

Experience This! Show Podcast
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ExperienceThisShow.com

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Episode 45: Making the Customer Journey Understandable and Efficient

[SHOW INTRO]

Welcome to experience this where you'll find inspiring examples of customer experience great stories of customer service and tips on how to make your customers love you even more.

Always upbeat and definitely entertaining customer retention expert, Joey Coleman.

Social media expert, Dan Gingiss serve as your host for a weekly dose of positive customer experience.

Don't hold on to your headphones. It's time to experience this get ready for another episode of the experience this show.

[EPISODE 45 INTRO]

Join us as we discuss the less than straight path of the typical B2B customer, the power of words as demonstrated by the one and only, Mr. Rogers, and an unexpected visit to the Department of State!?

Mazes, Phrases, and Passport's... oh my!

[SEGMENT INTRO] [CX PRESS]

There are so many great customer experience articles to read but who has that time. We summarize them and offer clear takeaways you can implement starting tomorrow. Enjoy this segment of CX Press where we read the articles, so you don't need to.

[CX Press: **The Customer Journey Maze**]

Joey Coleman: We regularly talk about the customer journey on this show. You know I was wondering, Dan, when you've seen a typical customer journey depicted visually, what has been your experience? What have you usually seen?

Dan Gingiss: I'd say I see it in usually one of two ways: 1) it's either a very straight-line suggesting kind of a linear path in which decisions are made, one at a time. Awareness to consideration to purchase to some sort of after purchase experience or, 2) I see it as a funnel in which you have a lot of people who have awareness about your company, your brand but fewer that are considering it, even fewer that decide to purchase it etc. Both of them are linear, they're just sort of pictured in different ways.

Joey Coleman: Right. So, maybe one goes left to right across the page, the other one goes top to bottom. It's a question of whether you're doing one person or several people but it's always moving on this linear path. And this has been something that, to be honest with you, is kind of driven me crazy ever since I started paying attention to customer journeys because I don't think that a customer journey is a purely linear path. It doesn't have a clear starting point, or an ending point and the good news is, as of today, I'm not the only one. Today's CX Press article was written by [Kimberly Whitley](#). Kimberly is an assistant professor at the University of Virginia's Darden School of Business where she conducts research on challenges faced by contemporary CMOs. And the article for our CX Press today can be found on Forbes.com and is titled, ["If You Think the Customer Journey is Linear or a Funnel, New Research Suggests You Are Wrong."](#) What I loved about this article is that it highlights new research from Gartner showing that this common assumption, that is that B2B or business to business buyers, progress in a linear fashion is fundamentally flawed.

Dan Gingiss: Yeah, and Gartner found that across a large set of B2B customers, the customer doesn't see the journey as a linear path but rather a set of jobs, and they outlined three specific jobs. The first was to find decision-enabling information. The second is to validate that information, and then the third is to drive alignment among key internal stakeholders.

Joey Coleman: Exactly. And according to my friend Brent Adamson from Gartner, the average B2B firm has roughly seven internal stakeholders that they need to get aligned before making a purchase.

Dan Gingiss: Is that the same Brent Adamson that you used to sing with?

Joey Coleman: Yes, it is Dan! Brent and I did use to sing in a choir together, but that's probably a story for another day. What's fascinating about the research that Brent and his team conducted is that the buyer goes in and out of all three sets of those jobs. So, rather than following a straight path, the customer journey is a process where the customer is searching for information, validating that information, and aligning the key stakeholders all at the same time and all concurrently. So, the customer's journey is more accurately depicted as jumping in and out of a maze as opposed to following a linear path. Whether that's, you know, left or right across the page or down through a funnel.

Dan Gingiss: Yeah, and I think that is also true of the consumer journey which is why this makes a lot of sense. I mean, think about if you are shopping for an item online or if you're trying to book some travel, it isn't always as simple as Google search, find the item, put it in your cart, and purchase it. There's often a lot of research that goes on. You might research at multiple sites, you might stop and read reviews, you might look at social media posts or ask your friends. You might put something in your cart and think about it for a while, and then take it out of your cart and put a different item in, or you might hold a flight for 24 hours while you look for other flights. So, there are lots of things that are going on at the same time in the consumer space as well, which is why to me this makes a ton of sense in the business to business space, with the added complexity that it's not usually one decision maker. That decision maker has to get, as your friend says, up to seven different stakeholders aligned in the company, and it's hard to get seven people to a meeting let alone get them all aligned on a decision.

