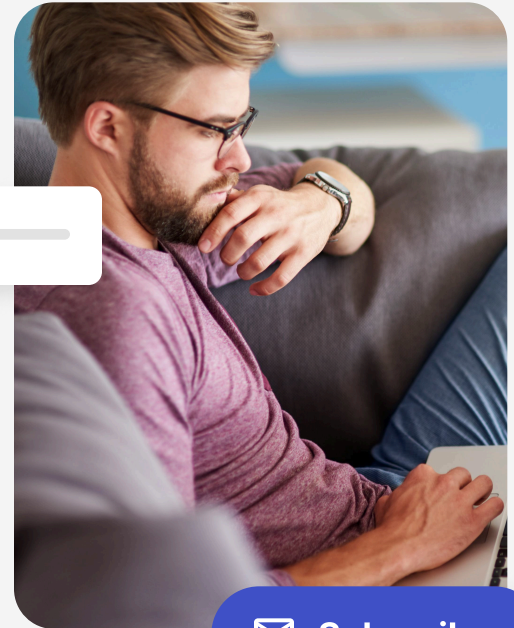


Medallia



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BEYOND TRANSACTIONS:

# The Shifting Dynamics of Customer Loyalty

Practitioner survey reveals what truly builds lasting connections, from brand strengths to the key role of experience management.

# Intro

Medallia and Ipsos are on a mission to uncover the truth about loyalty. In 2024, Medallia conducted a study of over 2,000 global consumers and unlocked insights that challenge long-held beliefs: As it turns out, loyalty isn't as clear-cut as we once thought — it exists on a continuum. Not only that, customers don't need countless brand interactions to feel loyal. In fact, loyalty can spark from a single, standout experience.

This raised a new question: how can organizations adapt to this shift and create memorable experiences while designing strategies that reflect and recognize this new loyalty landscape?

Medallia partnered with Ipsos to get insights straight from the source: CX leaders and experts. Together, we surveyed over 800 practitioners across industries like FinServ, B2B and IT, retail, healthcare, and more. The result is this comprehensive report that explores the true value of loyalty, where brands excel (and fall short), the critical role of experience management, how loyalty programs fit in, and the trends shaping loyalty's future.

**Author**

Andrew Custage  
Head of Research  
Insights, Medallia

**Author**

Jamie Thorpe  
Chief Experience  
Officer, Ipsos

# 01

## **Executive Summary**

Customer loyalty is critical — **97% of CX practitioners agree** — but our research shows there's plenty that leaders still don't fully grasp. For instance, customers often feel more loyal than brands realize, loyalty can form faster than expected, and while bad experiences can drive churn, the impact isn't always immediate. Plus, some recovery tactics work better than others.

We also uncovered the powerful roles of experience management and loyalty programs. Collecting customer feedback tops the list as the most effective loyalty driver. Brands with rewards programs report stronger CX performance and use them to foster personalized, proactive engagement.

Looking ahead, brands aiming to strengthen customer relationships will need to embrace generation-specific strategies, navigate a complex tech landscape, and harness AI for loyalty.

**The future of loyalty isn't just about retaining customers — it's about building smarter, stronger connections.**





# 02

**Why does customer  
loyalty matter, anyway?**

## Key Findings

Customer loyalty isn't just a nice-to-have; it's a must-have for thriving brands.

97%



### Loyalty = Business Success

Customer loyalty plays a major role in driving key business outcomes.

87%



### Loyal Customers = Brand Evangelists

When customers are loyal, they're more likely to spread the word and advocate for your brand.

87%



### Big ROI

Investing in loyalty initiatives pays off for the bottom line.

80%



### Loyalty > New Customers

It's cheaper and smarter to keep your existing customers happy than to constantly chase new ones.

86%



### Future-Proofing with Loyalty

As the business world evolves, customer loyalty is becoming even more essential for measuring success.

## Overall business success is dependent on customer loyalty.

There's one thing nearly all **(97%)** CX professionals agree on: Loyalty is either a fairly important or very important part of their organization's outcomes.

From Medallia + Ipsos November 2024 CX Practitioner Survey (n = 820); "How important do you consider customer loyalty to your organization's overall success?"

97%



"I consider customer loyalty a key metric of our company's success because it reflects both customer satisfaction and long-term engagement. Loyal customers are more likely to make repeat purchases, advocate for our brand, and provide valuable feedback, which helps us refine our offerings."

**Senior Manager**  
**B2B Agency, Australia**



"In our competitive market, customer loyalty is not just an 'extra' that is icing on the cake, but a 'necessity' for the company to survive and grow. You see, loyal customers not only make repeat purchases, but also become 'spontaneous ambassadors' for the brand, helping us attract new customers through word of mouth."

**Vice President**  
**Retail, USA**

## Investing in customer loyalty helps brands fuel ROI, brand advocacy, and cost savings.

When we asked CX professionals about the benefits of customer loyalty, they told us:

**87%**

Loyal customers are more likely to be brand advocates.

**87%**

Loyalty initiatives provide a good ROI for businesses.

