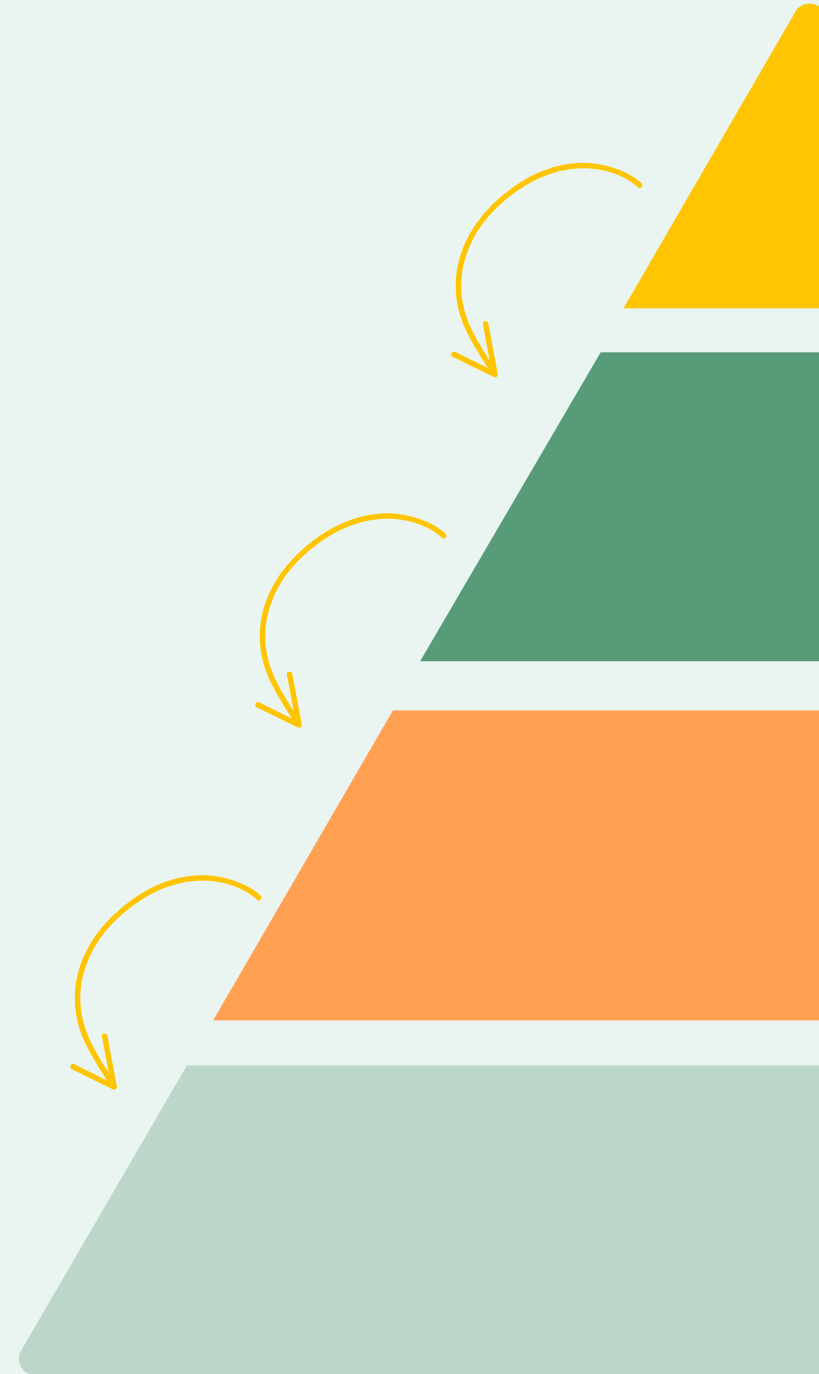


essense

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deliver on the PROMISE

A practical framework for delivering a differentiating
& branded customer experience across channels





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a fragmented customer experience

In the dynamic landscape of modern business, organisations are embracing the power of a customer-centric approach. This enhances inter-team collaboration, uplifts the overall customer experience and fosters deeper connections with customers, transforming them into brand loyalists.

In many cases, various departments are already initiating concrete actions:

- The brand team has outlined an ambitious brand promise in PowerPoint.
- CX teams are applying the six pillars of customer experience.
- Research is analyzing customer journeys & profiles.
- While the digital is putting a channel strategy in place.



Case example

Download our brand new App!

The management team has formulated a new brand proposition together with external brand strategists! This includes a campaign from the marketing department and of course a brand new app that will be launched in a few months. The agile team for creating the app immediately starts creating roadmaps to make the targeted deadline.

