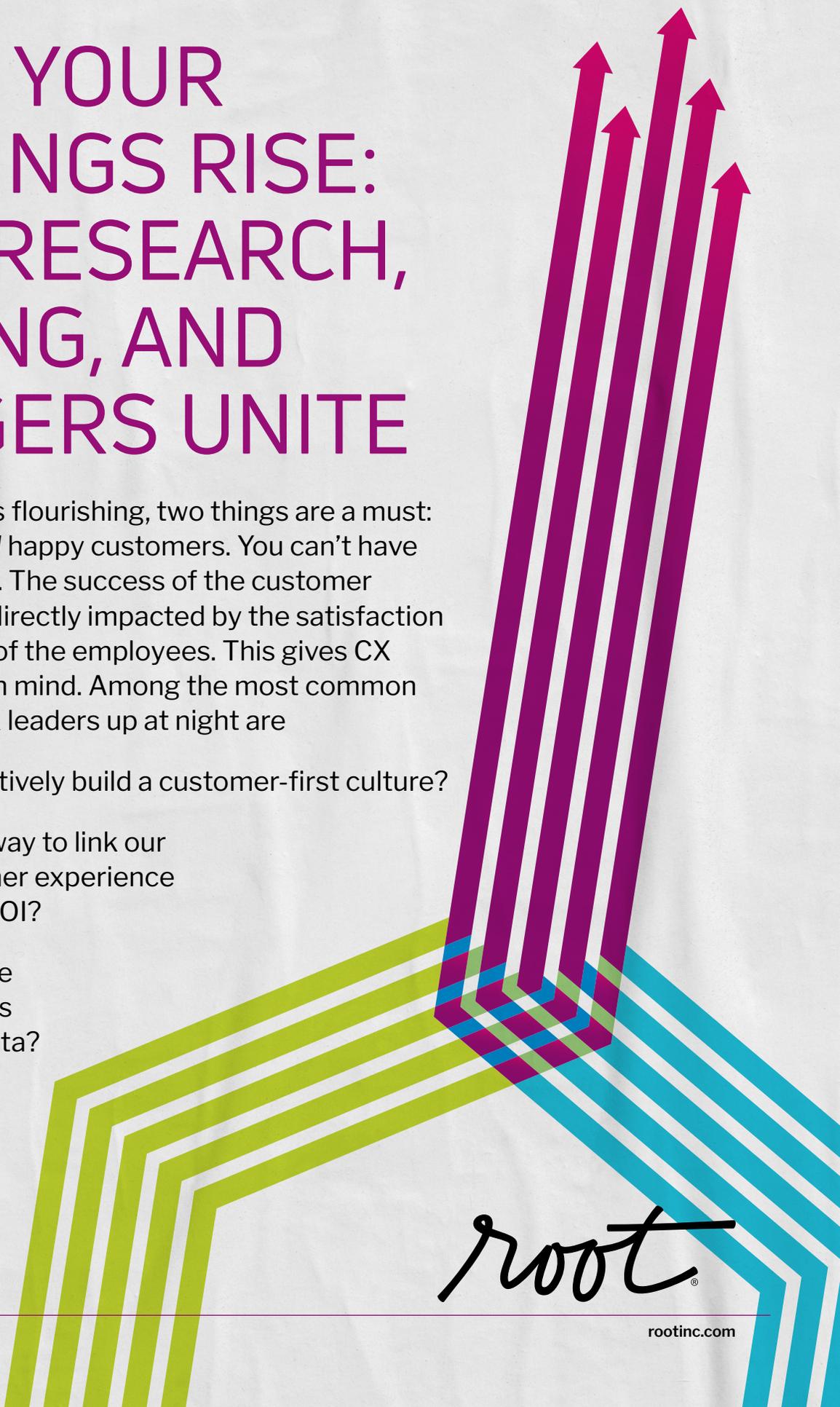


# WATCH YOUR CX RATINGS RISE: WHEN RESEARCH, TRAINING, AND MANAGERS UNITE

To keep your business flourishing, two things are a must: happy employees *and* happy customers. You can't have one without the other. The success of the customer experience, or CX, is directly impacted by the satisfaction and happiness levels of the employees. This gives CX leaders a lot to keep in mind. Among the most common questions keeping CX leaders up at night are

- How can we effectively build a customer-first culture?
- What is the best way to link our upcoming customer experience (CX) initiative to ROI?
- How can we create actionable insights from customer data?



