Foreword

When you reflect on this time in our history, how will you mark it?

There will be businesses, large and small, that will never recover, others will adapt and survive, and some will thrive.

Shareholders, customers and suppliers are watching revenue plummet, EPS dive, dividends evaporate, and they already know that profits, if there are any, will be hard to come by. Such generational challenges are devastating and will have far-reaching, long term resonance. Still, within this incredibly difficult time, there will be opportunities, to take a risk, accelerate change, repair, or adapt and set for the future. In this future, the consumer holds enormous power. So perhaps a better question is this:

How will you use the opportunity COVID presents you?

These powerful external influencers are driving massive change in customer behaviour. Differentiating and capitalising in the moments that matter for customers and responding, quickly, isn't easy. Harder still, if you don't have an aligned and committed leadership supporting the change, and a motivated, incentivised front-line staff to deliver on it.

In this book, *Lean CX*, Robert Dew, Bill Russell, Cyrus Allen and George Bej tackle the problem that many CX leaders confront every day – to convert what appears to be almost common sense into business practice and priority. As Drucker said, the real reason for a business to exist is to create and keep customers. So simple, so then why isn't this simple truth at the very heart of our organisations?

Some of the largest and most influential business leaders in the world regularly gather to discuss why corporations exist, most recently on August 19, 2019. The 181 American CEOs that make up the American Business Roundtable came together and announced a new purpose for the corporation: that it exists to create value for all stakeholders. Namely customers, employees and shareholders alike – undoing in a single meeting the Milton Friedman approach that the corporation exists only to serve shareholders.¹

So leaders are ready, customers are impatient, and the external conditions present us with a once in a generation chance to drive significant and systemic change. The only real question that remains is how will you do it? But something seems to be in the way.

Lean CX is an exciting evolution and a timely response to this worthy challenge; it is the practice reboot needed, delivered through the application of agile management techniques to the problem of improving the customer experience for real cut-through.

Dew et al. contend that within our largest corporations and government entities, the language of CX is not yet crisp enough to be sustainable, and the bell is tolling for practitioners that don't, or won't, seek to make the commercial dialogue the beating heart of the CX practice.

Stop trying to be the best, strive to be the only, is undoubtedly a galvanising and rousing call to arms, but it needs the support of the practice, commercial acumen and the strength of a robust process. *Lean CX* delivers the framework, supports a crisp commercial dialogue and has a laser-sharp focus on adjacent markets and value creation.

At its essence, the *Lean CX* approach provides an entrepreneurial approach and useful new ways to think about market engagement, iteration and value creation. It demonstrates how to get to actual customer observation via market testing as quickly as possible. In doing this, the *Lean CX* approach may reduce the risk of stalling at the point of planning and listening by reducing the time and resource investment compared to waterfall approaches.

As a CX practitioner or senior marketer it is important to deal directly with a lack of alignment around the customer, value and even go to market. *Lean CX* helps to address this by creating a common language for the organisation; by suggesting that the organisation needs to be an ambidextrous firm, that is, a firm that creates a difference every day by being able to exploit and explore at the same time. This approach stretches the boundaries of contemporary thinking about how CX can be applied to develop innovative solutions to complex organisational and market problems.

This book will re-energise your love of customer experience and sharpen the way you go about creating value for your customers, stakeholders, employees and yourself.

Lean CX is an original, intelligent and practical work, and I recommend you take the time to learn more from it.

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