**80%**

Building customer loyalty is a more cost-effective strategy than acquiring new customers.

### The call to action

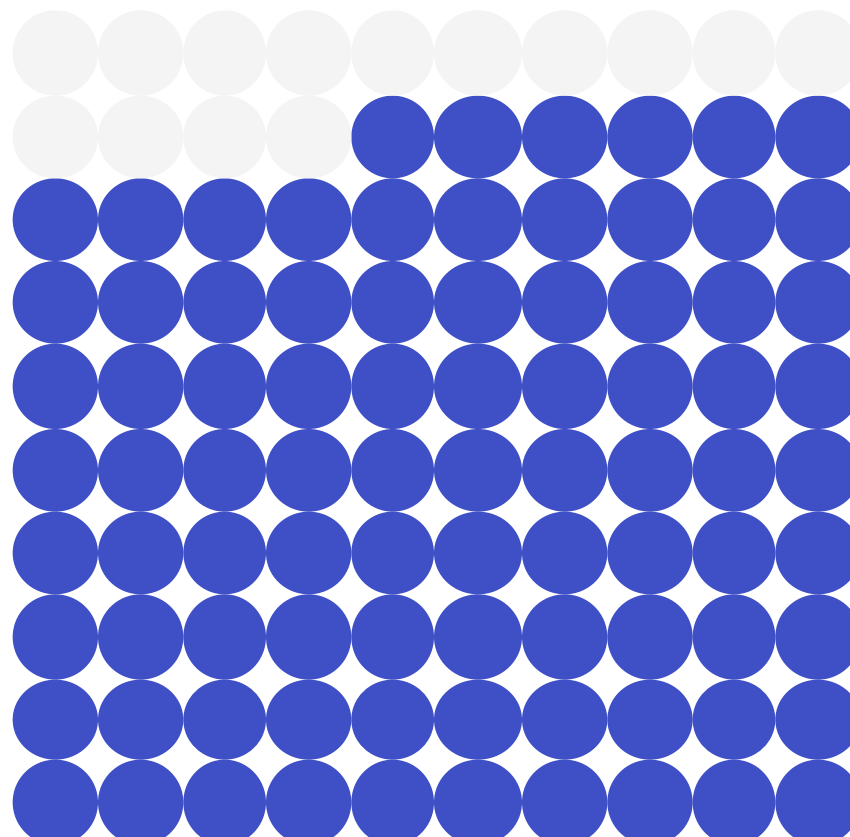
Customer loyalty needs to be a non-negotiable strategic priority. By prioritizing the top drivers of loyalty, including product quality and delivering exceptional experiences, organizations can expect to see their loyalty efforts pay off in a major way.

## Customer loyalty's importance is on the rise.

86%

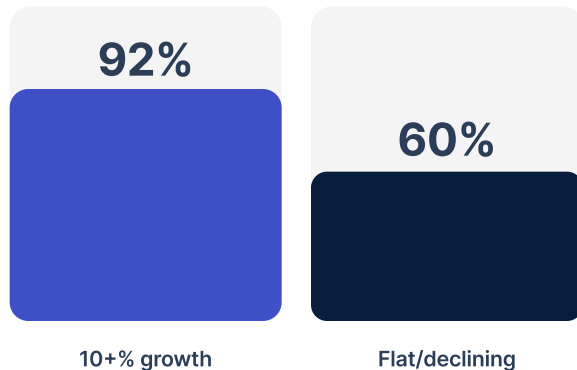
"Customer loyalty will increase in importance as a business metric in the future."

From Medallia + Ipsos November 2024 CX Practitioner Survey (n = 820); "To what extent do you agree with the following statements?" % selecting "strongly agree" or "tend to agree"



## High-growth companies lead with greater loyalty investments.

% indicating loyalty investment will be higher than last year



Annual revenue trend

### The call to action

If you want to achieve stronger outcomes in 2025, follow the example of today's fast-growing companies and boost your investment in loyalty.

# 03

**How well do  
brands understand  
customer loyalty?**



## Key Findings

Is your brand on the same page as your customers when it comes to loyalty? Let's break it down:

### Loyalty Looks Different from the Inside Out



Customers often feel more loyal than brands realize. Are you missing the mark?

### Loyalty Happens Fast



It doesn't take long for customers to form loyalty — but brands might not be catching on to the speed.

### Churn Isn't Always as Bad as It Seems



Brands tend to overestimate the threat of customer churn.