Joey Coleman: So true! Hey, we're going need everybody to carve out a half hour out of

their week to sit down and have a meeting, let alone actually make decisions. I get it. I think the research, with all due respect to Gartner, isn't necessarily surprising but I think it's really important, and I think it's important because all too often in business, we try to boil the customer journey down to a very clear path, and the problem is if we look at any one of our existing customers, nine times out of ten, they didn't follow that path, and yet they still became a customer. More to the research Gartner had done, they're kind of jumping in and out and there's lots of factors that are contributing to the decision-making process, and they may jump ahead and then skip back a couple of steps. What I love about this research is that it really focuses on the humans involved and I think all too often we get caught up in the, well B2B is different than B2C, instead of recognizing that it's all H2H, it's all human-to human behavior.

Dan Gingiss: Absolutely. I mean, when we are marketing to or trying to sell to another company, you are not selling to a building or a bunch of desks and computers. You're selling to another human being. And I think that's why when people ask me, well this stuff you talk about on the show, isn't it only for consumer businesses? I say no, because B2B companies are also dealing with humans so, all the things that we talk about on this show that makes for a remarkable customer experience, can be translated into the B2B world because you are working with a human on the other end. So, this definitely makes sense to me. I think that having been in the seat of making decisions about vendor purchases, you know you're often looking at multiple vendors at once, you're looking at how vendors work with each other, and the integration with your existing technology, There's so many different things going on that there's no way that it can be linear, because you run into some barriers, and you try to figure out a way around the barrier, etc. And so, I think the maze makes sense. I've also heard it described, very recently by HubSpot, as a flywheel, instead of a funnel which is of a similar concept that it's got a lot of movements to it and that it is not a straight path.

Joey Coleman: And I think regardless of whether you think of it as a maze or a flywheel or a bowl of gazpacho, it kind it doesn't matter as long as we recognize...

Dan Gingiss: ...Gazpachooooo....

Joey Coleman: I knew I'd get your attention with that one. As long as we recognize that the customer isn't on a singular linear path, and the more as organizations we are ready to meet the customer on the path where they are, the more the customer can truly have a journey. Because let's be candid, a journey, as a general rule, isn't about getting from point A to point B in the most direct route. Sometimes it shows up like that, but usually, there are a lot of stops along the way. There are a lot of opportunities for side trips, and the more as an organization we can be ready to meet our customers, and to be patient with them as they kind of jump in and out of the journey with us, the more likely we are to get them to that point where they actually transition from being a prospect to being a customer, and actually become a long-term loyal customer.

[SEGMENT INTRO] [SAY WHAT?!]

It's shocking how often people use 38 words to describe something when two would do the trick. We're looking at you lawyers and accountants. Words matter. And there is no excuse for trying to hide what you mean. We explore words and messaging in this next iteration of Say What?!

[Say What?! **Mr. Rogers**]

Joey Coleman: It's a beautiful day in this neighborhood...

Dan Gingiss: A beautiful day for a neighbor...

Joey Coleman: Would you be mine...

Dan Gingiss: Could you be mine...

Joey Coleman: Doesn't it just bring back the memories, Dan, hearing that theme song from Mr. Rogers?

Dan Gingiss: Man, I watched that show a lot. How about all those different colored sweaters, huh?

Joey Coleman: That's a lot of different sweaters, and that guy could take off a pair of shoes like a professional. And, the hand toss from one hand to the other and catching the shoe on the fly. Absolutely phenomenal. You know a lot of people are familiar with Fred Rogers and the impact he had especially on, let's be frank, Dan, our generation as well as ones before us and after us. Frankly, because at that time, pretty much the only TV that we watched when we were younger growing up was Mr. Rogers Neighborhood. But actually, I came across an article recently in the Atlantic titled, ["Mr. Rogers Had A Simple Set of Rules for Talking to Children,"](#) and it opened my eyes as to how much care Mr. Rogers placed in the power of words and language. And, that's why I thought this would be a fun thing to discuss on our Say What?! segment. The article actually, and I'm quoting from the article here, "he insisted that every word, whether spoken by a person or a puppet, be scrutinized closely because he knew that children, the preschool age boys and girls who made up his core audience, tended to hear things literally."

