

MarketingWeek



SECTOR 1 OF 5:

RETAIL, CONSUMER GOODS,
TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



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Forewords

Welcome to the sixth CX50 list of the UK's top 50 customer experience professionals.

Cognizant is delighted to have joined forces with Marketing Week and Adobe to highlight and celebrate the innovators and change-makers leading the way in customer experience (CX).

It's a pivotal moment for CX as the pace of change steps up yet again. There are more opportunities to reimagine experiences than ever before, particularly with the potential of generative AI. Whilst exciting, CX leaders are challenged to adapt, fulfil ever-expanding customer expectations, and make the most of the emerging modern technology landscape.

Businesses that are winning in experience still place customer-centricity, brand purpose, sustainability and transparency at the heart of their CX strategy. Now, they are combining this with active exploration of a new wave of strategies and technologies. Uniting the proven with innovation is what enables them to deliver the next generation of faster, seamless, intuitive and flawless experiences.

This year's CX50 highlights the 50 leaders who are successfully navigating this wave of change.

Congratulations to them all.



Rohit Gupta
Managing Director, UK and Ireland
Cognizant



Ian Barlow
Head of DX, UK and Ireland
Cognizant



James Lennon
Sales Director, UK and Ireland
Cognizant Netcentric

At Adobe we believe today's digital leaders have the unenviable challenge of keeping up with the lightning pace of marketing innovation, while delivering personalised experiences for customers.

The best go even further, and create highly personalised experiences for every customer, on every channel, in real-time, that not only deliver results today, but position their organisation for future success.

We are proud to partner with Cognizant and Marketing Week on CX50 to celebrate those individual leaders.



Suzanne Steele
*Vice President and Managing
Director, United Kingdom,
Ireland, Middle East and SSA*
Adobe



Russel Parsons
Editor-in-chief
Marketing Week

Few of us had a fun year in 2023. Growth was insipid, budgets were constrained and whatever extra money customers could spend went mostly down the drain of inflation. Add to this the corporate nervousness around the wars in Ukraine and the Middle East, and the political polarisation across the West, and the environment was far from conducive to investing in customer-centricity.

If things don't exactly look rosy now that we've turned our calendars to 2024, they at least look a bit less uncertain. Most brands seem to know what they have to spend, even if it's less than it was before. Time, then, to regain composure and remind ourselves what the best brands never forget: that regardless of the economic climate, we are nowhere without our customers.

And this, once again, is where the CX50 comes in. For the sixth time, Marketing Week – along with Cognizant and Adobe – has scoured the terrain to find the best examples of customer focus that the UK can offer. We've used our tried and tested approach to identify the top 50 customer experience professionals in the country, highlighting both pioneering product innovations and basic good service, as well as everything in between.

That's not to say we're standing still. We've done a few things differently in 2024, namely expanding the list outside the consumer sphere to look more deeply into the B2B and public sectors – thus offering more detailed and diverse perspectives on how brands create customer value across the whole economy. But the common dedication towards one simple goal remains plain: the pursuit of better experiences that benefit customers and businesses alike.

Methodology

The Marketing Week CX50, in partnership with Cognizant and Adobe, is the pre-eminent annual list of the UK's top 50 customer experience professionals, now in its sixth year.

For 2024, we have taken a new sector-driven approach to compiling the CX50 list, in an effort to better represent the diverse range of customer experiences and priorities present across the economy – particularly increasing its coverage of B2B organisations and the public sector compared to previous years. The CX50 2024 is divided into the following five sectors, each featuring 10 professionals:

- Retail, consumer goods, travel and hospitality
- Financial services
- Manufacturing, logistics, energy and utilities
- Life sciences
- Public sector

Our criteria and methodology for determining the CX50's members remain the same as in previous years. In order to create a pool of candidates, we combine nominations from Marketing Week and Cognizant's professional networks with independent measures of brands that perform highly on CX. To select the final list, we then assess individuals' achievements in the past year and over the course of their careers against the three criteria of impact, innovation and influence.

The CX50 members possess an eclectic set of skills and responsibilities, all crucial in the effort to deliver exceptional customer experience, so while we have not split the CX50 2024 into the five categories we have used previously, these nevertheless remain relevant as descriptions of who the CX50 are and what they embody, namely: organisational leaders, brand guardians, technologists, disruptors/challengers and growth drivers.

