B2B Customer Experience Benchmark Report

How do e-commerce leaders rank the most important elements of customer experience?

Liferay

Overview

It's undeniable — better customer experiences are critical for success in B2B commerce. In this benchmark survey of the most important elements in the B2B customer experience, Liferay talked to 30 leaders that drive the B2B commerce experience for their companies. Agreement on which job title owns the customer experience is still hard to pin down, but by starting with e-commerce, we were able to center the idea of customer experience on this key interaction point between B2B buyers and their vendors.

30	**22**	**03**
Companies Surveyed	Customer Experience Elements Ranked	Categories: Shopping Experience, Customer Service and Technology

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🔍 Major Findings

- Each team owns their own part of the B2B customer experience

- Self-service experiences and personal interactions are equally important

- Emerging technology trends are interesting, but not an immediate priority

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Respondents from companies of all sizes shared that every element covered in the survey is important to the overall experience. The priority of each element within their B2B customer experience vision depends on timeline — e-commerce leaders are asking themselves which elements will provide the greatest ROI today, in three months, in six months and a year out. Customer experience continues to be an evolution and the question is increasingly, not if they should implement a particular feature, but when.

For example, our survey showed that Augmented Reality and Virtual Reality technologies rank some of the lowest in importance for B2B customer experience. When asked why in follow up, most respondents shared that they're very interested in applying these to their businesses, but there are too many other priorities to focus on in the next 12 months. It's not a question of practical application; there are many proven use cases for AR/VR in B2B e-commerce. But many e-commerce practitioners, even industry leaders, are still working on the core elements of customer experience such as order history, responsive design and basic self-service capabilities. They feel a need to establish these table stakes before bringing in more advanced enhancements.

All together, the picture is this: B2B customer experience has a lot to catch up on, but the leaders and movers in this space know exactly where they want to be and how to get there. The only open questions are time and resources: how fast can they get there, and what is it going to cost them in terms of headcount and dollars?

How to Read This Report

Use these answers to rank your own B2B customer experience priorities and compare against those of your peers. After all, that's who you'll be compared against as your customers weigh their options for suppliers, and it's within these priorities that you can uncover opportunities for differentiation. See the full list of customer experience elements at the end for comparison.

Survey Results and Analysis

Who Owns the Customer Experience?

The past five years have seen many heated discussions over which job title owns and champions the customer experience for their organization. In B2B commerce, most respondents shared that each team owns their piece of the experience, but there isn't anyone in charge of the entire journey.

To unify experience and bring the following elements into a cohesive whole, e-commerce champions will likely need to reach higher into the organization and get buy-in for a singular vision across teams.

Who owns the customer experience in your organization?

- CMO
- CEO
- CTO
- Chief Experience Officer or someone else in charge of digital transformation
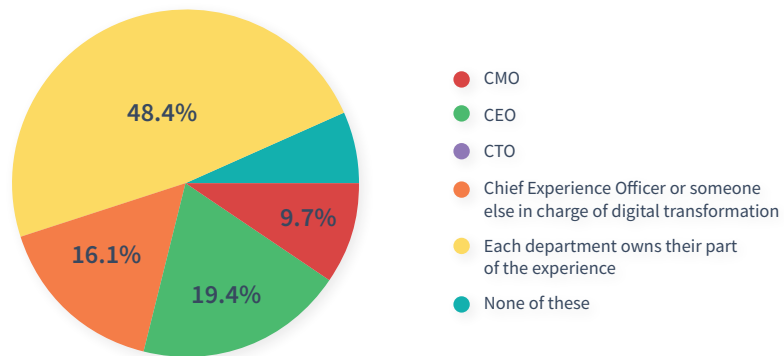- Each department owns their part of the experience
- None of these

Figure 1

Top Priorities for Customer Experience Overall

There was very little disagreement about the most important elements of customer experience for e-commerce, with few respondents choosing neutral or negative responses for the top priorities. The top ten elements are, in order:

1. Responsive Mobile Site

2. Online Transactions (Customer Self Service)

3. Viewable Order History

4. Personalized Recommendations

5. Live Phone Support

6. Dedicated Account Manager or Customer Service Representative

7. Pre-Sale Product Education

8. Real Time Order Tracking and Shipment Status

9. "Also Bought" Product Recommendations

10. Live Chat

As one respondent stated, "My customers want to know what they bought and where their order is. Making sure they can find this information is the top priority."

Interestingly, elements such as phone support and a dedicated service representative ranked in the top elements, indicating that the traditional sales and service channels still play a critical role in the B2B commerce experience.