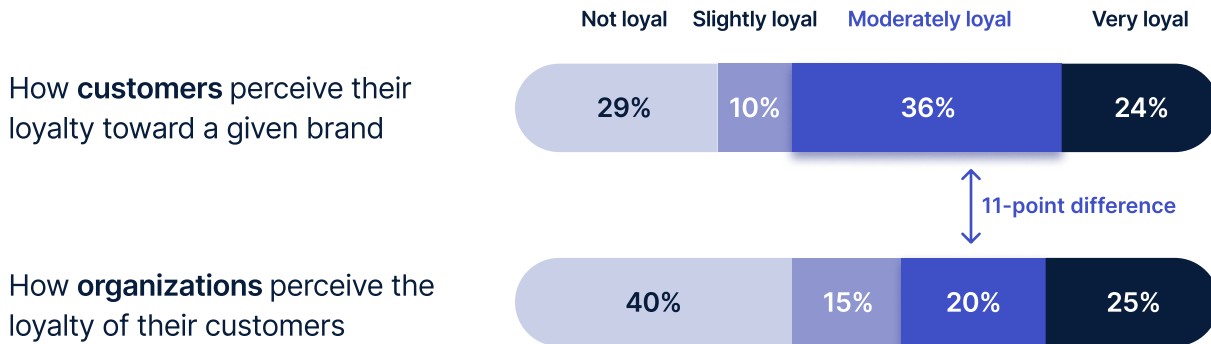
### Personalization Shouldn't Be a Last-Ditch Effort



Don't wait until a customer is slipping away — start personalizing from the get-go. They'll appreciate it more.

# Customers are more loyal than brands realize.

The customer loyalty gap: What organizations perceive vs. what customers self-report



From Medallia + Ipsos November 2024 CX Practitioner Survey (n = 820); "Do you believe that there are varying degrees of loyalty among these customers?" and Medallia Market Research July 2024 Consumer Loyalty Survey (n = 2,002); "How would you best describe your feelings about the company or organization from this situation?"

When we asked consumers to describe their feelings of loyalty, **70%** reported some level of it. However, on average, CX professionals estimate that only **60%** of their customers feel loyal. This **11-point difference** suggests that companies may be overlooking a significant portion of loyal customers and missing opportunities to nurture those relationships.

#### What this means

By not recognizing customers as loyal, companies might be overlooking golden opportunities to engage with them — costing them potential advocacy, referrals, and long-term loyalty.

This disconnect between how companies identify loyal customers and how customers see themselves could be due to limitations in measuring loyalty or a lack of insight into the full customer experience. Failing to address this gap could have lasting consequences for customer retention and brand growth.



## Just one transaction is enough to build customer loyalty, but most CX professionals aren't aware of this.

**52%** of customers say they have developed some feeling of loyalty toward the most recent brand for which they have transacted just once, yet just very few practitioners (**only 4%**) think customers become loyal to their brand after only one transaction.

A majority (**65%**) of the CX professionals we surveyed think it takes three to seven good experiences to foster loyalty, but **more than half** of consumers say they've felt some level of loyalty after just one transaction.

### What this means

Companies may be failing to recognize customers as loyal — and not taking appropriate steps to nurture these feelings — as early as they should be in the relationship.

From Medallia + Ipsos November 2024 CX Practitioner Survey (n = 820); "How many good experiences do you think are required before a customer would consider themselves loyal to your organization or brand?" and Medallia Market Research July 2024 Consumer Loyalty Survey (n = 2,002); "How would you best describe your feelings about the company or organization from this situation?"



52%

4%

## Brands may be too pessimistic about the risk of customer churn.

While **59%** of CX professionals believe that just one or two missteps could drive customers away, only **35%** of consumers agree. The reality? **72%** of consumers say they would leave a brand after four or fewer bad experiences.

This suggests there's a gap in understanding customer tolerance, and businesses may benefit from early and consistent efforts to address pain points before customers reach the tipping point — ultimately reducing churn and fostering long-term loyalty.

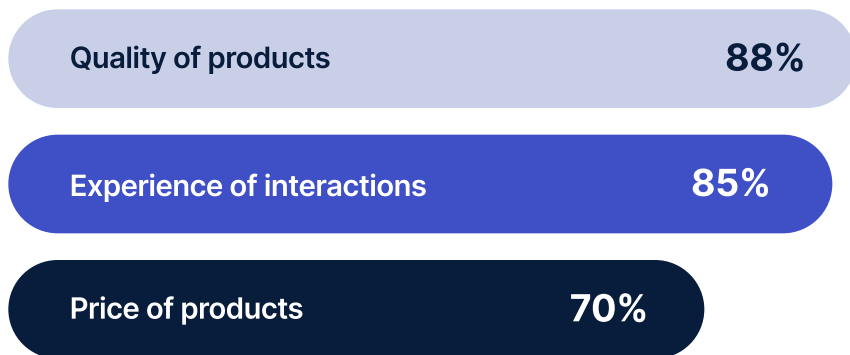
**59%**  
of CX practitioners  
think it takes 2 or  
fewer bad experiences  
for customers to  
abandon a brand

**35%**  
of consumers say  
they would quit a  
brand forever  
after 2 or fewer  
bad experiences

From Medallia + Ipsos November 2024 CX Practitioner Survey (n = 820); "How many good experiences do you think are required before a customer would consider themselves loyal to your organization or brand?" / "And how many poor experiences do you think would be required before a customer would stop using your organization or brand?" and Medallia Market Research July 2024 Consumer Loyalty Survey (n = 2,002); "Imagine a scenario involving a brand / company from which you regularly make purchases. How many poor experiences with them would you need to have in order to never be a customer of theirs again?"