Dan Gingiss: Yeah, and in fact, the producers and the staff on the show referred to this focus on language as "Freddish," after Mr. Rogers. And, "Freddish" was all about anticipating ways that listeners might misinterpret what was being said. So, for example, in one scene on the show, a nurse was inflating a blood pressure cuff, and the original line in the script said, "I'm going to blow this up." And when Mr. Rogers heard this, he made them redubbed the line to say, "I'm going to puff this up with some air" because he was afraid that "blow it up" might sound like there was going to be an explosion, and Mr. Rogers didn't want children watching the show to be frightened about what might happen next.

Joey Coleman: Can you imagine, Dan, if everyone in business was that diligent about choosing their words and trying to avoid confusion? You know if every copywriter, if every business that was thinking about creating content for their website, or their marketing materials, actually thought through how could this be misinterpreted? What I found most fascinating about the "Freddish" conversation was that his staff actually created an illustrated manual that was called, Let's Talk About Freddish, and it was a fun-loving parody that was all about getting the words right. And, it included a nine-step process to illustrate how language would evolve and the script, and so I thought we would share that with our listeners. We're going to walk you through the various nine-steps along with a single sentence, and how that sentence gets changed as you applied the different criteria, of having the speech be more "Freddish."

Dan Gingiss: Step 1: Is state the idea you wish to express as clearly as possible and in terms that preschoolers can understand. So, for example, "It is dangerous to play in the

street."

Joey Coleman: Step 2: Rephrase the sentence in a positive manner. For example, "It is good to play where it is safe."

Dan Gingiss: Step 3: Rephrase the idea again, bearing in mind that preschoolers cannot yet make subtle distinctions, and need to be redirected to authorities they trust. So, ask your parents where it is safe to play.

Joey Coleman: Step 4: Rephrase your idea to eliminate all elements that could be considered prescriptive, directive, or instructive. So, for example, in what we're talking about that means getting rid of the word ask. So instead, the new sentence would read, "Your parents will tell you where it is safe to play."

Dan Gingiss: The next step is, rephrase any element that suggests certainty, so that would be the word will in the previous sentence. So now we're at, "Your parents can tell you where it is safe to play."

Joey Coleman: Then Step 6, rephrase the idea to eliminate any element that may not apply to all children. Not all children know their parents. So, the new sentence would be, "Your favorite grownups can tell you where it is safe to play."

Dan Gingiss: Step 7 is to add a simple motivational idea that gives preschoolers a reason to follow your advice. So perhaps, "Your favorite grownups can tell you where it is safe to play. It is a good idea to listen to them."

Joey Coleman: Step 8: Rephrase this new statement repeating the first step. So, good represents a value judgment. And instead, we would maybe say something like, "Your favorite grownups can tell you where it is safe to play. It is important to try to listen to them."

Dan Gingiss: And finally Step 9 is to rephrase your idea one last time relating it to some phase of development a preschooler can understand. So perhaps, "Your favorite grownups can tell you where it is safe to play. It is important to try to listen to them and listening is an important part of growing."

Joey Coleman: So, that's a multi-step process, and you can see how the sentence evolved that we started with: "It's dangerous to play in the street." And we ended with: "Your favorite grownups can tell you where it is safe to play. It's important to try to listen to them and listening is an important part of growing." Personally, I thought that was a pretty amazing example of how much Mr. Rogers paid attention to language. Now imagine doing this for every line in the script for a TV show that ran 30-minutes long. It ran for 31 years with 912 episodes. That's a lot of scripting and re-scripting and working diligently to get the language and the messaging right.

Dan Gingiss: Yeah, and I agree that you know getting the language right is absolutely critical. And in business, we have lots of opportunities to use language to communicate with prospects and customers. And I think what you're trying to say here is, that businesses tend to not take that kind of care that Mr. Rogers was taking to make sure that the language is inclusive or simple to understand. Maybe not prescriptive because people don't want companies telling them what to do any more than they want, you know Mr. Rogers telling him what to do. And the fact, that as you said every word of these scripts

over 912 episodes were looked at in this way, I do think it's a really good learning for us because there are so many different places where we communicate with customers. It could be in a letter, it could be on a website, it could be in an email, on a social post, could be on the telephone with the scripts that we write for our call center agents, were communicating all the time and were using language and those words really do matter.

