

E Commerce application on IBM cloud foundry

Ecommerce Customer Journey

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What is the Ecommerce Customer Journey?

That quote about life from Ralph Waldo Emerson can also be applied to [ecommerce](#) businesses. While it is easy to think about the destination—that purchase arriving in the customer's hands—it is also very much about the journey and what happens en route to that final destination. Just as with life's journey, every stage of the ecommerce journey has its own features and qualities.

Our customers no longer buy just a product, they buy the whole experience of being a customer, they buy your brand qualities, your mission and values, and more. They buy into the ease of your processes, the information you provide, the convenience, the quality of your aftersales (and presales if needed) customer service. In short, they look at the whole package you offer.

We all do [process mapping](#) for our businesses as a matter of course, so we should be doing the same for the customer experience. You need to understand every aspect of how your business operates, from dealing with logistics to ensuring your customers are happy.

And do not be afraid to use shortcuts. The very reason tools such as templates are offered is to make it easier for you to conduct business. They can save you time and money and it can be easy to find one that suits you.

It is not only the price of something that matters to them, it is everything that surrounds it, including how they access your site or app (and how easy it is to use), how you communicate with them across different channels, possibly even using [companies like Slack](#), and how quickly you respond to their inquiries. In short, it is about providing an ecommerce customer journey map that meets all of their needs.

Focus not only on your customers' journeys, but also on their relationship with you; that's important whether you are a small business or a large international one. Investing in [customer relationship management](#) (CRM) software is highly advised, especially when you have a multichannel or omnichannel business.

There are also other aspects to consider. Many people now ask '[what is affiliate marketing](#)', as offered by MaxBounty, and what is its place in online retail? If you use a strategy such as affiliate marketing, then you need to make sure that a customer's journey is consistent across all the options open to them. Whether they find you via your own channels or through an affiliate.

5 Stages of the Ecommerce Customer Journey

So we recognize that the customer journey is far more than a simple buying process. We also recognize that we need to know [how to develop a successful ecommerce fulfillment strategy](#) that helps us win and retain customers. Knowing the main stages of that journey is essential to both mapping it and ensuring that it is as optimized as possible.

And when a business operates across many channels (omnichannel or [multichannel](#)), you need to recognize that their journey may differ greatly depending on which channel they are using.

1. Awareness.

Every journey has a starting point, and in the ecommerce business, that starting point is awareness. This is the stage where the customer discovers your product/service and your brand. This is also where you discover how they found you. Did they find you via a search engine (thus validating your SEO strategy)? Did they see an ad on social media or in a more traditional medium?

You can not only see where they came from but also what behaviors they are showing once they have 'arrived'. Do they look at particular landing pages that give you an idea of what products they are interested in? You could also describe this as the first learning stage; the customer is learning about your business and you are learning their preferences and needs.

2. Consideration.

In this stage, the customer begins to show real interest in particular products or services and move beyond general browsing. For example, with a cosmetics company such as [Bliss World](#), they may start looking at the vegan skincare range, letting you see that this is their specific interest product-wise.

From your organization's perspective, this stage of behavior allows you to analyze what works and what doesn't. Those analytics can help you reduce bounce rates and encourage further investigation by the customer.

3. Conversion.

One of the magic words in ecommerce, but this stage is not always a guaranteed sale. In some cases, this stage can include those customers who have added a product to their cart (or to their wishlist) but have not yet proceeded to actually buying it. In most cases, though, we do consider this to be the stage at which a prospective customer becomes an actual customer who adds to your [conversion](#) rate.

It is at this stage that you as a business have to begin delivering on any promises you may have made to get the customer to this point. Part of that delivery is making sure all your processes, such as marketing, sales, customer service, etc., are aligned and are delivering the same message and quality of service.

4. Retention.

Another of those magic words. Having a customer make a single purchase is satisfying, but having them return again and again to buy is even more satisfying. This means they are very happy with most or all aspects of their journey and experience to date. From this point they begin to exhibit brand loyalty and may always look at your site before others.

The thing for businesses to be aware of at this stage is that providing an excellent experience once is fairly easy, but providing it time and time again is where the challenge lies.

5. Advocacy.

This stage is the Holy Grail of the customer journey but do not expect to achieve it with every customer. Most companies fall short at stage four, but those who do manage to retain customers are then hoping that those people become advocates and brand ambassadors with a high lifetime value. At this stage, your best customers are not only buying but interacting at a high level.

They will interact with you across most if not all of your touchpoints, such as your homepage, any blogs, social media, etc. More importantly (from your marketing perspective), they will be sharing information that you post on their own platforms and will actively advocate and talk about your products/services. That can also include recommending you to people and writing reviews.