## CX professionals and consumers agree that experience matters more than price when it comes to loyalty.

% of CX professionals who agree that the following attributes are a key driver of loyalty



When surveyed, customers have also agreed feelings are stronger for brands with better experiences **(80%)** than ones with lower prices **(70%)\***

\*From Medallia Market Research July 2024 Consumer Loyalty Survey (n = 2,002); "For each of the following statements, select which best applies to you."

From Medallia + Ipsos November 2024 CX Practitioner Survey (n = 820); "To what extent do you agree with the following statements?" % selecting "Strongly Agree" or "Tend to Agree"

# To combat churn, brands need to prioritize experiential factors, including staff friendliness, trust and transparency, and customer recognition.

## Issues that most often drive customer abandonment

Issues ranked by % of CX practitioners selecting for their brand

	Total Rank
Product quality	1
Price	2
Unhelpful or unfriendly staff	3
Long waits to get products or services	4
Trust and transparency	5
Lack of customer recognition / personalization across interactions	6
Brand image or identity	7
Poor in-person atmosphere	8
Product selection	9
Inconvenient locations	10
Limited digital options (e.g. app, website, etc.)	11
Lack of advertising / top of mind awareness	12

The 2024 Medallia report, *The State of Brand Loyalty: Demystifying what makes your customers loyal* revealed similar findings. For example, **61% of consumers cited having friendly employees** as one of the top elements of a brand's customer experience that plays a big role in loyalty.

## **Brands think they can regain lost loyalty with personalized communications, but consumers tell us they're more likely to respond to value incentives.**

### **How lapsed customers re-engaged to drive return transactions**

Top 5 of 11 based on frequency of mention

- 1 Engaging in more targeted / personalized communications (46%)**
- 2 Requesting customer feedback (43%)**
- 3 Offering a deal or discount (40%)**
- 4 Adding new products or services to our selection (33%)**
- 5 Sending a personal apology (31%)**



## The opportunity

These findings highlight the importance of listening and understanding your customers' needs and expectations. This ensures you deliver the best experience, encouraging more customers to stay. While offering a deal or discount is effective, your company may end up competing on price, which is a strategy that erodes margins more than differentiating your brand based on the quality of your products, services, or the experiences you offer.

## The call to action

Now is the time to get things right from the start, minimize customer churn, and nurture more relationships into lifelong loyal customers who are drawn to your brand promise and values. That way, your company will no longer have to rely on the unsustainable strategy of offering deals or discounts to drive business outcomes.



# 04

**How does experience  
management fuel loyalty?**

# Key Findings

## The experience–loyalty connection: What's the link?

### Feedback is a Key Ingredient of Loyalty



The #1 tactic brands use to build loyalty? Listening to their customers.

### It's About More Than Transactions



Loyalty is about how engaged customers feel, not just about repeat purchases.

### Experience Metrics = Loyalty Metrics



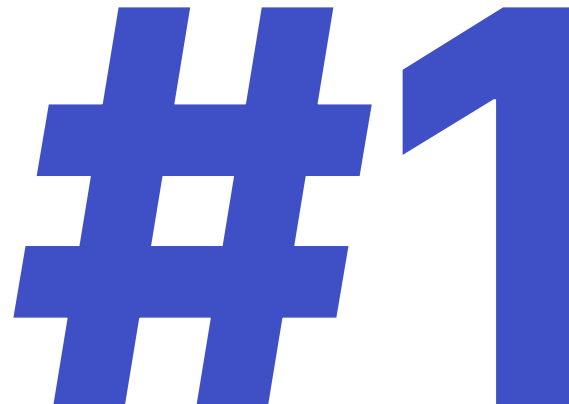
More brands are prioritizing experience-related metrics as the true measure of customer loyalty.

## Customer feedback reigns supreme in driving loyalty.

In our survey results, this strategy ranked higher than personalized offers, proactive engagement of lapsed customers, and social media engagement. The vast majority (**81%**) of organizations with loyalty programs say they use their program database to collect customer feedback.

**The #1 most commonly cited initiative for driving loyalty is [collecting customer feedback](#)**

From Medallia + Ipsos November 2024 CX Practitioner Survey (n = 820); "Which, if any, additional initiatives or programs does your organization have in place to drive customer loyalty? Please select all that apply."



## Customer feedback informs loyalty-related initiatives, but brands could do more.

The most-cited ways companies are leveraging customer feedback to improve loyalty include analyzing the insights to improve staff training, for benchmarking purposes, and for product development.

### The opportunity

This reveals that more brands have the chance to take action on customer feedback in real time to drive in-the-moment improvements, such as closing the loop with dissatisfied customers, instead of just using these insights to inform future strategies. In the past, customer experience teams focused on solving problems after the fact. Leading brands, however, are raising the bar by getting ahead of issues before they arise through thoughtful experience design.