CX50 2024

RETAIL, CONSUMER GOODS, TRAVEL & HOSPITALITY

| | | |
|-------------------------|---|---------------------------|
| Clara Beattie | <i>Head of Technology – Marketing, Online and Retail</i> | Morrisons |
| Annika Bizon | <i>Marketing and Omnichannel Director, UK and Ireland</i> | Samsung Electronics |
| Paula Bobbett | <i>Chief Digital Officer</i> | Boots |
| Stephen Cassidy | <i>Managing Director, UK and Ireland</i> | Hilton |
| Jack Constantine | <i>Chief Digital Officer</i> | Lush |
| Gavin Forth | <i>Marketing and Digital Director</i> | Jet2.com and Jet2holidays |
| Leanne Gaughan | <i>Head of Ecommerce</i> | Whitbread |
| Sara Holt | <i>Group Marketing Director, UK and Europe</i> | Merlin Entertainments |
| Neal Jones | <i>Chief Sales and Marketing Officer, EMEA</i> | Marriott International |
| Charlotte Lock | <i>Customer Director</i> | John Lewis Partnership |

CX50 2024

RETAIL, CONSUMER GOODS, TRAVEL & HOSPITALITY



Clara Beattie

Head of Technology – Marketing, Online and Retail
Morrisons

Clara Beattie is accountable for the transformation of technology at Morrisons, ensuring the supermarket has the right tools, processes and ways of working to deliver new digital products at the speed required in today's retail sector.

In her time with Morrisons, she has been responsible for developing customer websites and apps, as well as the systems behind the Morrisons More customer loyalty programme, and technology to enable the onboarding and management of wholesale customers. She has amassed particularly strong experience within the fields of ecommerce, marketing technology, CRM and data.

Before she joined Morrisons in 2021, Beattie set the digital product strategy at Daily Mail Group, leading large transformations of people, processes and systems. That followed 18 years in various roles at Direct Line Group (previously RBS Insurance), where she started her career. She says that “curiosity and hunger for a challenge” have been constant features of her career, spent developing commercial partnerships and customer relationships as well as digital platforms.



Annika Bizon

Marketing and Omnichannel Director, UK and Ireland
Samsung Electronics

“My team and I spend a lot of time talking to and about our customers, finding out their behaviours, purchase drivers and shopping habits,” says Annika Bizon, explaining how she combined Samsung’s UK and Ireland marketing and omnichannel functions to put customers at the heart of everything – whether it be through insights from focus groups, consumer research or sales data. In January 2024, she was given expanded responsibility for mobile experience in Ireland.

As well as keeping her finger on the customer pulse, she is also at the centre of driving forward new product offerings. For example, Samsung is constantly expanding its device ecosystem – including wearables, hearables and large devices such as TVs – with partnerships such as Disney+ being invaluable to this. The brand has also made foldable smartphones one of its strategic product priorities globally, and Bizon is closely involved in efforts to get the new technology into more consumers’ hands, giving them the confidence to buy.

She is undoubtedly positioned at the forefront of the UK tech industry, being a member of Meta’s advisory board in addition to her Samsung role. Looking ahead, she sees artificial intelligence playing a growing role in the creation and delivery of relevant marketing content.

“

My team and I spend a lot of time talking to and about our customers, finding out their behaviours, purchase drivers and shopping habits.”

Annika Bizon, Samsung

CX50 2024

RETAIL, CONSUMER GOODS, TRAVEL & HOSPITALITY



Paula Bobbett
Chief Digital Officer
Boots

Part of the Boots executive leadership team since April 2022, Paula Bobbett brings deep knowledge of analytics, ecommerce and marketing to the role of Chief Digital Officer, having previously served as Director of Boots.com and before that in senior positions at Dixons Carphone and Avon.

Since first joining Boots in December 2020, Bobbett has been at the centre of driving huge growth in online market share and sales – the latter being 60% higher than pre-pandemic levels by May 2022. She has led on significant user experience improvements to the retailer’s online basket and checkout processes and has laid the technology foundations for future innovation. She was also instrumental in setting up Boots’ Deliveroo partnership, which enables fast delivery of many product ranges from nearby stores.

In the newly created Chief Digital Officer role, Bobbett is responsible for delivering digital transformation at scale and speed across Boots’ commercial operations.