It is D day, the app is launched! A few things don't seem to work yet and customer service department is receiving calls. However, they have not yet been informed or sufficiently trained on the new branding, offer and app-feature set. Customers notice this and are disappointed. Clearly a case of overpromising and not delivering on that promise across channels due to a lack of an orchestrated omnichannel alignment.

Yet, without coordination of all these efforts, collaboration and alignment between these departments is often insufficient or unstructured, often leading to an unintended or fragmented customer experience.

But why is this so difficult? How is it possible that a brand promise or proposition developed in marketing is often not delivered as intended in all customer interactions? Why are companies struggling to align teams towards a shared goal and thereby *delivering on the promise?*

In this whitepaper we dive into these questions. We also cover the necessity of an outside-in way-of-working and explain how to align channels and connect with customers on an emotional level for a loyal customer relationship. Finally, we present our **PROMISE pyramid**, a practical framework to help you deliver on the promise!

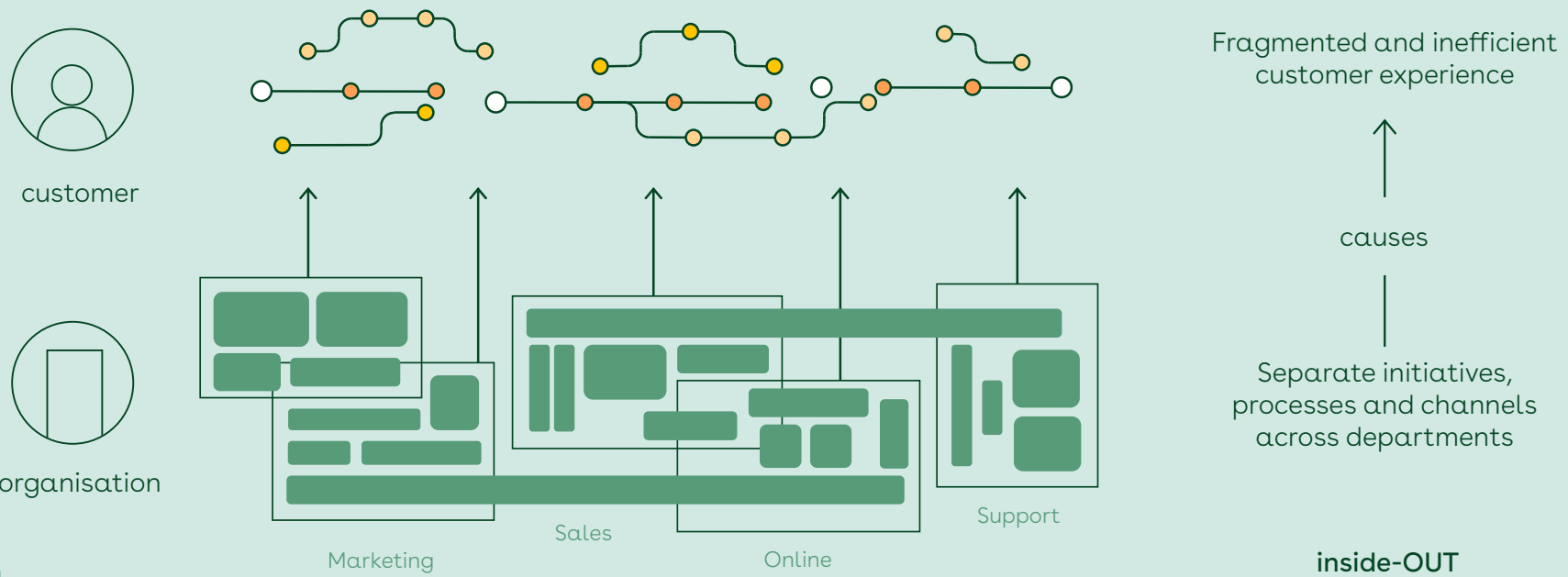


the biggest obstacle: silos

The biggest obstacle we observe in many organisations, lies in the siloed structure of organisations. Departments establish KPIs geared toward departmental efficiency or outcomes. This often leads each department to mainly focus on their own tasks, tools and workflow, instead

of jointly working towards the overarching objective: delivering exceptional service to customers from marketing to customer service.

This is widely known as **“working inside-out”** - in which the primary emphasis is placed on streamlining the internal operations, with the customer experience as the resulting outcome.



Working inside-out has the advantage that departments such as marketing, sales, online and customer service each run efficiently on their own. Nevertheless, the major disadvantage is the tendency for teams to become inwardly focused, reducing their motivation to collaborate with other teams. Which eventually results in a fragmented, inefficient, and ultimately unsatisfying customer experience.