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Answering these questions is critical. Leaders must build strategies and plans to tackle these issues and create alignment among everyone in the organization – from leaders to the front line – because customers are more demanding than ever. They expect consistent, quality experiences as they interact with team members in your company across all touchpoints, from brick and mortar locations to websites, instant chat conversations, and more. And as the customer journey evolves on an almost constant basis, it's imperative for everyone to understand what the CX plan is in order to tackle those challenging demands.

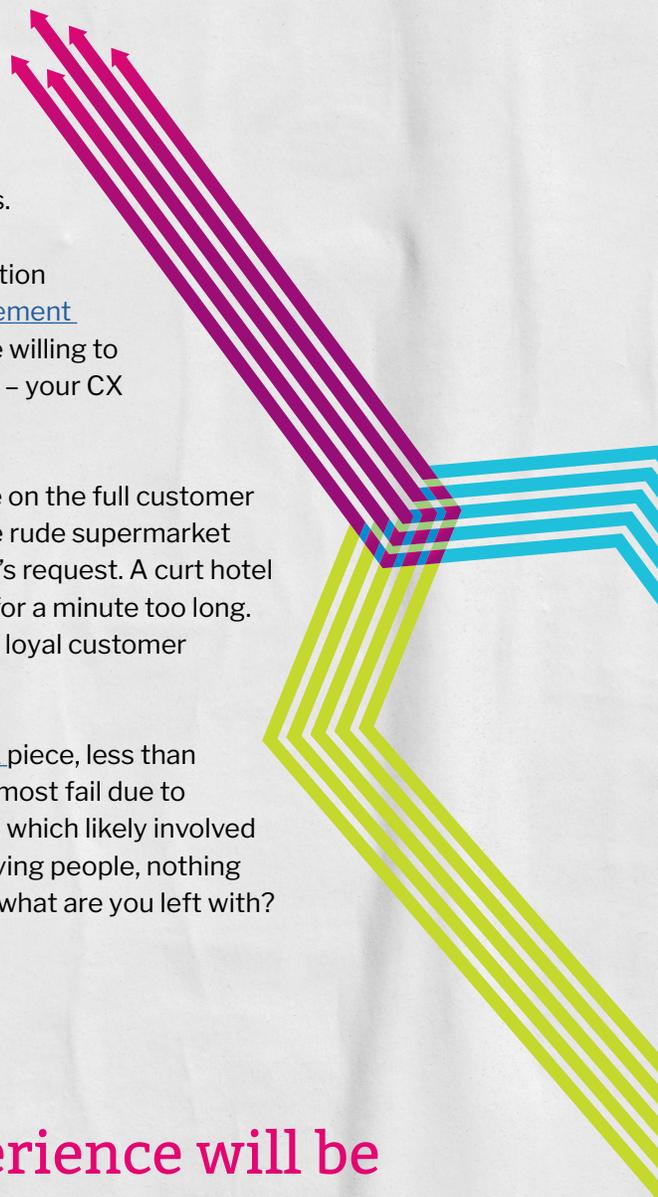
## The Importance of CX Continues to Rise

Putting more pressure on CX leaders is the fact that research tells us that experiences will soon be more important than offerings. A report by [Walker](#), a customer experience consulting firm tells us, “By 2020, customer experience will be a more important consideration for customers than price or product.” Indeed, the [American Management Association](#) revealed that a staggering 90% of customers would be willing to switch to a competitor after a single poor experience. It's very clear – your CX must be strong for your business to survive.

With so much riding on CX, businesses need to keep a watchful eye on the full customer journey. Just think about what one mishap could do for a brand. One rude supermarket cashier. A single flight attendant who rolls her eyes at a novice flyer's request. A curt hotel front desk agent. A contact center agent who puts a caller on hold for a minute too long. One poor experience with an individual can be enough to drive your loyal customer straight to the competition. That's terrifying.