## Brands recognize loyalty is about more than just spend or frequency, but the total experience.

How organizations define “customer loyalty”, % indicating characteristic listed

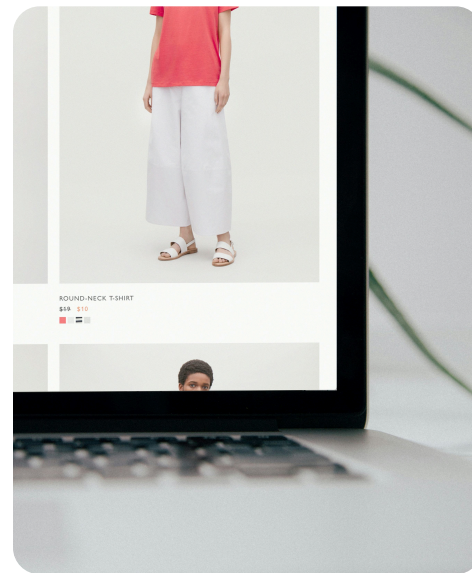


Historically, loyalty has been defined transactionally, meaning businesses have identified loyal customers as consumers who spend more money and more frequently transact with brands. Leaders are starting to evolve this definition. They're taking a more nuanced approach, recognizing that various factors shape this behavior and that loyalty is more complex and fluid.

In particular, businesses are paying attention to engagement levels and other actions, such as whether they refer new customers or advocate on behalf of a brand, enroll in a company's loyalty program, provide feedback about the brand's products or services, or are willing to stick with a company even after a bad experience.

### Further insights

This is consistent with previous findings from the 2024 Medallia report, *The State of Brand Loyalty: Demystifying what makes your customers loyal*, which revealed that "loyalty" doesn't mean "exclusivity." A loyal customer may still engage heavily with the competition even if transacting with a particular brand often. As a result, indicators of their engagement and commitment to staying with the brand — even as the market changes — are increasingly important.



# Companies are prioritizing experience metrics to evaluate customer loyalty.

## Top KPIs CX professionals use to measure customer loyalty

Rank	Metrics used to measure customer loyalty	% using this KPI
1	Overall satisfaction scores (OSAT)	47%
2	Repeat purchase rate	46%
3	Customer feedback participation rate	45%
4	Purchase frequency	39%
5	Loyalty program rewards collection/redemption	39%
6	Customer lifetime value	38%
7	Average purchase value	32%
8	Social media engagement	30%
9	Net Promoter Score (NPS)	29%
10	Customer churn rate	29%
11	Communications/marketing engagement	29%
12	Advocacy or referrals	26%
13	Communications/marketing enrollment	23%
14	We do not track any loyalty KPIs as far as I know	2%

tied

tied

Some of the metrics that many brands have only started tracking within the last three years include OSAT, social media engagement, and NPS®.

### What this means

A customer experience management solution is essential for enabling organizations to measure the impact of their loyalty initiatives. Transaction data alone is insufficient.

From Medallia + Ipsos November 2024 CX Practitioner Survey (n = 820); "Which, if any, of the KPIs you said are currently used have been adopted by your organization within the last three years?" / "Which metrics or KPIs does your organization use to track and measure customer loyalty?"



# 05

**What do CX teams really  
need to know about  
loyalty programs?**

# Key Findings

Here's the scoop on loyalty programs — are they right for your brand?

## Loyalty Programs Are Everywhere



Over half of brands already have a loyalty or rewards program in place.

## The Case for Loyalty Programs



Fast-growing companies often leverage loyalty programs to elevate the customer experience.

## ...But They're Not the Only Way to Win



Loyalty programs are powerful, but they're just one part of the puzzle — other strategies can also drive loyalty.

## More than half of brands (61%) offer some type of loyalty or rewards program.

United States brands are more likely to have a program (**64%** U.S. vs. **54%** non-U.S.). Certain industries favor them over others (for example, **74%** of financial services brands offer one versus **39%** of healthcare organizations).

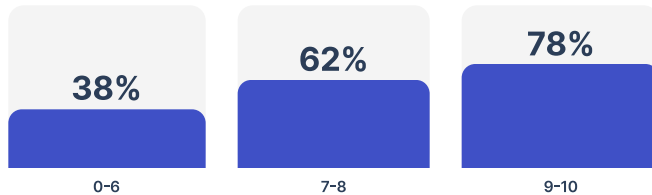
From Medallia + Ipsos November 2024 CX Practitioner Survey (n = 820); "Does your brand or organization offer a loyalty or rewards program to customers?"

61%

## Brands that have a loyalty or rewards program are more likely to self-assess their CX program as being better overall.

### % offering loyalty / rewards program, by organization's CX program quality

Self-assessment: rating based on 0 (very poor) to 10 (very good) scale



"Our loyalty programs help us retain our valuable clients. The customer experience is greatly enhanced by feeling closer to our firm."