Stephen Cassidy
Managing Director, UK and Ireland
Hilton

It should be no surprise that Hilton excels at customer experience, given it continues to uphold its founder’s vision “to fill the earth with the light and warmth of hospitality”. Senior vice-president and managing director Stephen Cassidy takes ultimate responsibility for delivering on Conrad Hilton’s promise in the UK and Ireland, and therefore for the company’s top 10 status in KPMG’s UK Customer Experience Excellence rankings for 2023.

With 175 hotels across the UK and Ireland, among other things Hilton guests have access to an app that enables booking, check-in and keyless room entry, as well as flexibility to choose optional extras such as breakfast – a key factor in its Honors programme being the fastest-growing loyalty scheme in the sector globally. It is Hilton’s staff that enable consistently high service levels to be maintained, and the company’s support for them is clear, having been named best workplace in the world by Fortune and Great Place to Work. Cassidy has particularly advocated giving more opportunities to people with learning disabilities, saying: “Building an inclusive workplace which allows every individual to thrive is fundamental to the success of any business.”

In the UK specifically, Cassidy oversaw refurbishment of the brand’s oldest UK hotel, the London Hilton on Park Lane, in 2023. And his vast sector experience was also recognised in his elevation to the role of chair of industry body UKHospitality.

“

Building an inclusive workplace which allows every individual to thrive is fundamental to the success of any business.”

Stephen Cassidy, Hilton

CX50 2024

RETAIL, CONSUMER GOODS, TRAVEL & HOSPITALITY



Jack Constantine
Chief Digital Officer
Lush

“I invent bath bombs whilst navigating the digital landscape for Lush,” is how Jack Constantine neatly summarises his own role at the cosmetics manufacturer and retailer. The brand regularly features highly in customer experience rankings, which is testament to the unwavering attention it pays not only to delighting customers but also to its ethical principles, which include fighting animal testing and minimising packaging.

Constantine’s job is to generate the same good will from customers in the digital sphere, and he has developed principles governing Lush’s presence there: open source and free software, ethical privacy and data, and ethical hardware and e-waste management. “If we can put a marker in the sand and strive to be better, hopefully the rest of the market – and then the world – will follow suit,” he says.

In particular, Lush took a stand last year in moving a third of its digital spend away from platforms such as Google and Meta as part of its ‘big tech rebellion’, preferring to engage smaller communities in environments such as the metaverse. Constantine has also been behind storytelling initiatives such as Lush’s takeover of the Outernet venue in London with a multisensory digital experience last December.



Gavin Forth
Marketing and Digital Director
Jet2.com and Jet2holidays

Jet2.com and Jet2holidays are accustomed to receiving recognition for customer experience, with a host of recent accolades from various bodies both in and outside the travel sector – including Which? Travel Brand of the Year in both 2022 and 2023. In his 11 years working on the brands, Gavin Forth has played no small part in that success.

He has been behind campaigns and partnerships such as tie-ups with ITV over the past two summers, which saw competition winners get a Love Island-style trip courtesy of VIBE by Jet2holidays, the brand’s offering targeted at millennials. Forth is also unerring in communicating the “VIP experience” the Jet2 brands offer all customers.

Prior to joining the company in 2013, he had stints at GHD, Orange, Boots and Guinness.

“

If we can put a marker in the sand and strive to be better, hopefully the rest of the market – and then the world – will follow suit.”

Jack Constantine, Lush

CX50 2024

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Leanne Gaughan
Head of Ecommerce
Whitbread

With a remit covering the Premier Inn brand in the UK and Germany, as well as its InnBusiness offering for corporate bookings, Head of Ecommerce Leanne Gaughan has wide-ranging responsibilities covering ecommerce products, content and merchandising, the user interface and experience, and marketing technology and automation. Working within the commercial function and reporting into the executive committee, she is ultimately accountable for driving revenue through digital products.

In her current post since 2020, she has been heavily involved in digital transformation as part of the Whitbread group's shift to new platforms for both property management and reservations. She also has the task of planning for future evolutions of the digital customer experience.

Gaughan's understanding of the Whitbread business and its customers is almost unrivalled, having worked her way up to the Head of Ecommerce role after originally joining the company's graduate scheme.