Siloed companies often become fully occupied with their internal working, insufficiently aware of the fact that customers do not perceive distinct departments and, frankly, couldn't care less about it.

So, to address this, it is crucial to factor in the customer's perspective when shaping your processes, requiring a different way of working: **"customer centric collaboration"** across departments. That's where we need to flip our perspective to outside-IN.

Case example

Seamless delivery isn't easy

The large e-commerce players have achieved something amazing. You order a product online and the package is delivered neatly the day after, sometimes even on the same day. A perfect example of streamlining the customer journey to perfection. These companies have full control over the entire service delivery operation and all customer interactions.

If you order through a partner company on Amazon or other e-commerce shop, you will quickly notice the difference. The product may not be on stock and communication on availability and expected delivery times is triggered from both companies and probably also the parcel delivery partner. Very tricky to maintain consistency in communication, and next to this, the customer doesn't understand which brand to believe in case of conflicting information.

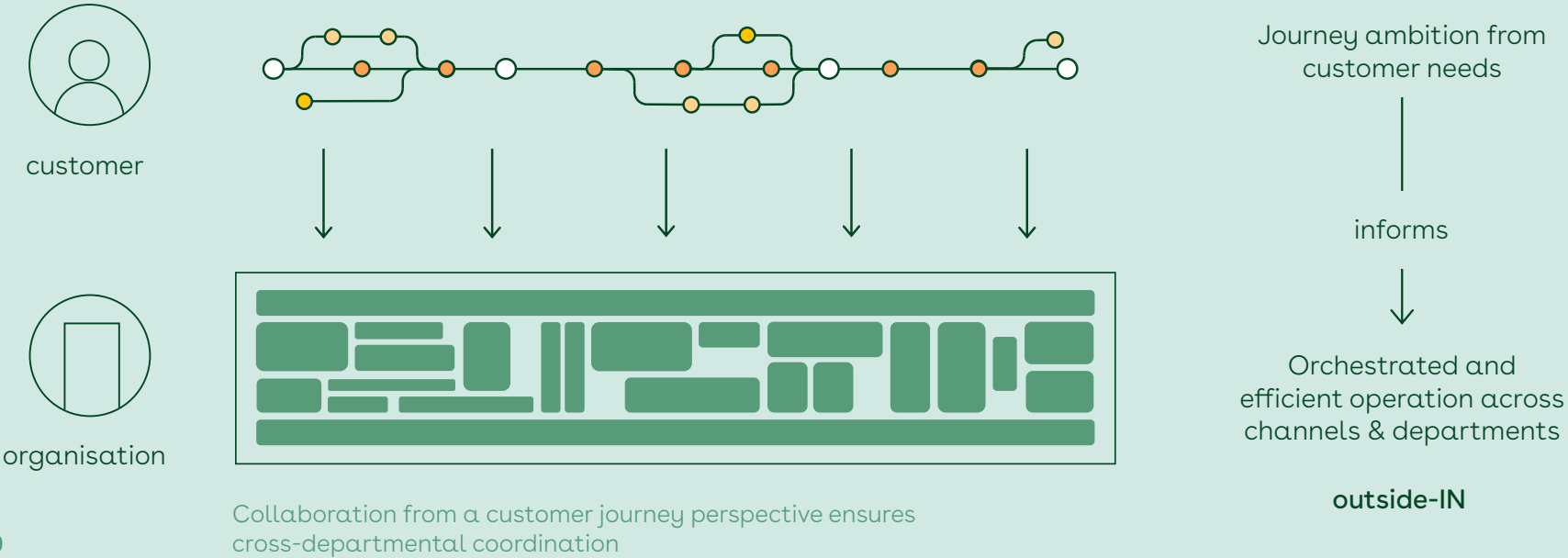
Each company may have independently delivered excellent work. But because the operations & communication towards the customer was not aligned coordinated, the customer experience can quickly become frustrating for the client. This can damage the brand reputation of each of the partners, whether that's fair or not.

flipping the perspective

The encouraging news is that the solution to this is not overly complex, though it does demand dedication and time. To deliver on the promise as a company, our aim should be to roll out a collaborative way of working that unites all teams and dismantles silos. This way, every team aligns its efforts toward the same objective:

the consistent fulfillment of your customer needs and brand promise across all services and channels.

To achieve this transformation, we must flip the perspective from inside-out to outside-in. Meaning, rather than organising ourselves around internal operations, we adopt the perspective of the customer as the starting point: the customer journey perspective.



