

# Three ways human expertise can deliver amazing customer experiences in a data-rich world

[Laurinda Pang](#)



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Recently, I was reviewing a Quadrant Strategies survey with global IT decision makers when a data point caught my eye. Ninety one percent of those surveyed agreed that a company's ability to quickly acquire, analyze and act on data will determine if their company will be a technology leader in the future.

These leaders see both the promise and the peril of the 4th Industrial Revolution, and so do we. Our recent launch of Lumen Technologies is more than just a branding change. It reflects how we have transformed as a company and how we have the right platform for supplying the digital solutions that support our client's growing data needs.

That's the digital side of the coin. Having a platform that delivers amazing things still requires human beings who understand their clients intimately. It doesn't take much to miscommunicate. In fact, it can be just a matter of inches.

For example, NASA lost a \$125 million spacecraft designed to orbit Mars, because the subcontractor that built it used English units of measurement to track its acceleration. Unfortunately, NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory used the metric system instead. Their flight engineers failed to translate the information correctly, and even though the discrepancy was a small one, the orbiter entered the Martian atmosphere at the wrong angle and was destroyed.

How often do we miss the little things that allow a client relationship to spin out of control? What can we do to make sure that what they say doesn't get lost in the translation? We've come up with three specific ways to make sure client messages are loud and clear.

First, we're committed to provide a differentiated customer experience built around what we call "deep" listening and learning. Listening turns client interactions into learning experiences. And when those interactions help develop loyalty and trust, we're in a better position to understand what customers want, and equally important, what they are really saying to us.

Second, we protect, nurture, and grow these partnerships by delivering "data-driven" insights and solutions that adjust to changing business conditions or customer needs. This is a natural

progression from our commitment to listen and learn. Our customer support teams intimately understand the value of our platform and the solutions we provide, such as hybrid networking, cloud and edge connectivity, security, and collaborative solutions. Their expertise allows them to have the right conversations with clients, as we work together to anticipate marketplace opportunities or challenges.

Third, if you listen and learn from your customers and make a commitment to develop and deploy digital expertise, then you are in a position to deliver amazing experiences. Keep in mind that IT decision makers expect those experiences will evolve rapidly. Close to 80% of those surveyed by Quadrant Strategies said that they expect to see a century's worth of technological advancements taking place in just five years. Data may be the fuel driving this change, but someone has to be at the steering wheel to anticipate what lies ahead, develop the right response, communicate in a timely manner, and make it easy for the client to be "amazing" in the process.

But with the wrong data, a client relationship, just like a spacecraft, risks going off course. Our responsibility is to use data to illuminate opportunities and light the way forward. Yet we also need to depend upon basic human qualities, such as listening, learning, and loyalty, to help ensure a client experience never drifts into darkness.

## **AUTHOR**

Laurinda Pang is President of Global Customer Success for Lumen. She brings more than 25 years of telecommunications experience to this role, which helps protect, nurture and grow enterprise customer relationships. Laurinda also leads business and operational results in Asia Pacific, Latin America, Europe, Middle East and Africa and Lumen's wholesale business. Over the course of her career, Laurinda has driven significant business initiatives while holding several global and North American leadership roles with Level 3 Communications and Global Crossing. She currently chairs the ITW Global Leaders' Forum and serves on the Board of Directors for Acacia Communications, Inc. (NASDAQ: ACIA). She also serves on the Board of the CenturyLink Clark M. Williams Foundation.

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