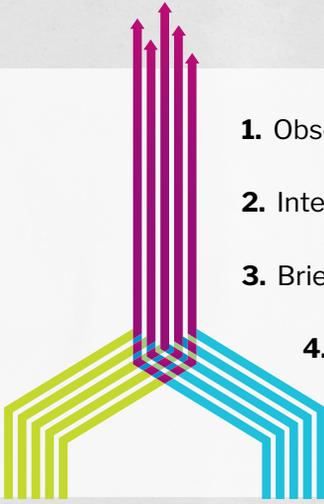
And here's an equally terrifying fact, according to a [Customer Think](#) piece, less than one-third of customer experience initiatives actually succeed. And most fail due to issues with execution. This means that after creating a CX strategy, which likely involved lots of time, resources, and budget dedicated to training and improving people, nothing stuck. So if you try to put a CX plan in place and it doesn't succeed, what are you left with? What can you *actually* do?

**“By 2020, customer experience will be a more important consideration for customers than price or product.”**



## Motivating the Front Line to Change

An organization with more than 70,000 frontline team members wanted to improve its customer experience. Before rolling out a new strategy, leadership opted do ethnographic and qualitative research to test the readiness of the front line for adopting behaviors related to the strategy. This process included the following steps:

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1. Observing team members to get a baseline of customer service behaviors
  2. Interviewing customers to get their perspective on their customer service experience
  3. Briefly coaching the front line on a few new behaviors and providing feedback about their performance
  4. Observing how they interacted with customers after the intervention
  5. Interviewing customers to see if anything had changed about their experience

Throughout the research process, team members were asked how they felt while performing the behaviors. For instance, “How difficult was it to use the customer’s name during the interaction? What would help increase the likelihood of using the customer’s name in every interaction?” These questions gave leaders insight into the mindset and point of view of the front line, which illuminated the challenges to be faced when implementing the new CX strategy.

This research proved that yes, targeted behaviors were performed more often after training, with some behaviors being easier to pick up and sustain than others. One of the most interesting findings was the fact that most team members thought they were demonstrating these behaviors consistently (both before and after training), even though the vast majority were not.

Here’s the best news – customers noticed a difference after training, and customer satisfaction ratings increased by 10%!

But that’s not the end of the process.

## When Managers Get Involved, Magic Happens

This example proves training and feedback *are* effective in motivating frontline team members to perform new behaviors that directly impact CX for the better. However, the leadership team wasn’t ready to stop. Next up, bringing managers into the mix. The question to answer was: Can managers effectively train the front line to create the same levels of change in the customer experience?

In the second part of the research, managers were coached to train the front line more effectively. To ensure managers were ready, they were given a framework to help them coach their teams on specific customer service behaviors. Managers were asked to:

- Use the framework and tools they now possessed to coach team members on the new behaviors
- Continue the briefing and coaching process for eight weeks
- Observe team members – specifically looking for these behaviors – and provide additional support and feedback as appropriate
- Share the reasons behind the change during the rollout to ensure the front line was clear on the positive effects the changes would have on the customer experience

One of the most impactful aspects of this experiment was the fact that at the end, managers felt more comfortable, empowered, and confident interacting with their team members. Because they had been trained on how to coach and provide feedback to others, they were better equipped to lead their teams to success. They knew how to set expectations, provide more communication, and offer constructive feedback that would be well received by the front line.

This finding firmly validates how critical it is to properly coach and support managers. They are the most influential people in the business and need to be empowered with knowledge that enables them to lead the front line successfully – directly translating to happier customers, which leads to loyalty, repeat business, and profits.

Beyond the more confident and prepared managers, other results of the second phase of the research included:

- Positive changes were observed in the frontline team members.
  - Team members expressed appreciation for the specific feedback and coaching from managers.
  - Team members were more motivated and felt supported by their managers.
  - 68% reported doing something differently due to manager interactions.
- Targeted behaviors were performed more often; customers noticed a difference.
- Customers who interacted with team members who had been briefed and coached reported feeling significantly more valued, like the team member cared about them, and that the team members were more engaged.
  - And, again, customer satisfaction ratings increased by 10%.