Customer-centric organisations meticulously map out every step a customer takes during his customer journey, spanning for instance marketing, sales, onboarding, delivery, customer support. Mapping out customer needs in every step of the journey, providing insights and opportunities for improving the service offering or to streamline operations. This is what we refer to as “the horizontal axis” of the customer experience, focusing on aligning teams and channels to meet customer needs on a functional level.

However, while focusing on optimizing the customer journey on a functional level is very valuable, long-term differentiation can be harder to realise, because you are rarely the sole provider of a product or service.

It can be challenging to achieve a differentiating experience with your product or service alone, making it difficult to maintain lasting customer loyalty, given the low threshold for customers to switch to a competitor.

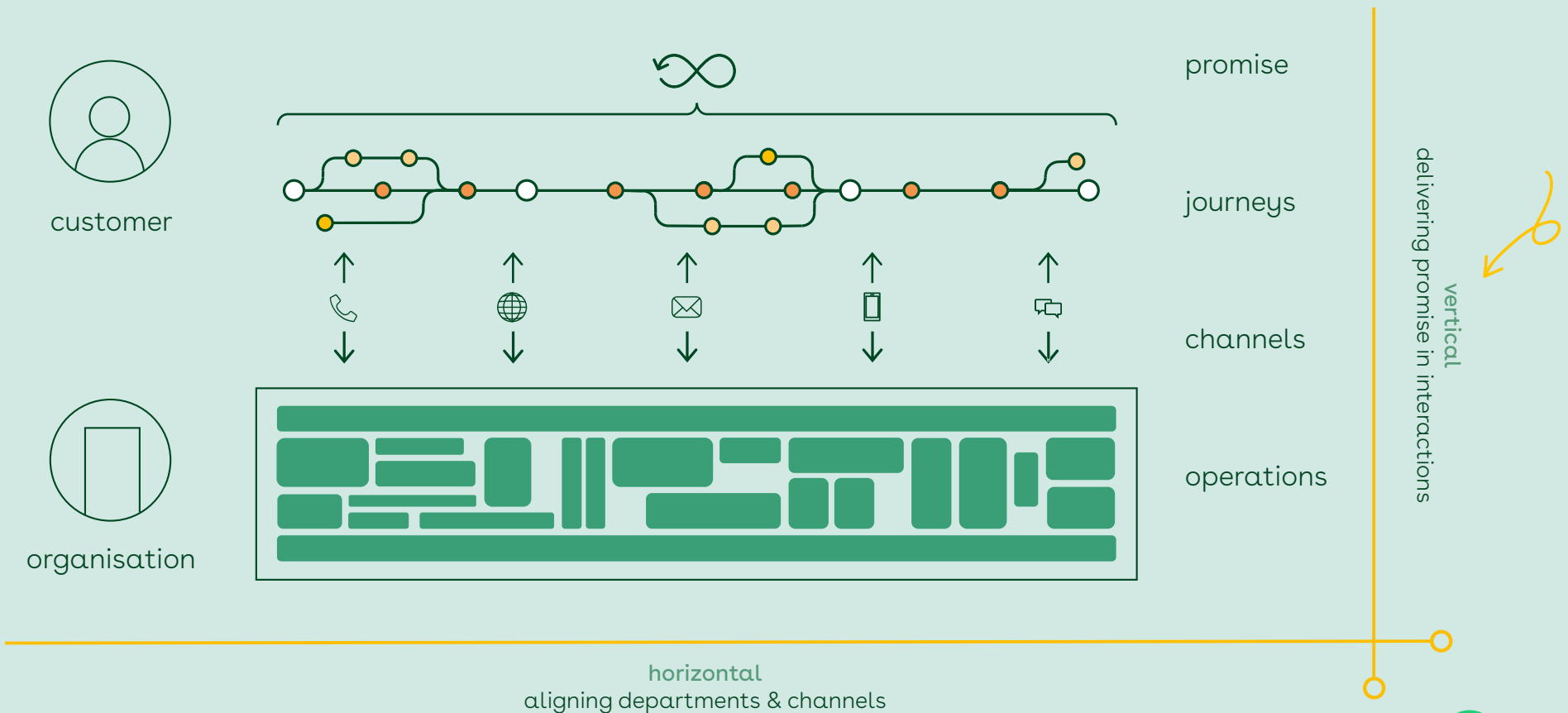
That’s where your brand loyalty comes into play.



the vertical axis

As you are reading this whitepaper, it's likely your organisation is already engaged in customer-centric endeavors, including journey

mapping, customer research, voice of the customer programme, proposition validations, and NPS measurements.





