



Are You Ready to Revamp Your Utility's Customers' Journeys? ©

April 2017 EEC Subscriber Exclusive

When was the last time you went to a utility industry conference and heard about something completely new? I don't mean variations on a well-established theme, like "worst to first in customer satisfaction," shortening the meter-to-cash cycle or boosting employee engagement. I mean something you never heard discussed before.

That happened to me about two years ago, when I attended a session on customer journey-mapping at a conference organized by the Western Energy Institute. The speakers took pains to distinguish customer journey mapping from process mapping. Utilities are very familiar with the latter, but the former, not so much.

What is Journey Mapping Really?

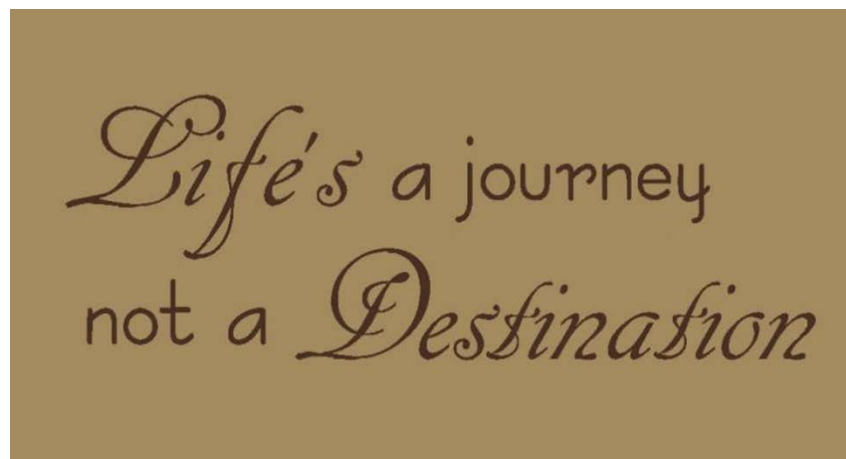
Journey maps link well to process maps, but they are very different and should not be conflated.



“People sometimes conflate journey-mapping with process mapping,” says Melanie Wemple, managing director of the [E source Strategy & Optimization practice](#). “But the power of journey mapping is that it uncovers cross-functional connections and outlines how customer interactions unfold in the real world. Customers don’t interact with utilities in the same neat, hierarchical ways that utilities used to rely on to design a process.”

In the past, continues Melanie, utilities may have thought, “We can force customers to interact with us according to our rules.” But that’s no longer the case. She adds: “That’s not acceptable anymore.”

As its name suggests, customer journey mapping maps the often frustrating journeys utility customers go through when they try to conduct business with their utility. **Whether it’s poorly designed integrated voice-response (IVR) systems, unhelpful call-center representatives or baffling web-based program sign-up pages, a significant number of customers have unhappy journeys.** In many cases, the transaction they wanted to conduct was more complicated or more time consuming than they expected.



Although they wanted to reach their destination (i.e., complete their transaction), the journey was more arduous than what they experienced when they purchased something from Amazon.com or Zappos. “Why does it have to be so hard?” many wonder.

Two years ago, when I first heard the words, “customer journey mapping,” it was still an emerging trend for utilities. But more and more utilities are getting the memo on journey mapping, says Melanie. “Still, many utilities are not sure how to effectively journey map,” she comments.

Utilities can use journey mapping for a variety of purposes, including:

- streamlining processes
- onboarding employees
- cutting costs
- increasing program enrollments
- improving the e-payment process
- breaking down organizational silos
- improving outage communications
- redesigning communications channels, and
- implementing an enterprise-wide software upgrade.

[Joe Piette](#) has been doing customer journey-mapping for about a decade. Currently a vice president of customer experience at [Andrew Reise](#), a Kansas City-based consultancy, Piette also was president of his own firm for a while. Before that, he was an executive at We Energies, the Milwaukee-based combination utility that now is part of WEC Energy Group, where he practiced journey mapping.