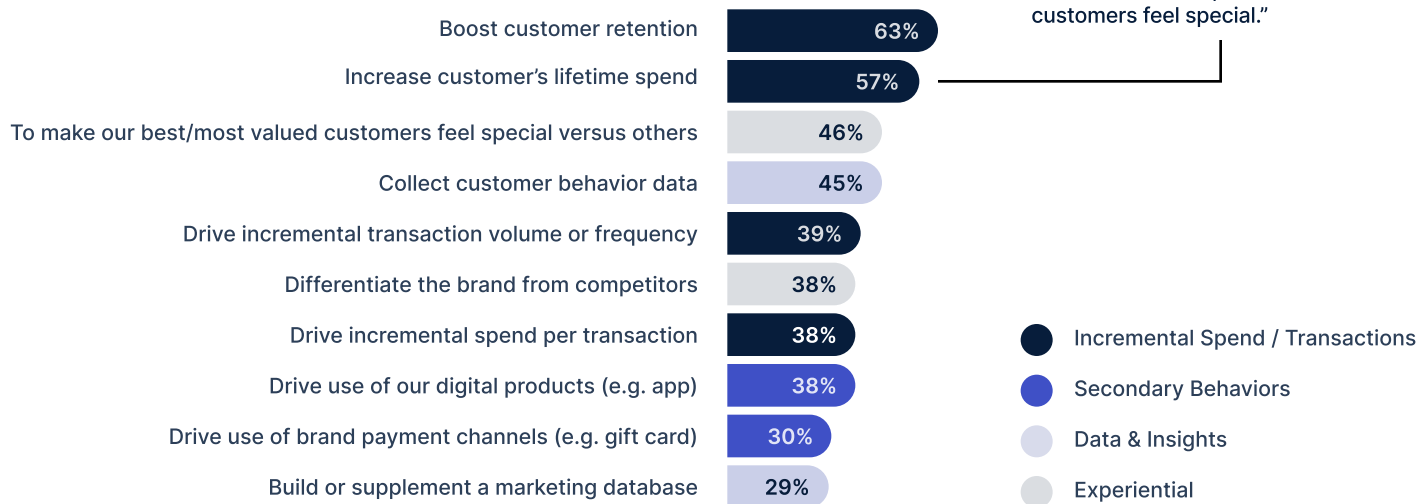
Senior Manager  
Healthcare, USA

# The fastest-growing companies use their loyalty program as a way to improve the customer experience.

## Strategic value of loyalty rewards programs

% indicating

57% of brands with 10%+ annual revenue growth agree. The strategic value of offering a loyalty program is “to make our best / most-valued customers feel special.”



## **69% of brands with a loyalty program intentionally offer a differentiated level of service to members vs. other customers.**

### **Ways Organizations Offer Loyalty Program Members an Elevated Experience**

- 1** Quicker delivery / deployment of products or services
- 2** Dedicated account management teams
- 3** Tailored marketing communications
- 4** Priority support

# Rewards programs create more ways to measure loyalty — across transactions, engagement, and experiences.

Most organizations with loyalty programs (**86%**) say they use their program databases as sources for collecting customer feedback.

## Loyalty metrics used: orgs with loyalty rewards programs vs. orgs without

*\*more likely to use these metrics, compared to orgs without loyalty rewards programs*

Social media engagement	<b>2.4x*</b>
Communications / marketing enrollment	<b>2.0x*</b>
Customer churn rate	<b>1.7x*</b>
Overall satisfaction scores (OSAT)	<b>1.6x*</b>
Purchase frequency	<b>1.5x*</b>
Average purchase value	<b>1.4x*</b>
Customer feedback participation rate	<b>1.4x*</b>

### The opportunity

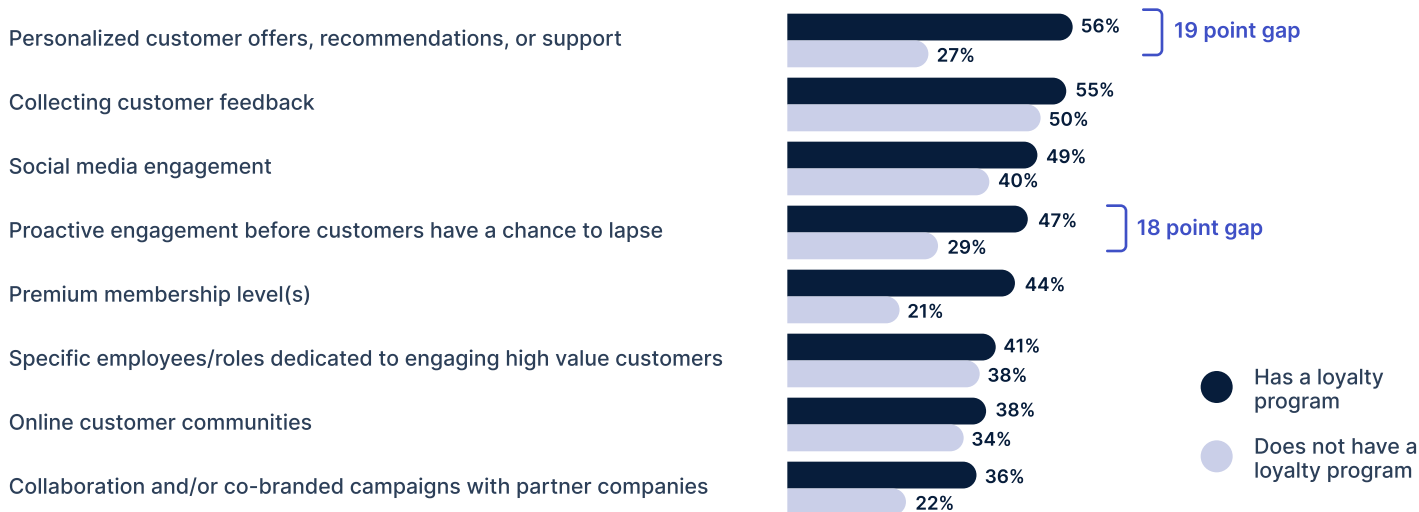
Having a loyalty program arms businesses with a range of powerful customer data that can be harnessed to create better experiences and leveraged to measure loyalty initiatives' successes more accurately.