While these activities are all valuable for improving your proposition and the associated customer journey (*the horizontal axis*), it's challenging to secure enduring brand loyalty through this approach alone. For achieving that, the key lies in being clear about what makes your organisation unique and how it could be used to differentiate your service delivery. It's about defining your identity, determining what you stand for, and taking actions that not only strive for satisfied customers but also transform them into fans who genuinely love your company.

In pursuit of this objective, alongside horizontal alignment of your channels, we introduce the vertical axis of the customer experience. Here, we effectively "translate" your brand identity and brand promise into tangible customer experience principles and outcomes. This empowers proposition and channel to infuse the brand essence into every interaction throughout the various propositions and associated customer journeys.

By putting the brand promise in the center of the stage, we ensure that your connection with the customer extends beyond mere functionality, creating a relationship on the emotional level. But only if all internal teams are aligned on this and apply this in their efforts.



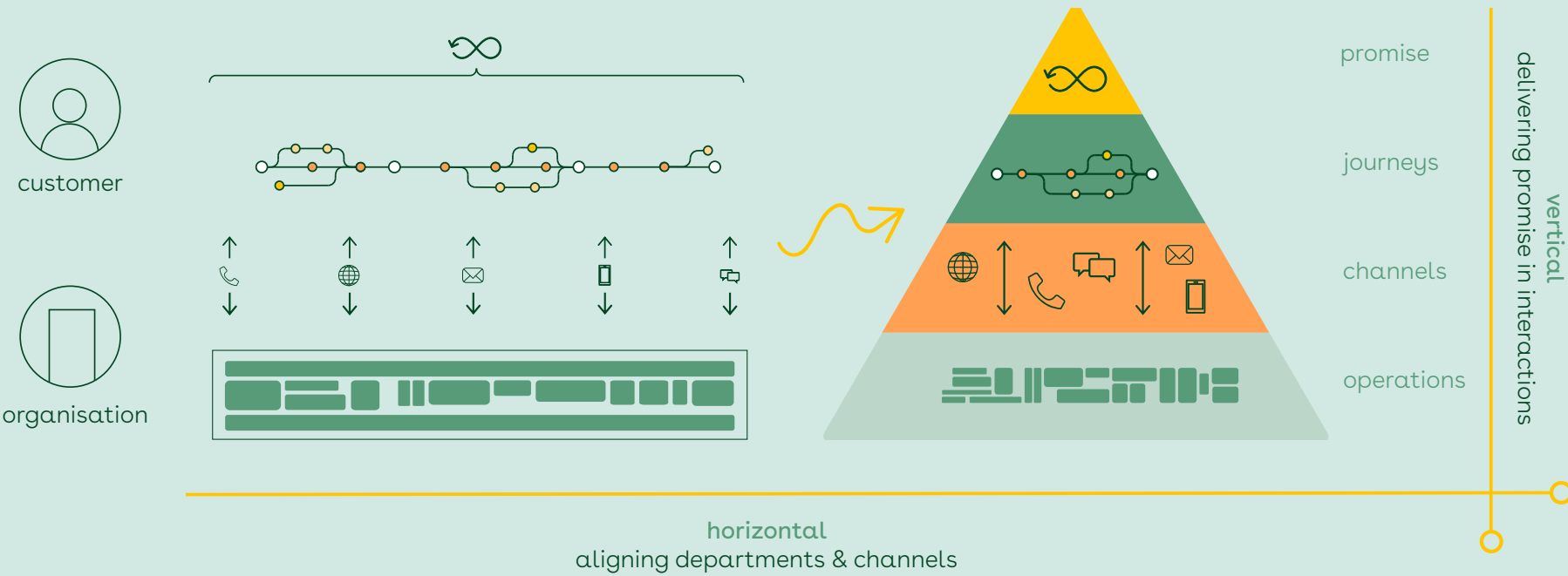
introducing the PROMISE pyramid

In order to manage both the journey perspective (horizontal alignment) and the delivery of your brand promise in your channels (vertical alignment) we have developed a unified but practical framework: our PROMISE pyramid.

Through this model we combine the management of each of the four layers depicted horizontally, while also establishing

vertical connections between the layers. This way, we're aiming to facilitate a customer-centric way of collaboration across departments, striving for seamless proposition journeys - horizontally- with a uniquely branded customer experience - vertically.

Following this framework will help you to deliver on your brand promise within the realm of your customer experience.



Case example

iPhone experience vs. Fairphone mission

If we only look at the functional aspects, the differences between the smartphone of the Amsterdam startup and that of the US tech giant are not large. You can make calls, use the internet, view the time, take photos, listen to music and install all kinds of apps on both smartphones.