Joey Coleman: I couldn't agree more, Dan. And I think let's be really clear here, I'm not proposing that every sentence of your website, every sentence of a blog you write, every sentence of your marketing materials, be run through a nine-step process to make it preschooler friendly, okay. But what I am saying is, there's an opportunity with the words we use to think more diligently about the level of understanding we're hoping to get out in the world. I think a lot of businesses know their product, they know their services so well that they'd write in shortcuts, and that sometimes shows up as business speak, right? Where it's just kind of gobbledygook language that is insider baseball makes sense to people in the company or the industry but to no one else, or it's these broad sweeping generalizations. You know where he can almost play kind of tagline bingo, and say you know, take taglines and swap between companies because they're just these kinds of useless, airy phrases that really don't have a lot of substance to them. So, hopefully, the next time you need to come up with some ad copy, or directions for your product or contract language for a joint venture, you'll think a little bit about Mr. Rogers. And if you'll indulge me, allow me to paraphrase from the Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood theme song, "Won't you please? Won't you please? Please, won't you think about your language?"

[SEGMENT INTRO] [THIS JUST HAPPENED]

We'd love telling stories and sharing key insights you can implement to avoid based on our experiences. Can you believe that This Just Happened?

[This Just Happened: **Passport to Easy**]

Joey Coleman: Let's talk about the federal government, shall we, Dan?

Dan Gingiss: Oh boy. We're kind of a customer experience podcast, not a political one, Joey.

Joey Coleman: Oh no, no, no, I get it, I get it. But in many ways, the one brand that every person living in the United States deals with is the United States Government. And I actually had an experience with the Federal Government this week that I wanted to talk about on the show.

Dan Gingiss: Why do I think, Joey, that you somehow ended up in prison or something?

Joey Coleman: No, no, no...

Dan Gingiss: It would be a great story...

Joey Coleman: ...not this time, folks. Not this time. No, not at all. In fact, this is, this is a really positive story. It's a story about a fantastic experience with a large government organization that I think even the smallest businesses can learn from this story. So, I realized a few days ago that we were going out of the country for a speaking gig I'm doing up in Canada and I'm taking the entire family, and what I realized was not that we were going but rather that Canada has recently started enforcing a rule, like many countries,

that your passport needs to be valid for six months after your trip. Not valid on the days of your trip. It has to still be, can't expire, for six months after your trip. Otherwise, you can't get in.

Dan Gingiss: Which in and of itself is a bit of a strange rule. But so, I know you travel with your wife and your sons. So, which passport was the culprit this time?

Joey Coleman: Well, the offender this time was my five-year old, Lochlan. So, his passport expires in two months and we leave for the trip in three days. So, we needed to get it expedited, which the good news is there is a special office in Denver, Colorado, about an hour away from where I live, where you can get an expedited passport. And, there were three things that I absolutely loved about this experience okay, and stop and realize that I just said, there were three things I loved about the experience I had with the Federal Government. Okay, so for those of you that are skeptical, I understand, but this worked really well. Number one: there was a clear description of everything you needed to bring with you for the application on the website and on all their official forms. Now there's a lot of paperwork when you're getting a passport or renewing a passport. In our case, we were renewing. But what was great is they were extremely specific not only about what documents we needed, but which documents could actually be used to qualify for multiple requirements. So, for example, the birth certificate could prove that our son was a citizen and it could also legally prove that he was our son if both of our names were on the birth certificate.

Dan Gingiss: Now, are you sure you didn't have to like fill out all these forms in triplicate or something?

Joey Coleman: No, no... it was, it was really quite easy. You only had to fill out the forms once. They wanted photocopies as opposed to original, they want you to like, to bring the original birth certificate but have a photocopy that you could leave with them, which I thought was really nice because not many people have dozens of original birth certificates lying around, right? So, it was really great. You know it clearly said what you needed. The next thing though is where it really started to get interesting. When you check into this office, the first thing you do is you go up to a booth and they confirm that you have everything you need before giving you the number to be waited on. So, they can do this quick check verification. This is fantastic. It speeds the process up. It honors the customer's time because it would be terrible to sit there and wait for your number to be called in a room with hundreds of people, and maybe you end up waiting quite a while and then to get up to the front only to find out that one of the documents you needed you didn't have. So, they do this kind of a quick two-minute check to make sure you all have all your paperwork. Then they give you the number that puts you in line to actually, you know, go and talk about what you need and why you need it, and you know, pay for it etc., etc. So, I love this quick check verification.

