

# How customer journey mapping is driving Porsche's success



In the face of a **continuous decline** in global sales, the automotive industry is looking for innovative ways to ride out a turbulent period in its history. And even though high-end brands such as Rolls Royce, BMW, Lamborghini, Porsche and Bentley have announced record sales in recent years, there have been warnings that relying on the selling power of luxury alone will not guarantee success.

In a provocative interview with CarsGuide.com, Sean Hanley, chief executive for the Australian division of Lexus, recently suggested that any car manufacturers that plan to focus on luxury over experience are choosing a path “fraught with danger”.

“Whilst consumerism is on the rise, if our kids become successful, they will want a point of difference,” Hanley explained. “That point of difference in the age of technology and social media and whatever else is available in their time, will be the experience they get from that product.”

Hanley proposed that the lifecycle of customers should now be the number one priority for all car brands, something that is borne out by research including **a report from TeleTech** that iterates the need for car brands to move away from seeing themselves as manufacturing companies to become all-encompassing service-providers.

The days of forgetting about the customer the moment they drive off of the forecourt are becoming a thing of the past. But for some brands, an ongoing customer relationship has always been part of the roadmap.

“The key for us at Porsche is to build personal lifetime relationships, and the key to successful relationships is to get to know people and treat everyone as an individual,” says David Metcalf, head of customer experience and customer strategy at Porsche, fresh from speaking at **Customer Experience World London**. “A one-off transaction is easy. But a lifetime relationship requires effort.”

This, emphasizes Metcalf, means that customers must not only have a memorable purchase experience, but also enjoy outstanding ongoing ownership as well. As part of efforts to ensure that the end-to-end experience with Porsche is of the highest quality, the manufacturer conducts customer journey mapping, detailing all the experiences that consumers have with

the brand and the emotional responses that it provokes, whether that's the first impression of driving the car, speaking to staff at the dealership or having the car serviced.

### **Connected to the customer**

Through this process of identifying how the customer is treated during each contact and how the customer feels at every touch point, businesses can gain valuable information to help direct their decision-making. And in Porsche's case, it also helps the entire team feel connected to the customer, no matter what their job.

"It is important to learn who the customer is and what they are saying and thinking, but it is also important that everybody in the business, even those who do not necessarily think of themselves as being connected to the customer, feel like they have a part to play," explains Metcalf. "Mapping the customer journey can help you do that. For instance, part of the customer's experience might be taking out finance on a vehicle, so the finance team needs to think about their part of the journey. The legal team might have requests to fill out lots of different pieces of paper at the end of the transaction, but is that really what the customer wants? So you can use the journey to pull them into the experience, because they've still got an important role to play in ensuring they have a really good experience and making sure the whole thing works. It helps people to think of themselves as connected to one mission, which is providing a great customer experience."

Furthermore, Porsche also overlays customer emotional and rational desires onto this mapping to help them identify creative solutions.

"A Porsche is a dream product, and anything you've dreamt of having you will have expectations for – you visualize going through the experience and how you'll feel and how everything will be perfect," continues Metcalf. "It is important to think about that when we analyze the customer journey. You don't just buy a Porsche to get from A to B. People buy them because they want to get the most out of life and enjoy the experience of driving. So that is something we try to build upon in the customer experience."

As an example of this, Metcalf explains how any customer putting a deposit down on a vehicle is automatically invited to the home of British motorsport, Silverstone, where there is a Porsche center. Customers are guests at a full-day event where they are treated to test drives of sports cars, driving lessons in high-performance vehicles, and breakfast, lunch and tea. "There's no sales pressure, no sales people, just passionate Porsche people," notes Metcalf. Indeed, because of the volume that Porsche sells, and the amount of centers that it has, the auto firm has always prioritized getting to know the customer well and creating great personal experiences, rather than focusing on a hard-sales techniques.

"We get to know the customer and their needs – have they got a family, is it something they'll just use at the weekend, do they use their car on a track – and build a relationship," says Metcalf. "By the time we get to handing over the vehicle, we already know what kind of

person they are and what experience they want – do they want to just drive off or do they want to bring the family down and have refreshments and have photos taken with the car, to make a special moment of it. So we’ve got to know them enough so that we can tailor it.” And Metcalf emphasizes that this relationship doesn’t come to abrupt end the moment the customer drives off the forecourt. Porsche checks in with customers to ensure they’re happy and getting the most from the car, inviting them back to the driving center. There is also an open door policy on Porsche centers, with customers offered free coffee and wifi access, and even access to their center boardrooms for business meetings if they need them.

## **Relationship-building**

A further way of maintaining the relationship with the customer is through events, whether some of the big car events that Porsche has a presence at, such as the Festival of Speed at Goodwood, or events at its own centers, where recently they were celebrating 50 years of the 911. Some of the centers also organize drive-outs in the summer, and there is also the Porsche club, which while not owned by the auto firm itself, has a close partnership. “Another example of how we have kept in touch with customers is through a restoration program, where each center was invited to purchase a vehicle that was in bad condition and bring it back up to pristine condition, and a lot of customers tracked that and came in to see how it was progressing,” says Metcalf. “It created a lot of interest in the center when you could see the new 911 next to one that was perhaps 30 or 40 years old. You could see the contrasts but also the continuity of the design, which demonstrated the importance of heritage.”

With the focus on relationship-building that the brand commits to, it is unsurprising that it is keen to track how effective these efforts are proving. For this reason, Porsche has used Net Promoter Score to measure how its efforts at customer experience management are resonating with its audience. While the ‘one number you need to grow’ has its detractors, it has proven very popular at Porsche. “We measure how well we did at critical stages of the customer journey - after a deposit, after an experience, and after the customer becomes a Porsche owner,” Metcalf says. “NPS works well for us and our customers are busy people so it’s vital that we provide a way for them to quickly and easily tell us how we are doing. We know that they don’t want to spend their valuable time filling out hundreds of questions. It’s also simple for our colleagues to understand. And finally, it is used by many of the world’s best brands, so it allows us to compare ourselves against them.”

Metcalf summarizes Porsche’s approach to customer experience management as a four-step process:

- 1 First we listen.
- 2 Then we provide bespoke solutions based on the customers rational and emotional needs.
- 3 Next, we measure to check whether we got things right.

4 And then we follow up – if the customer gives us 10, we call to thank them. If they give us 1, we call up to apologize, to listen and to resolve their issue. Once we fix the issue, we follow up again to ensure we have done the right thing to put things right.

“The Porsche brand stands for intelligent performance. It doesn’t end with the people who design our sports cars, it flows through our business right through to our customer experience,” he notes. And ultimately, this means reinforcing the rational appeal of the cars, while also maximizing their emotional appeal – the perfect blend of both experience and luxury.

“At the end of the day, nobody needs a Porsche, but a lot of people dream about owning and driving one,” concludes Metcalf. “So the customer’s rational need is to know that they are purchasing a car that is safe to drive dependable and comfortable with cutting-edge technology that is built to the highest standards and backed up with exceptional customer care.

“From an emotional point of view, when a customer decides to purchase a Porsche they don’t just want to get from A to B. they want to have the most thrilling drive imaginable. It’s about excitement, the speed, the road handling, the roar of the engine, the smell of the brakes and the glances of delight when heads turn to look at the car. It’s hard to put into words, the only way to truly understand the allure of Porsche is to get behind the wheel and drive one.”



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How can auto firms continue the customer relationship after the car has left the forecourt?