Most Important Elements of Customer Experience for Commerce

Figure 2

Lowest Priorities for Customer Experience Overall

When it came to ranking the lowest priorities for customer experience, respondents had less agreement. In order, the three lowest priorities were:

1. Augmented or Virtual Reality Experiences

2. Chatbots

3. Shoppable Experiences[1]

Only the first element, Augmented or Virtual Reality Experiences, had a majority of respondents ranking it 1 or 2.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, these three elements are popular B2C trends that haven't gained much traction in B2B. Although there is a lot of hype around bringing B2C-like experiences into the B2B world, most practitioners will tell you that the most important elements to carry over are ease of ordering and transparency. There are still many B2C strategies that won't be successful in B2B channels.

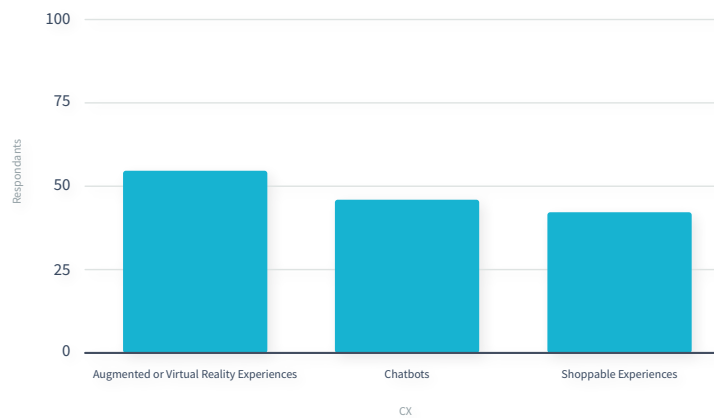### Least Important Elements of Customer Experience for Commerce

Figure 3

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1 Purchasing through non-traditional, content-driven channels such as social media

Top Priorities By Category

The 22 experience elements were split into three categories — Shopping Experience, Customer Service and Technology — with the majority of elements in Shopping Experience.

When viewed in isolation, the Shopping Experience elements (Figure 4) are heavily weighted toward elements of the pre-purchase experience, such as recommendations and educational product content, rather than post-purchase experiences such as reordering or product reviews.
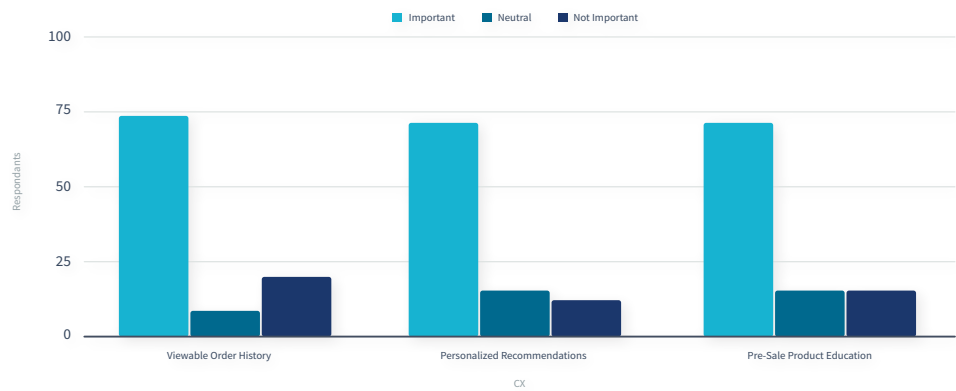
Top Shopping Experience Elements

Figure 4

However, when viewed in the context of all 22 elements, Customer Service elements (Figure 5) rank as high or just behind many pre-purchase elements. This indicates that, for B2B, post-purchase service delivered through an actual representative is more valued than online self service elements.
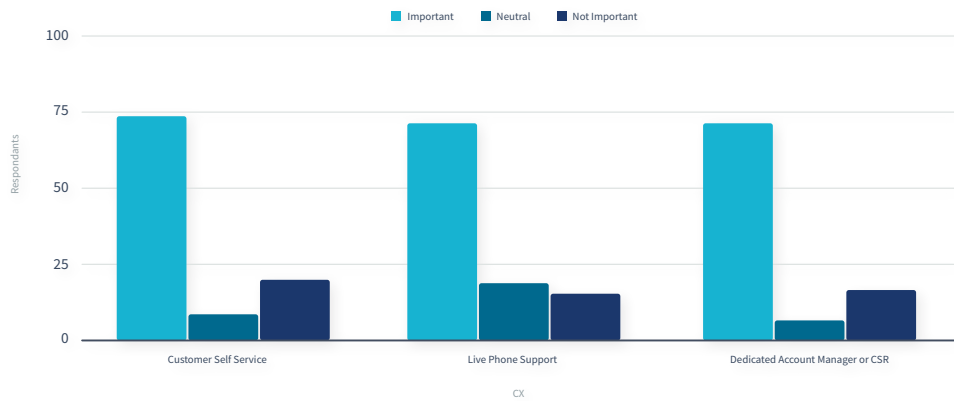
Top Customer Service Elements