From Medallia + Ipsos November 2024 CX Practitioner Survey (n = 820); "Which metrics or KPIs does your organization use to track and measure customer loyalty? Please select all that apply" and "Which, if any, additional initiatives or programs does your organization have in place to drive customer loyalty? Please select all that apply" / "Do you use your loyalty program database as a source of sample for customer feedback surveys?"

# Companies without loyalty programs may miss out on offering premium membership levels and personalized, proactive communications and engagement.

## What else is being used to drive loyalty?

% indicating, by whether or not organization also has a loyalty / rewards program





# 06

**What's next for  
customer loyalty?**

# Key Findings

The future of loyalty is evolving fast — here's what to keep in mind:

## Loyalty Is Getting Tougher



Keeping customers loyal is more challenging than ever in today's competitive landscape.

## Generation-Specific Strategies



To win loyalty, brands must cater to the unique preferences of each generation.

## Tech-Savvy Loyalty



Navigating the tech landscape will be key in building future-proof loyalty strategies.

## AI-Driven Loyalty Is on the Rise



More brands (especially the fast-growing ones) are using AI to strengthen customer loyalty.

# 71% of CX professionals say maintaining loyalty is harder than ever, citing internal and external challenges.

## What are the top challenges in improving customer loyalty?

% of organizations placing attribute in rank listed

	Total placing in top 3
High level of competition from other brands	38%
Price sensitivity among consumers	37%
Consistently delivering brand promise without occasional issues	32%
Consumer trust in data security / use	28%
Negative reviews, feedback, or word of mouth	27%
Pressure to get new customers over driving loyalty from existing ones	25%
Demand for personalized experiences from customers	25%
Needing to keep loyalty program fresh / innovative	24%
Having enough data about customers to inform action	24%
Difficulty appealing to some customers without alienating others	20%
General expense of loyalty programs or other initiatives	19%

### The call to action

Many companies are struggling in a crowded marketplace, facing price sensitivity among consumers, and looking to deliver consistently on their brand promise. Continuously listening to customers and using these insights to add value and improve the experience is a potent strategy that can help strengthen trust and loyalty.



## Brands need to create generation-specific loyalty strategies.



**83%**

of CX practitioners agree

**“A distinct strategy for loyalty is required for customers from different generations (i.e., Gen Z, Millennials, Gen X, Baby Boomers).”**

### Further insights

Gen Z, Millennials, and Gen X are more likely to consider themselves “forever customers” of certain brands, according to the 2024 Medallia report, *The State of Brand Loyalty: Demystifying what makes your customers loyal*. More than half of these respondents say they feel loyal — **61%** of Gen Z, **57%** of Millennials, and **53%** of Gen X — while less than half (**43%**) of Baby Boomers feel the same way.

# Fostering customer loyalty in the future will require navigating a complex tech landscape.

## The myriad of technologies used to drive loyalty today

% indicating

Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system	55%
Customer Experience Management (CXM) platform	52%
Social media monitoring tools	43%
Digital experience analytics	43%
Rewards program management platform	40%
Marketing automation platform	35%
Personalization / recommendation engines	35%
Chatbots or virtual assistants	33%
Conversational AI tools	30%
Geofencing and location-based services tools	19%
Augmented / virtual reality experiences	16%

# 54%

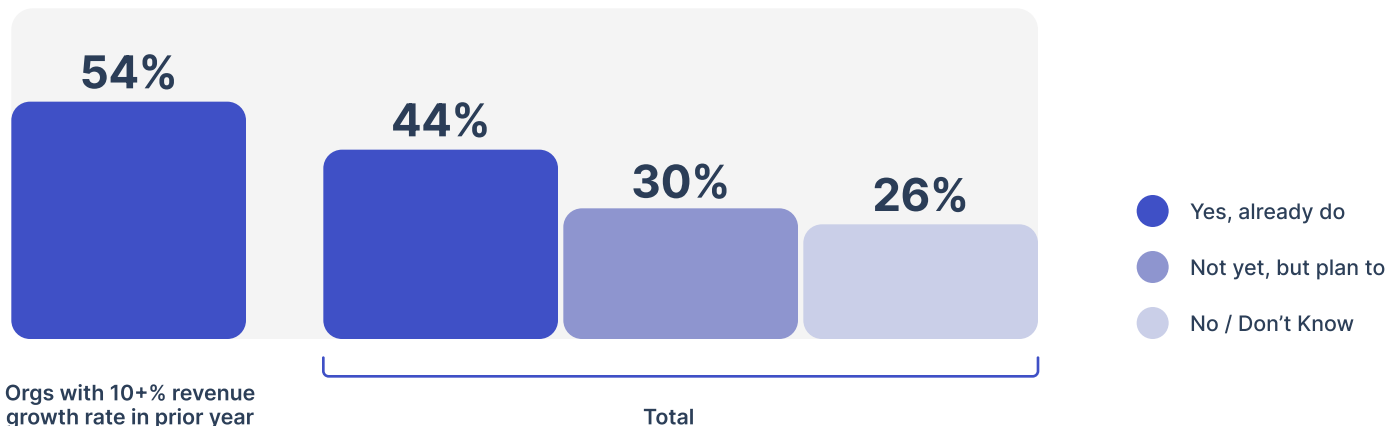
say they struggle to properly integrate technologies that play a role in customer loyalty