The difference is that Apple has become hugely successful with their customer experience end-to-end. Delivering on their brand promise in every product again and again, adding up to brand loyalty. Fairphone, instead, focuses everything on their mission to develop a sustainable smartphone platform in which you only have to swap out components but not replace your entire phone. This is highlighted when you put the phone components together. Very clever branded experience.

Of course, Apple is way more successful in term of revenue but Fairphone customers are extremely loyal due to the emotional connection for the mission and the fact that they deliver on that promise in every interaction.

In brief, the pyramid's vertical dimension highlights the importance of connecting your brand promise with the customer journeys, the journeys with the channels and the channels enabled by the backstage operations to serve your customers. Horizontally each level must also maintain alignment along the journey, across the channels and throughout the entire customer operations process. This, in a nutshell, encapsulates the essence of the **PROMISE pyramid**.

But how do we systematise this alignment to make sure your brand promise cascades into journeys and channel interactions in a controlled manner? As we work our way down the pyramid, it becomes more tangible.

Starting at the top, most organisations will have a brand **Promise** defined. However, this promise is often too abstract, making it difficult to translate into a concrete journey ambition and channel interactions. Hence, the first step of translating the brand promise into practical CX principles and outcomes is crucial. This empowers proposition or 'journey teams' crafting on propositions to apply them effectively.



For organisations housing multiple business units or propositions, this approach guarantees that the brand experience permeates across services throughout the entire customer lifecycle in a consistent manner, building a loyal customer **Relationship**.

Equipped with the tools to translate your brand promise, you gain the capacity to develop and manage the optimal experience for each of your propositions. However, given your company's diverse array of propositions, each comprising of multiple journeys, you will first have to connect everything together (thus make a clear overview of how all journeys relate) to avoid that your teams are working on overlapping and conflicting journeys.

A journey framework is the only way to make your **Omnichannel** customer experience optimally manageable, facilitating collaboration among teams and alignment across the levels in the pyramid.

With your journey framework in place, it's time for the next descent in our pyramid. The journey **Management** approach

guarantees that different agile development teams will work on improving customer **Interactions** across all channels along the end-to-end customer journey.

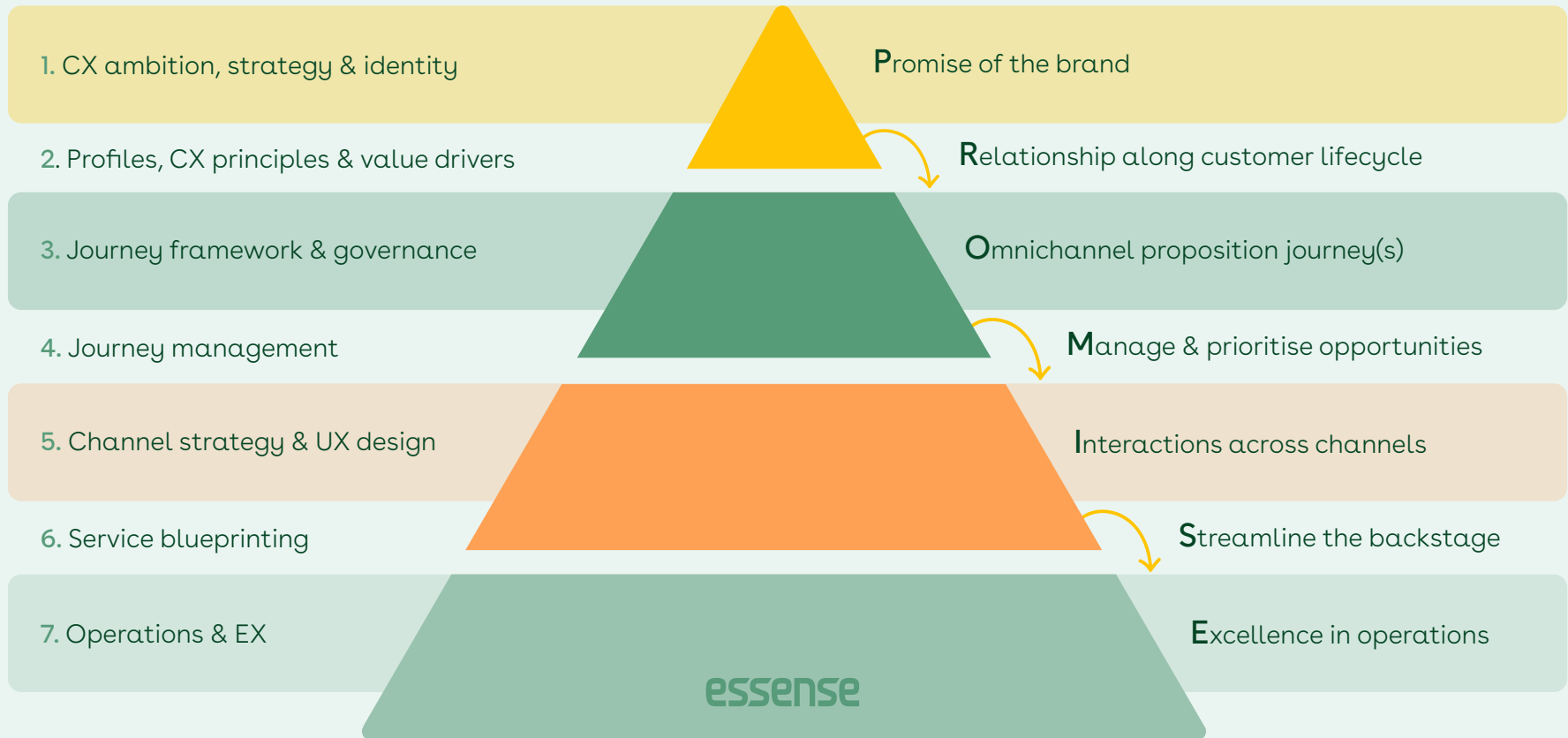
This journey perspective serves also a very effective mean to **Streamline** your operations across departmental silos, leading to operational efficiency gains reducing cost, errors and time to serve. This enables your employees in the frontline of the customer experience to achieve Excellence in customer operations.