Dan Gingiss: Yeah, it probably also helps the people in line after you because they now don't really have to wait while you get all your papers in order, or you dispute with the person who says you have the wrong papers, and you don't have this argument, meanwhile you're waiting because everything is taking longer. So, it's not adding to your wait time because it's done that sort of a different step.

Joey Coleman: Absolutely. The third thing is where I thought to myself, wow there's hope for the Federal Government yet, and that is the staff, and full disclosure I used to work in the Federal Government, so I have a lot of respect for folks that work in the Federal

Government. But what was great about the Department of State staff here at the Passport Office, is that they take into consideration your specific situation when processing your application. Now for a place that's all about policies and procedures, to add a touch of humanity was such a unique and shocking and delightful experience. Long story short, I explained that I lived an hour away and what they did is they said, you know what, we're going to expedite your application. So, normally they give it to you the day before you have to leave. They kind of wait until the end. But they said instead, we're going to give it to you two days before that, because we want to give you as many opportunities to drive down here because we know you've got to take your kid to school and then come down and get it, and then get back in time to pick your kid up and that kind of thing. And it was just a really nice example of an employee saying, I know what the official policy is, but I am going to use some of my power and discretion to do something to make your day. Little did he know, he was going to get talked about on The Experience This! Show.

Dan Gingiss: Well, he also did a good job of putting himself in his customer's shoes and understanding the things that would cause you to have a more difficult experience, and so you know, he basically showed empathy, right? He understood your situation and then tried to adapt his own procedures to make it easier for you.

Joey Coleman: So true. So, folks, whether you're a government agency, and we've got a lot of government agency folks that listen to the show, we appreciate you listening in and thinking about your customer's experience, or even those of you that are in business, take a lesson from the State Department. Make sure you have a way for your customers to deal with you quickly, efficiently, and effectively while smiling and making them feel human every step along the way.

[SEGMENT INTRO] [THREE TAKEAWAYS]

We've talked, you've listened. Now it's time to act. There are many things you could do to take what you've learned in this episode and implement it. But at times that can feel overwhelming. Instead, why not just focus on three takeaways.

[Three Takeaways: **Questions to Consider for Episode 45**]

Joey Coleman: Takeaway #1: Have you truly mapped your customer's journey? Do you see your customers moving along a clear linear path or is it more nuanced than that? If you know your customers are gathering information from multiple channels, what are you doing to help them validate that information and persuade their internal stakeholders at the same time? Remember those seven internal stakeholders that need to be aligned? Are your materials easily shared amongst them? Do you address the different types of stakeholders in a personalized and customized way so as to make them feel special? What are you doing to make sure your customer can choose their own adventure if they don't want to follow your linear customer journey?

Dan Gingiss: Takeaway #2: Are you speaking your customer's language? Mr. Rogers spent hours upon hours studying linguistics and child development. Are you studying your customers with the same level of diligence and focus? How can you take what you know about your customers and infuse it into your messaging? Do you use words they use? Do you use phrases they use? Is your language clear direct and intentional? Do you regularly audit your communications to make sure they aren't confusing anyone? What can you do to look at the phrases and words you use the most and evaluate whether or not they are of a caliber befitting the brand experience you're trying to create.

Joey Coleman: Takeaway #3: Are you using your size as an excuse for being inefficient? Most organizations have a ton of complex moving parts, but are you using that to justify why it takes a long time for your customers to get what they want? Just because your company is big, doesn't mean it needs to be impersonal. Just because your organization has a complex process, doesn't mean you can't be efficient. Just because you normally have a set procedure and timeline, doesn't mean you can't make exceptions and deliver outstanding service in the process. What are you doing to make customer interactions more effective, more efficient, and more enjoyable?

And those are three takeaways for this episode.

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Speaking of which, if you do enjoy the show and if you've listened this long, we think you might feel free to share it with any of your colleagues that you think might also enjoy our weekly musings on bite-sized nuggets of customer experience delight. And as always, thank you for being a huge part of Experience This!

Wow! Thanks for joining us for another episode of Experience This! We know there are tons of podcasts to listen to, magazines and books to read, reality TV to watch - we don't take for granted that you've decided to spend some quality time listening to the two of us. We hope you enjoyed our discussions and if you do, we'd love to hear about it. Come on over to ExperienceThisShow.com and let us know what segments you enjoy, what news segments you'd like to hear.

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