**68% reported doing something differently due to manager interactions.**

## Recognize Where Your People Are to Get Them Where You Need Them to Be

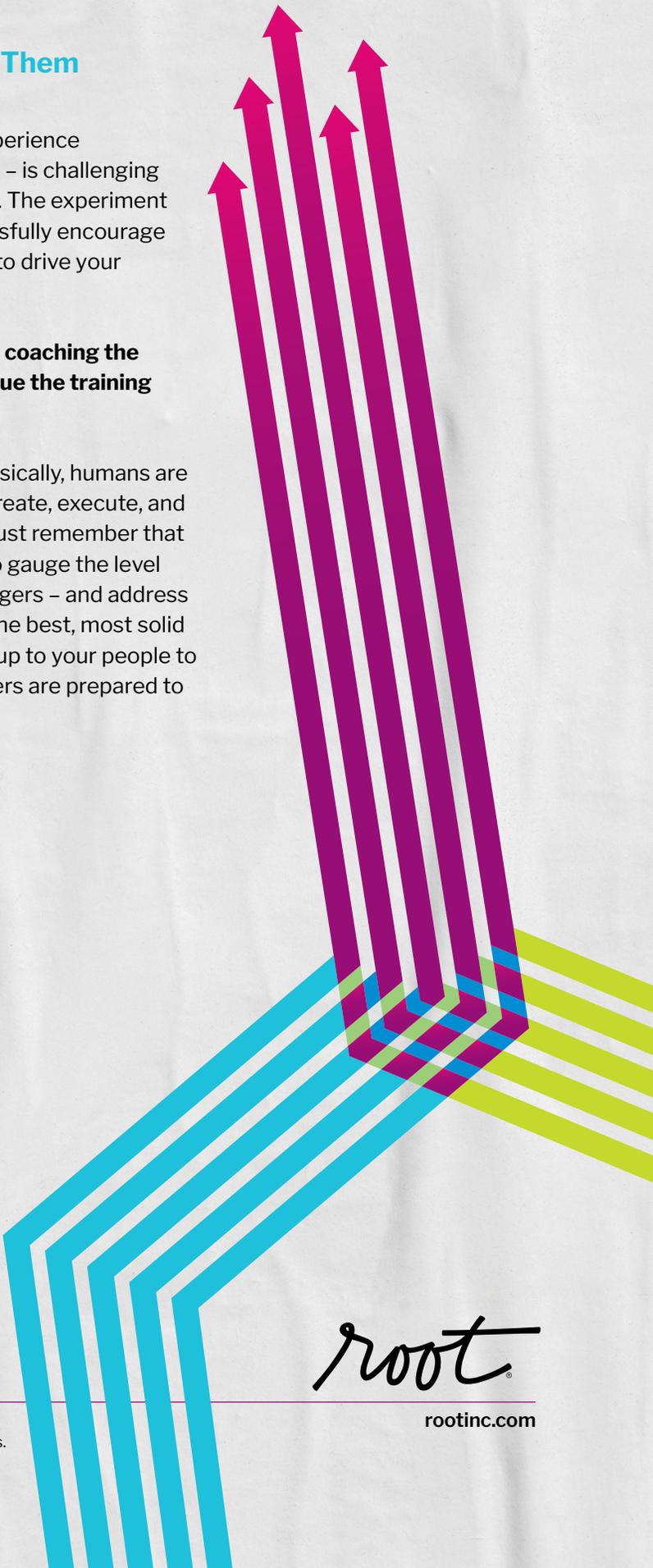
The knowledge that less than one-third of customer experience initiatives succeed – primarily due to issues in execution – is challenging leaders to reevaluate the ways they've been doing things. The experiment above offers great real-world insight into how to successfully encourage the front line to adopt new customer service behaviors to drive your customer-first culture.

**As demonstrated here, the answer lies within training: coaching the front line *and* coaching the managers on how to continue the training themselves.**

Asking people to make any type of change is hard. Intrinsicly, humans are hard-wired to resist change. And while it *is* possible to create, execute, and sustain new customer experience strategies, leaders must remember that to give the new strategy a fighting chance, it is critical to gauge the level of change readiness for both the front line and for managers – and address the challenges before you start. After all, you can have the best, most solid strategy for changing the customer experience, but it's up to your people to deploy it. Make sure both the front line and your managers are prepared to handle it!

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