In summary, your brand promise is translated into a journey experience, which is made out of all channel interactions and delivered by all operations behind the scenes.

But also the other way around: all operational efforts allow for great channel interactions, adding up to great journey experiences to deliver on the brand promise, and ultimately leading to loyal customers or even brand ambassadors.

Mastering this in both directions is the holy grail to deliver on the promise.





When working on these four levels it becomes evident that nearly every action undertaken by various departments directly influences the customer experience, albeit on different levels. While all teams may say they work on customer experience, they actually work on brand, journey or channel experience depending on which level they're active.

Even employee experience is relevant for customer experience, especially for teams that are performing or streamlining your customer operations. An important aspect of enabling a great customer experience.

measuring CX in layers

Wonderful, we're all working together on a branded customer experience across all proposition journeys and channels! But how do we know if we're actually impacting the customer experience? How do we measure our progress?

Looking at the pyramid it becomes clear why, in many organisations, there is a tendency to talk past each other when talking about measuring CX:

- Management likely thinks about CX in terms of improving NPS, brand preference and loyalty.
- Proposition and Journey teams tend to perceive CX in terms of satisfaction, recurring usage and feedback from customers.
- Agile teams approach CX by aiming at improving customer interactions, conversion and effort scores in individual channels.
- And Operational teams tend to focus on CX with efficiency, average response times and first-time resolution rates.



Case example

Summing up the Tesla experience

Customer experience is regularly measured in its entirety at NPS level. But it is precisely the sum of the measurements at these four different layers that provides insight into success. So it is certainly good to measure the NPS, but keep in mind that this mainly says something about the brand experience & loyalty of your customers, and (watch out) because it can even disguise problems.

For example, a Tesla driver can be incredibly loyal to the brand, because Tesla is innovative, and yes, the driving and supercharging network is a fantastic experience. But the customer service around maintenance can be extremely frustrating. The NPS may be high but the specific journey stages or channel interactions could be dissatisfiers over time. More specific insight per journey and channel would make this much more apparent.