Journey mapping means different things to different people, Piette notes, and his firm prepared the table below to help explain journey mapping.

	WHAT	WHY	HOW	RESULT
Tier 1: Customer Lifecycle	<i>A high level view of the end to end experience that highlights touch points and channels.</i>	<i>Shows the entire experience of a customer with your company and identifies pain points and opportunities</i>	<i>Cross-functional workshops with customers and key stakeholders. Journey Mapping software or any tool that allows you to document and categorize touchpoints, channels, notes and artifacts about an experience.</i>	Company: <i>Overview of everywhere an experience is delivered and the interdependencies within the entire experience across sales, marketing, service, operations, communications, and IT.</i> Customer: <i>Ability to create a seamless experience, address pain points across channels, and present one brand.</i>
Tier 2: Moment of Truth Map	<i>A magnified view of a specific, critical interaction with your customer.</i>	<i>Not all customer interactions are created equal. Spending time on the critical moments is important to make sure you get it absolutely right.</i>	<i>In-depth qualitative and quantitative research, paired with existing VoC and operational metrics, expert interviews, cross-functional workshops and stakeholder discussions in order to take action on journey map initiatives.</i>	Company: <i>An understanding of emotional drivers, customer goals, actions, behaviors, attitudes, and feelings of customers and the pain points, opportunities and associated initiatives to create differentiated experiences.</i> Customer: <i>Create a seamless experience for customer when it matters most so they can be more deeply connected and an advocate for a brand.</i>
Tier 3: Experience Capability Map	<i>A view of the customer journey, but also the technical and business capabilities required to deliver the experience.</i>	<i>This allows you to connect the dots from the desired customer experience to the business capabilities needed to deliver it.</i>	<i>Cross-functional workshops to identify and ideate the processes, applications, data, and information needed to deliver the experience.</i>	Company: <i>An understanding of how to deliver and support an existing or new experience from a people, process and technology perspective.</i> Customer: <i>Access to more relevant and timely information, integrated experiences and more robust functionality and personalization.</i>

Credit: Andrew Reise

“Oh my God — we put our customers through this?” an astounded utility executive said during a recent journey mapping engagement, Piette told us. Utility officials rarely go through the channels they set up for the public: They don’t use the public website, so they don’t have to confront a dizzying array of information or a non-intuitive architecture. They don’t call the contact center, so they don’t have to interact with the IVR system.

And when they do go through those channels, when they walk the customer’s journey, he adds, they are shocked and dismayed more often than not.

Customer journey mapping forces utility officials to walk a mile in their customer’s shoes, Piette said: “It helps people on the inside understand what customers on the outside go through to complete something the utility wants them to do,” Joe said. “It also forces a conversation about customer touchpoints and triggers, and how they can be made easier and friendlier to customers.”

In addition to running his own customer journey mapping shop while inside We Energies, Piette has about a dozen engagements under his belt, including with Xcel Energy, Duke Energy, Hydro One and Pepco.

The proliferation of channels customers can use to interact with their utility makes designing a one-size-fits-all channel strategy impossible. Instead, utilities ought to design their channels around their most likely users. Don’t expect a Millennial to interact with a poorly designed application. And don’t expect aging Baby Boomers to choose digital as their channel of choice. Rather, Piette advises, think about each target audiences’ level of digital engagement and level of energy engagement. Create a four-cell graphic and start plopping your customer personas into one of the four panels.

Successful Journey Mapping: The ROI

Piette and others I interviewed for this piece agree having an internal advocate that understands the difference between process mapping and journey mapping is critical for a successful engagement. Utilities love their process maps, but j-maps exist on another plane. Another hallmark of a successful j-map engagement is having a large, multidisciplinary group do the work. This can’t be the exclusive domain of the customer service, market research or customer-experience groups. Finally, tying the j-map engagement to a specific set of metrics, such as return on equity (ROI), customer satisfaction, program enrollment, cycle times or cost reductions, will help keep the j-map binder off the shelf and instead on the minds of the principals.

