

[00:38:51] **Chris Wallace:** I would just say that when it comes to You talked again about, about the culture. You talked about, where organizations struggle. You can't train customer experience.

[00:38:59] I really don't believe you can. I do believe it has to be cultural. I think that setting standards and really promoting a mindset and a culture and themes internally around what we're doing. What an organization is doing for the customer. I think that's the only way to make it scalable.

[00:39:14] To say you're gonna put somebody through customer experience. Customer experience is a cultural thing. You need to expose them to their colleagues. You need to share exam. One of the things that we do with our clients constantly is encourage them, share examples of people who are doing it well.

[00:39:29] Share the feedback that you're getting from the customer. So to me it's that cultural piece, right? Making sure that you're weaving that in and giving your people the opportunity to celebrate those wins and share them. To me that's a really important.

[00:39:42] **Andy Murray:** Yeah I, one of the things I thought Walmart did a nice job of when I worked there was every now and then the CEO would play some recordings from the call centers of, a customer going through an issue or a challenge and, and all the officers hearing that at the same time, it's global.

[00:39:59] It's gold. It's gold. It is, it's gold. You can't argue with a customer's experience, right? That, that was their experience. And it could be real eye-opening and great way to focus the mind on, the customer by telling their story. But if you can get it in their own voice even better from that standpoint.

[00:40:14] Chris, it's been lovely having you on. What you're doing is so central to being a customer-centric organiz. That I don't know why we didn't have you on a couple years ago when we started but thanks for all you're doing on this and we'll put links in the show notes for how they can reach you and find out more about interview and find

[00:40:30] **Chris Wallace:** out more about you.

[00:40:32] I really appreciate Andy. Thank you for having me on.