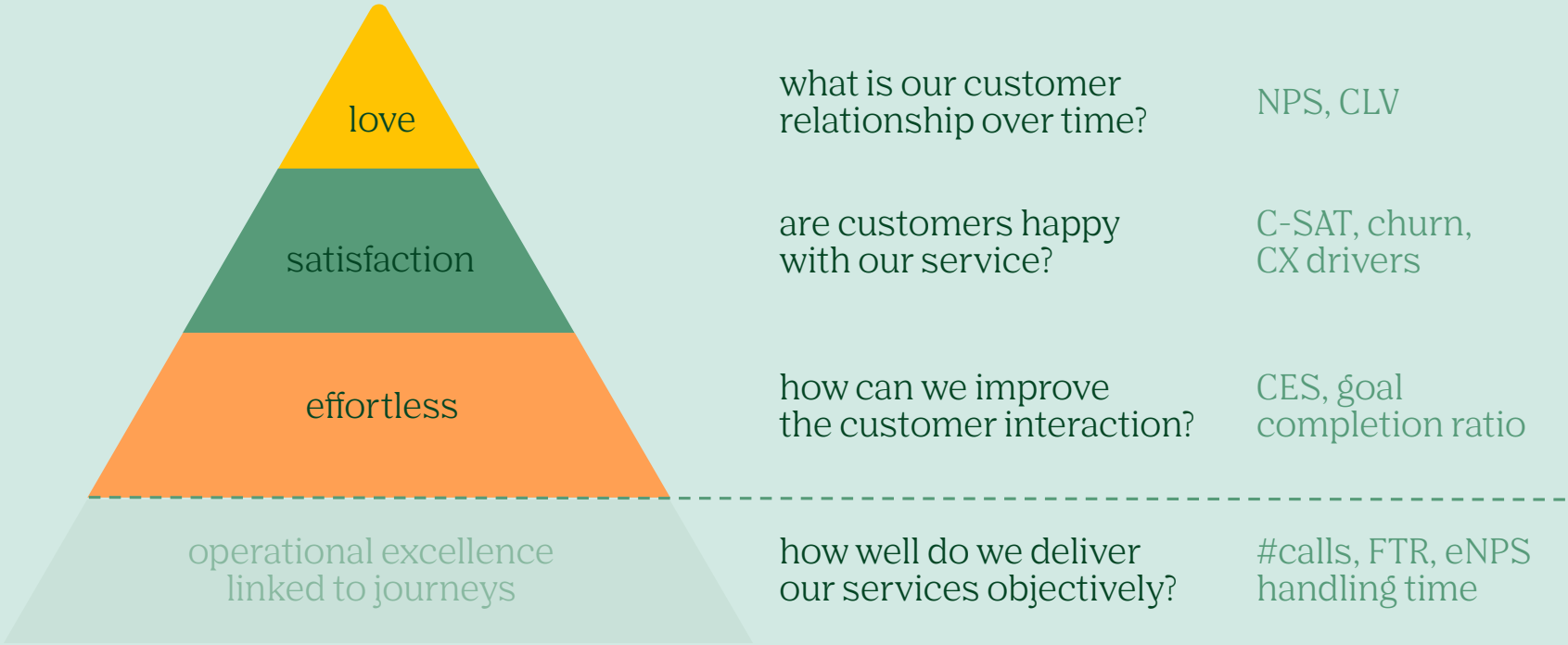
In practice, many organisations use NPS across these levels as the main KPI, as it serves as a strategic metric for the executive roles. While that's great, NPS is mainly a brand-loyalty indicator and is often not a suitable measure for assessing satisfaction in customer journeys or effort in interactions. Consequently, we need to break it down by defining meaningful metrics per layer to make sure we can measure effectively at each level of the PROMISE pyramid.

Furthermore, considering that each level of the experience is managed by distinct teams and levels within the organisation, these teams need relevant measurement KPIs in order to manage their level. More importantly they need a KPI that they believe they can effectively influence. Unfortunately, this is often not the case for NPS, which can lead to teams either overlooking or manipulating the score. Nobody wins!



Instead, we need relevant metrics that aptly measure channel experience, journey experience and brand experience effectively. A solid measurement framework across the

layers of the pyramid will provide insight in each level. As an organisation we need to foster the belief that all channel efforts will add up to great journeys and brand experience.



so, where do I start?

Hopefully, what's written above is very relevant and recognizable. But maybe you're also thinking: how on earth can we connect all this?

Because yes, it requires a complete makeover of our way of working as an organisation. However, it's essential to realise that you don't need to do everything at once. The great thing about the pyramid's layered structure is that it offers the flexibility to start in your respective layer and establish connections either upward, downward or in both directions.

The optimal starting point should be influenced by your role within the organisation. The overarching goal remains the same: connect and align vertically and horizontally, what can be done from every layer within the organisation.

Regardless of your role, whether as a product owner or a channel manager, you can start aligning with other channel managers along the journey and then engage with customer operations, proposition or marketing team to align more structurally.

Alternatively, if you're the tribe lead for a specific business unit, you may want to align with your brand team on formalizing the branded experience ambition. Finally, if you're a customer journey manager, you might want to initiate a monthly governance meeting with all relevant channel managers. The list goes on!

Most important is to be customer-centric with your insights and journey perspective, and to collaborate with teams horizontally and vertically. By methodologically advancing towards true customer centric collaboration across teams and layers, is to ultimately deliver on the promise in everything you do for a customer. Which can lead to the ultimate reward: loyal brand ambassadors.

Whether you start top-down, bottom-up or scaling up, the most important thing is that you start. And remember, embarking on a customer centric transformation requires time and commitment, just like with agile and digital transformations.



Feel free to connect with us on LinkedIn, follow our webinars and join our roundtables if you want to learn more.

Until then, good luck delivering on your promise to customers!

essense
your customer first



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