

# Lifting customer experience at an elevator company

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Pierre Liautaud, executive vice president at Finnish elevator maker KONE, describes the critical role of frontline teams in navigating complex business-to-business (B2B) customer-experience relationships.

**Superior customer experience**, once the exclusive preserve of business-to-consumer companies (B2C), is now proliferating through the B2B arena. In a recent interview, Pierre Liautaud, executive vice president of Finnish elevator maker KONE, explained to McKinsey's Nicolas Maechler how focusing frontline workers on complex B2B customer journeys can create unique co-creation opportunities with customers to improve relationships and efficiency. Edited excerpts from their conversation follows.

## Interview transcript

### On 'moments of truth'

Our main goal in the customer-experience area is actually to deliver ultimate service quality. To do that, we decided that we had to work along a certain number of directions. The first one is responsiveness. Responsiveness means the ability to show that we can meet customer demands that, even more and more in the digital world, are asking for fast and instant responses.

The second one is understanding our customers better. And in that case we looked at understanding the customer journeys as we interact with them in a deep way. The last initiative has been around sales, account management, and pricing.

So as the customer journey was our key initiative, we decided to focus on one particular business unit, which is global maintenance services. We decided to pick a country—in this case, France. We built a full pilot of understanding our customer journey in the residential

segment. We picked a district. We picked a set of customers. We picked technicians and salespeople in order to model what the customer journey was and what were the most important elements or moments of truth in those customer journeys.

The real “wow” moment in this project was the ability to create new offerings or changes in our processes with the field and with the customer. There was really co-creation. We interviewed housing owners. We interviewed building managers. And based on that research and the feedback from our people, from our employees at the front line in touch with the customers, we redesigned our processes. And we focused on around nine key moments of truth or key touch points.

### On ‘surprises’

There were indeed a lot of surprises in how we built our new maintenance processes. The first one was that a set of customers that we had somehow ignored or discounted actually were the most important ones in making decisions or influencing decisions. And therefore, we decided that our new maintenance journey will have a higher focus on those segments, namely the housing owners.

We also discovered that the on-boarding visit, the moment where the first visit of a technician and supervisors with the customer [occurs], was really a moment where you could really create enormous buy-in, enormous good will. So this on-boarding visit was defined as a key moment where now, along all the geographies where this is in place, we have recrafted that moment to make it a super strong element.

The technician is indeed the person who sees the customer the most. We have more than 20,000 technicians—maintenance technicians—who are dispatched from equipment to equipment, from unit to unit, from building to building, to care about our customers, to care about the equipment that they have in their responsibility.

For many years at KONE, we had a service program called KONE Ambassador. KONE Ambassador was a program through which we trained and coached our maintenance technicians to have a true service attitude toward a customer. In light of the learnings of the customer-journey project, we decided to make this program a company-wide program, not just for the maintenance technician, but for everyone.

At the end of the day, customers who pay KONE bills are the ones who pay our salaries. And I think it was enlightening to see all KONE personnel, whether they’re sitting in the factories—whether they’re sitting in R&D, whether they’re sitting in sales, marketing, finance—to understand the impact of what they do on customer satisfaction. So having a true service mind-set is one of the key ways to win customer loyalty.

### On 'digital designs'

About two-thirds of our maintenance portfolio happens to sit in Europe. So after the French pilot, our first priority was to expand the experience and the project across Europe. We are now, at this moment, in five countries in Europe that have deployed the project. And our goal is that, by the end of 2018, 100 percent of Europe—that is two-thirds of KONE maintenance portfolios, that is 700,000 equipment units in service—will benefit from the customer-experience project that we have built together.

At KONE we believe that the customer experience spans multiple channels. Indeed, a physical interaction between the technician or the salesperson or the customer-care people and the customer is an important one. But more and more, we see the impact of digital channels where customers are able to see in real time what's happening with the equipment, and with service-level agreements that we have passed with them.

We've announced recently the global availability of an application called KONE Care Online, or KONE Mobile, which puts this information at the fingertips of the customer, whether they're housing owners or building managers. We believe that technology will transform our industry the same way it has transformed the financial industry, the automotive industry, and many others.

In the case of KONE, we believe in connecting our customers, connecting our equipment, connecting users, connecting our own employees. All the mobility and connectedness applies to all the stakeholders. We don't think that technology will replace technicians. We think that technology will enable, and technicians will enable KONE to [provide] superior customer experience to our customers.

### On 'scaling fast'

In our customer-experience initiative, we've learned a couple of things. I think we've learned that those programs are best when they're built with the field and with the front lines instead of being kind of engineered in headquarters. So my first recommendation would be work with your customers, work with your field, work with your salespeople. They are the ones who are able to guide and to accelerate the development of your initiatives.

The second one is scale fast. Those programs are meant to create enthusiasm with your field and buy-in from your client. And the rollout of this program is as important as the pilot. You need to build the capabilities to roll out the program globally, and you need to make the resource investments in the rollout. And we've discovered how important the quality of the people who conducted the rollout was.

We started the customer journeys with maintenance and Europe. We are now exploring the extension of our customer-experience program to the new equipment business, to

modernization, to Asia–Pacific, to the Americas. The ability to transform that success into a huge service business in China is super important. So developing customer experience, customer journeys in the China mainland is actually super important for our future. □

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