Getting people from different parts of the utility together to attack a particular problem is where the light bulbs really start to light up, experts say. It is not uncommon to hear, “Really? I had no idea our processes made customers feel that way.”

The infographic below, supplied by [Touchpoint Dashboard](#), shows the top five sources of return on investment for journey mapping.

TOP 5 SOURCES OF ROI IN CUSTOMER JOURNEY MAPS



Source: Touchpoint Dashboard

Don't confuse journey mapping with a Christmas tree, onto which any number of ornaments can be hung. "You can't have 20 priorities and you can't manage 40 moments of trust simultaneously," Piette cautions.

"Because journey mapping is a focused exercise, it keeps utilities away from analysis paralysis," says Peter Haid, CCXP, chief product officer at Touchpoint Dashboard. "You're looking into moments of truth in the customer's journey, surfacing their pain points and figuring out how to fix them quickly. **Used properly, journey mapping can be a low-cost, high-impact way to relatively quickly identify problems and implement solutions.**"

TOP 5 REASONS CUSTOMER JOURNEY MAPS GET STUCK IN THE MUD



No Clear Outcomes

Failure to define a goal for your journey mapping leads to team disinterest and no action plans for improving customer experience.



Misunderstanding the Methodology

Journey Mapping is not Process Mapping. Journey maps created as process map will lack relatable emotion. This will make it difficult to empathize with customers.



Scope is too Large

Be clear about the personas and scenarios for which you are creating maps. This will keep stakeholders engaged and focused on resolving specific needs.



Checking a Box

Avoid creating journey maps just because it's cool. Your maps will end up collecting dust and stakeholders won't be engaged enough to create followup action plans.



No Adoption

Be sure to include all supporting elements (images, videos, etc.) that will humanize your journey map. Lack of emotion leads to an inability to relate to customers and ultimately, failure to adopt journey maps.

Source: Touchpoint Dashboard

“We mapped our rebate process and what we found was that the journey really starts when a customer’s furnace fails,” recalls Meena Beyers, director of energy efficiency marketing and communications for Nicor Gas, now part of the Southern Company. “Specifically, customers used their mobile devices to search for contractors and energy-efficient information almost immediately after their furnace broke.” That was a moment of truth, and Nicor Gas then optimized its website to be more mobile-friendly as well as adjusted their keywords to make their rebate programs easier to find.

“It’s still hard for some utility executives to wrap their arms around a utility’s customer’s journey or a customer’s experience, both of which are largely emotional and thus different from processing mapping,” Haid said. “Moving beyond functional to emotional engagement can be a big step for people whose professional life has focused on the functional. But if you commit to it, journey mapping can be a powerful tool.”

Dennis E. Crumb, CCXP, president of [optimalCX solutions](#), agrees. “The highly compartmentalized work processes inside a utility can lead to a fragmented customer journey,” he said in an interview. Crumb, who worked at Avista for about decade before hanging out his own shingle in 2008, also works with E SOURCE on utility journey mapping.

Crumb emphasized a journey mapping engagement covers people, policies, procedures, processes and technologies. “The best intentions for delivering outstanding customer service or an excellent customer experience often run into policies established decades earlier,” he tells us.

What’s Next for Journey Mapping

Now is a particularly good time to utilize journey mapping as many utilities are morphing their business models. Technology, regulation and customer expectations are driving the changes. There is no consensus on what the new industry will look like. As utilities move from their current state to their desired future state, they can use journey mapping to guide their journey.

Crumb said journey mapping could guide a utility’s journey to its future desired state. “Do you want to be the low-cost provider? Do you want to be the trusted energy adviser? Those are different journeys that are delivered differently. Journey mapping can be used to identify opportunities for improvement that can get you closer to the future desired state.”

Utilities can use the tools of journey mapping to guide their path to their desired future. Hopefully, that path will be less bumpy, arduous and frustrating than the journeys many utilities have, in the past, forced their customers to travel.