From Medallia + Ipsos November 2024 CX Practitioner Survey (n = 820); "To what extent do you agree with the following statements?" % selecting "Strongly Agree" or "Tend to Agree" / "Which of the following technologies, if any, does your organization use in its customer loyalty efforts? Select all that apply"

## Nearly half of organizations use AI to drive loyalty — especially among the fastest-growing companies.

Does your organization currently use AI to drive more customer loyalty?

% of organizations, by status of using AI



## Brands using AI to enhance loyalty focus on improving customer service, support, and experiences.

Common ways CX practitioners say they're using AI for improved loyalty outcomes

Personalized Experiences

Data Insights & Analytics

Worker Efficiency

Enhanced Service & Support

Amount of Customer Engagement



# Conclusion

Customer loyalty is more important than ever, and it's only going to keep growing as a key business metric. Over 80% of CX professionals and leaders say it is becoming a bigger priority, and over 70% are increasing their investment in it this year.

As brands redefine and measure loyalty, the role of experience management will also evolve.

We've uncovered some exciting opportunities for growth, starting with the power of a great first impression — often all it takes to win a customer for life. Now is the time to recognize overlooked segments, nurture these relationships, and drive long-term loyalty, advocacy, and referrals. Companies can also make a real impact by using better recovery tactics for lapsed customers, acting on customer feedback, and optimizing the employee experience to strengthen loyalty. Plus, loyalty programs aren't just for rewards — they're a goldmine for insights, personalized experiences, and proactive customer engagement.

To succeed in the next era of loyalty, organizations must focus on delivering consistent experiences, tailoring strategies for different customer groups, and navigating the complex world of AI.

## Medallia

Loyalty is the ultimate competitive edge, and Medallia has put together a guide to help you take your strategy capabilities to the next level. Get your copy of [How to Keep Customers for Life: 3 CX Essentials for Building Loyalty to get started.](#)

➤ [Download Now](#)

## Ipsos

Are you building strong customer relationships? Ipsos has created a human-centric framework to measure the key factors shaping customer experience. Get your copy of [The Forces of Customer Experience to evaluate whether you're delivering a CX that drives a true return.](#)

➤ [Download Now](#)

# Methodology

Medallia and Ipsos gathered responses from 820 professionals whose roles influence their company's customer or prospect experience (CX practitioners). The sample size included 62% U.S.-based experts, 21% from the UK, 9% from Australia and New Zealand, and 7% from Canada. Respondents were from companies that have an annual revenue of less than \$1 billion to more than \$25 billion.

Respondents described themselves as VP level or above (29%), Senior Director or Director (25%), or Senior Manager / Manager (45%).

The survey took place between October 29 and November 7, 2024 using Medallia's Agile Research survey platform. This study was jointly designed between Medallia and Ipsos.

## About Medallia

Medallia is the pioneer and market leader in customer, employee, citizen, and patient experience. Medallia Experience Cloud captures billions of experience signals across interactions including all voice, video, digital, IoT, social media, and corporate-messaging tools. Medallia uses proprietary artificial intelligence and machine learning technology to automatically reveal predictive insights that drive powerful business actions and outcomes. For more information visit <http://www.medallia.com>.

## About IPSOS

Ipsos is one of the largest market research and polling companies globally, operating in 90 markets and employing nearly 20,000 people. Our passionately curious research professionals, analysts and scientists have built unique multi-specialist capabilities that provide true understanding and powerful insights into the actions, opinions and motivations of citizens, consumers, patients, customers or employees. Our 75 business solutions are based on primary data from our surveys, social media monitoring, and qualitative or observational techniques. "Game Changers" – our tagline – summarizes our ambition to help our 5,000 clients navigate with confidence our rapidly changing world. Founded in France in 1975, Ipsos has been listed on the Euronext Paris since July 1, 1999. The company is part of the SBF 120, Mid-60 indices, and is eligible for the Deferred Settlement Service (SRD). ISIN code FR0000073298, Reuters ISOS.PA, Bloomberg IPS:FP <http://www.ipsos.com>.