By leveraging the 'Crawl, Walk, Run' approach, organizations can gradually evolve their CS operating model.

In the fiercely competitive landscape of modern business, a conventional customer success (CS) strategy simply isn't enough. Instead, companies need to shift their paradigm, integrating CS as a vital part of their business operations. This transformative approach is anchored in three pillars: an outstanding product, superior customer experience (CX), and a commitment to continuous improvement.

This comprehensive approach leads to a customer-centric organization that is in sync with its customers' needs, expectations, and preferences across all interactions. The guiding philosophy is a simple yet powerful one: "Are we moving closer to the customer with every interaction, whether online or offline?" Many successful companies, like Amazon, use a playbook like this, continually evolving their CX strategies in response to customer feedback and market dynamics.

The Customer Success Model: How to Accelerate Value Through Maturing Operations Strategy

By Dayton Rutherford and Marcus Vassell

Our ambition is to cultivate a customer ecosystem that mirrors the hierarchy of customer needs and aligns with their changing values and expectations. This can range from providing a simple and intuitive online navigation experience to offer–ing relevant personalized product recommendations. In this context, we introduce the Customer Success Operating Model, a strategic roadmap conceived by Jabian and designed to help your organization achieve enhanced customer experience, streamlined processes, and increased business agility.

Customer Success Model:

Roadmap Your Growth

The CS Operating Model is an evolutionary framework that can be used to measure, plan, and elevate your organization's CS maturity level. The first step in leveraging this model is understanding your organization's current position within it. Are you often consumed with troubleshoot–ing immediate issues like product glitches or delivery delays? If so, you may still be in the early stages.

The evolution of the CS Operating Model in software as a service (SaaS) companies often follows a systematic "Crawl, Walk, Run" approach. This path is depicted by the formula:

Voice of the Customer (VoC, what consumers say about the product and their needs) + Voice of the Product (VoP, how consumers actually use the product) = Time to mature your CS operating model.

This formula illustrates the journey from a reactive, basic stage (Crawl) to a proactive, customer–obsessed stage (Run), a journey that is facilitated by the feedback loop between customers and the product.

Stage 1: Crawl: "Siloed"

At this beginning stage, companies react to customer feedback and product performance with a focus on individual tasks within specific domains. CS organization operates in a siloed domain and processes are executed reactively in response to customer requests or issues. The technological tools are not tailored specifically for customer success and are often borrowed from other functions within the organization.

PEOPLE: The emphasis is on individual functional domain expertise. Employees primarily concentrate on fulfilling task goals within their specific departments.

PROCESS: Procedures are performed ad hoc in response to customer requests. There is limited process integration across departments, leading to less flexibility due to high standardization.

TECHNOLOGY: Tools in this stage are borrowed from other functions and tweaked to meet basic CS needs, laying the groundwork for the organization to become data proficient.

Stage 2: Walk: "Customer-Centric"

In the Walk stage, companies begin integrating customer feedback (VoC) and product performance (VoP) into strategic planning. The focus shifts toward customer satisfaction and promotes increased cross-functional collaboration. Processes are realigned to match customer needs more closely, and technology starts incorporating tools developed specifically for customer-centric tasks.

PEOPLE: The emphasis now shifts to establishing robust customer relationships. Employees become more oriented toward the customer experience and foster collaboration across departments.

PROCESS: Procedures are realigned to mirror customer needs and preferences, enabling improved cross-departmental process integration, which allows for greater flexibility and responsiveness.

TECHNOLOGY: At this stage, technological tools designed for specific tasks are introduced. These tools may not be fully integrated or collaborative, but the organization progresses toward a data-driven model, empowering CS teams to access and apply data insights.

Stage 3: Run: "Customer-Obsessed"

The Run stage signifies a mature CS model, characterized by the harmonious blend of the Voice of the Customer and the Voice of the Product. Companies operating in this stage are adept at leveraging customer feedback and product insights to proactively anticipate and meet customer needs with relevant personalized recommendations. Netflix, with its customer-obsessed approach, exemplifies this stage perfectly.

PEOPLE: Employees in this mature stage focus on catering to customer needs. Netflix, Google, and Apple cultivate an innovation-driven, experimentation-focused culture. This approach fosters a symbiotic relationship among departments that boosts the organization's overall effectiveness.

PROCESS: Processes are redesigned to foster engaging interactions at every customer touch point. For instance, Salesforce focuses on customer value-driven practices that anticipate and swiftly address customer requests. They utilize complex algorithms to monitor product usage and provide new functionality, thus improving user engagement and satisfaction.

TECHNOLOGY: Technological tools are fully integrated throughout the customer journey. For example, Netflix's platform offers real-time, actionable insights and data that influence decision-making and foster a data-innovative culture, creating agentive and assistive experiences.

In the Run stage, companies are continually refining their practices to align with evolving customer needs and market trends, akin to how Netflix iterates its content recommendations based on user feedback and viewing habits. Remember, the CS Operating Model journey necessitates intentionality, and each stage is vital for cultivating sustainable success.

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> **This comprehensive approach leads to a customer-centric organization that is in sync with its customers' needs, expectations, and preferences across all interactions.**

	Crawl SILOED	Walk CUSTOMER-CENTRIC	Run CUSTOMER-OBSESSED
PEOPLE	+ Technical expertise in functional domain + Business oriented + Concerned with individual task goals + Departmentally focused + Limited cross-functionality with other departments	+ Technical expertise in customer relationship + Customer experience oriented + Concerned with customer satisfaction goals + Customer focused + Highly cross-functional with other departments	+ Technical expertise in solving customer needs + Customer feedback oriented + Concerned with customer's business goals + Experimentation focused + Symbiotic relationship with other departments
PROCESS	+ Processes are performed ad hoc in a reactive manner to customer requests + Business value-driven set of rules and best practices + Lack of process integration across different departments + Limited flexibility due to high degree of standardization	+ Processes are aligned with the needs and preferences of customer requests + Customer value-driven set of rules and best practices + Cross-functional process integration across different departments + High flexibility due to customers changing needs	+ Processes are built to create highly engaging interactions across every touch point + Personalized value-driven set of rules and best practices to anticipate customer requests + Cross-functional process integration across different departments + Agile to pivot quickly to address customer feedback and adopt their processes
TECHNOLOGY	+ Tools are not yet catered to customer success; however, tools from other functions are adapted to serve basic needs + Data-proficient or data-savvy	+ Tools are developed for certain tasks but are not yet fully integrated or collaborative + CSMs can request for certain data insights to be produced + Data-driven	+ Tools are fully integrated through all aspects of the customer journey + Real-time actionable insights are readily available to the organization + Create agentive and assistive experiences + Data-innovative

Roadmap Your Growth

Mapping your growth is the final stage. It involves planning your next step in the CS maturity journey. For example, if you're currently working on personalizing the CX, your next objective might be to use customer data for predictive personalization.

Weave process improvement into your strategy, refining your practices continuously to align with evolving customer needs and market trends. Remember, progressing through the CS Operating Model requires intentionality. Each stage is a steppingstone and skipping ahead without the appropriate infrastructure could lead to initiative failure. The journey is akin to human growth — one cannot skip adolescence to reach adulthood; each stage imparts valuable lessons and helps organizations learn what success looks like for their customers.

By leveraging the "Crawl, Walk, Run" approach, organizations can gradually evolve their CS operating model. Each stage represents a deliberate progression in building essential capabilities for enduring success. Facilitated by the seamless integration of the Voice of the Customer and Voice of the Product, this journey culminates in a peerless customer experience, sustainable business growth, and a sturdy foundation for future success. ★

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