Sara Holt
Group Marketing Director, UK and Europe
Merlin Entertainments

As Europe's biggest operator of theme parks and attractions – and the second-biggest in the world – Merlin is a brand with big plans this year, including the launch of the UK's tallest and fastest rollercoaster, Hyperia, and the opening of two Peppa Pig theme parks in Germany and the US. It's Sara Holt's job to drive the growth agenda through a new product development strategy across Merlin's European destinations, with what she calls "a relentless focus on key drivers of NPS and guest satisfaction".

Holt took on her role in 2023 with a brief to execute a digital transformation of Merlin's European marketing, promising to "unleash new sources of growth through data". One of her key achievements already has been overhauling the use of first- and third-party data to achieve a 60% increase in return on ad spend. She also set up a social media pilot that drove more than 40 million incremental video views and doubled engagement in the space of four months.

“

[We have] a relentless focus on key drivers of NPS and guest satisfaction.”

Sara Holt, Merlin

CX50 2024

RETAIL, CONSUMER GOODS, TRAVEL & HOSPITALITY



Neal Jones

Chief Sales and Marketing Officer, EMEA
Marriott International

Marriott is the world's largest hotel group by number of rooms, and as a member of the EMEA senior executive leadership team, Neal Jones is tasked with driving growth strategies for the region and positioning the company's brands at the forefront of the hospitality sector.

Sustainability and AI will be the two most influential trends for the future of travel, Jones argues, noting that the former is already established in consumers' holiday planning, while 90% of those who have used it say it influenced their plans. "Generative AI is perfectly placed to analyse huge amounts of information for travellers, and offer them recommendations based on it," he says, adding that "we expect its use to become even more mainstream in the next three years". On the sustainability front, he echoes Marriott's customers' view that "holiday companies have a responsibility to support the local communities where they offer holidays" – something that's already influencing projects Marriott is developing in Africa.

It's also important to get the everyday basics right, so Jones is equally focused on serving members of the Marriott Bonvoy loyalty scheme well with exclusive benefits. Since 2021, this has included offering money-can't-buy experiences through Marriott Bonvoy Moments, enabled by partnerships with events, venues and sports teams, for example.



Charlotte Lock

Customer Director
John Lewis Partnership

It is a formidable task taking responsibility for customer experience at an organisation renowned for being customer-focused – no more so than when the organisation is the John Lewis Partnership, which owns both the eponymous department store brand and its sister supermarket chain, Waitrose.

Charlotte Lock stepped into the newly created Customer Director role in 2022 to transform the partnership's customer capability, and adding to her 'pan-partnership' remit she has since also taken on responsibility for the John Lewis brand, leading new investments in data and technology to create value for customers. Her dual role encompasses brand, strategy, transformation and campaigns, putting a focus on the partnership's wider purpose, and she is credited with playing a fundamental part in its data-driven marketing transformation plans.

Prior to joining John Lewis, she held digital and data roles at Co-op for over two years, and previously spent nearly nine years in a variety of senior positions at the BBC.

“

Generative AI is perfectly placed to analyse huge amounts of information for travellers, and offer them recommendations based on it.”

Neal Jones, Marriott

About our partners

Cognizant

Cognizant (Nasdaq-100: CTSI) engineers modern businesses. We help our clients modernise technology, reimagine processes and transform experiences so they can stay ahead in our fast-changing world. Together, we're improving everyday life.

Zone, our experience consultancy, is the first port of call for businesses seeking human-centred partners who can transform, innovate and optimise any customer or employee experience. Our experience transformations, which include the latest GenAI innovations, change people's lives for the better, whatever the scale of the challenge.

Cognizant Netcentric, our Adobe Centre of Excellence, transforms customer experiences by leveraging the Adobe Experience Cloud. We enable brands to connect with their customers, achieve customer experience excellence and succeed in the digital era.

For more information, please visit www.cognizant.com or [Cognizant's LinkedIn page](#).

Adobe

Adobe gives everyone – from emerging artists to global brands – everything they need to design and deliver exceptional digital experiences. We empower people to create beautiful and powerful images, videos and apps, and transform how companies interact with customers across every screen.

Adobe Creative Cloud, Document Cloud and Experience Cloud bring together our design expertise with customer intelligence to deliver experiences that get results. With a robust platform that's powered by advanced science, a thriving community of partners and developers, and a culture that's passionate about pushing the boundaries of what's possible with our products, Adobe is changing the world through digital experiences.

For more information, visit Adobe.com.

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