Figure 5

In the category of Technology, the only significant trend is Responsive Mobile Sites (Figure 6). When asked for clarification in follow-up questions, many respondents indicated that they're interested in emerging technology and channels such as AR/VR or Voice Search, but see it as a few years out because of competing priorities.

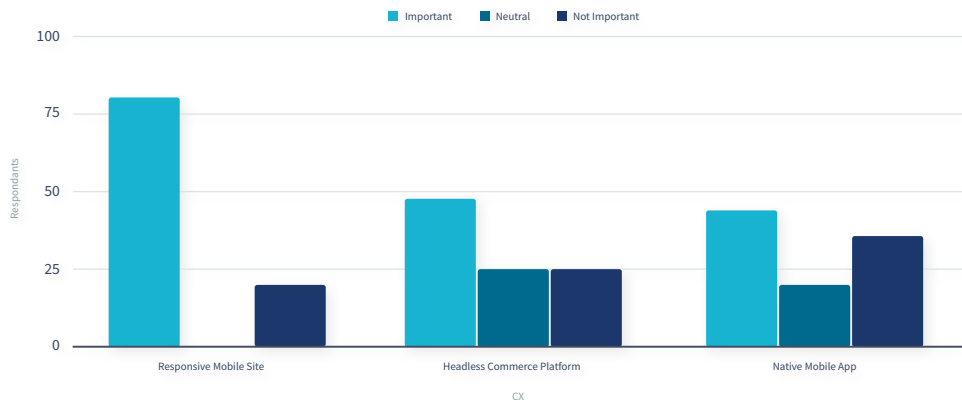## Top Technology Elements

Figure 6

Conclusion

In B2B customer experience, common self-service features and B2C-like interactions are already the baseline that customers expect. Within these elements, however, you may find that your own buyers have slightly different priorities. Some may find little value in product reviews, and other customers might find them critical to their purchasing decisions.

Understanding how your peers prioritize the elements of customer experience can give you a foundation for your own initiative. As you plan future iterations, be sure to return to your own customers' feedback in order to craft the right experience that will create business value for your company.

About Liferay

Liferay helps companies create modern B2B commerce experiences that are rooted in B2B customer needs. To learn more, visit liferay.com or request a personalized demo of Liferay Commerce.

Survey Data

Methodology

For this report, Liferay surveyed 30 e-commerce practitioners with job titles of Manager or higher who are responsible for the B2B e-commerce experience in their companies. Respondents were asked to rate 22 B2B customer experience elements on a scale from 1 – 5, 1 being low and 5 being high. The elements were divided into three categories: Shopping Experience, Customer Service and Technology.

Surveys were conducted in person and individual respondents were sometimes asked follow-up questions to clarify why they had chosen specific answers.

Customer Experience Elements

Shopping Experience	Important	Neutral	Not Important
Viewable Order History	74	6	20
Personalized Recommendations	71	16	13
Pre-Sale Product Education	67	16	16
Real Time Order Tracking and Shipment Status	64	19	16
Also Boughts	61	16	22
Product Reviews and Ratings	55	22	22
Post-Sale Product Education	51	19	29
Subscription Purchases	50	23	26
One-Click Reorder	48	26	26
One-Click Checkout	38	32	29
Shoppable Experiences	19	39	42

Customer Service	Important	Neutral	Not Important
Customer Self Service	77	7	16
Live Phone Support	71	16	12
Dedicated Account Manager or CSR	68	7	16
Live Chat	58	10	32

Technology	Important	Neutral	Not Important
Responsive Mobile Site	80	0	20
Headless Commerce Platform	48	26	26
Native Mobile App	45	19	35
Operational Improvements Powered by AI/ML	42	26	32
Personalization Powered by AI/ML	42	26	32
Chatbots	22	32	45
Augmented or Virtual Reality Experiences	16	26	58

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