

Experience This! Show Podcast
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ExperienceThisShow.com

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Episode 46:

[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, and social media expert, Dan Gingiss, serve as your hosts for a weekly dose of positive customer experiences.

So, hold on to your headphones, it's time to Experience This!

Get ready for another episode of The Experience This! Show.

[EPISODE 46 INTRO]

Joey Coleman: Join us as we discuss buttons that don't work, appointments that don't start on time, and a taste test that doesn't look or feel like any other.

Dan Gingiss: Buttons, braces, and botanicals. Oh my!

[SEGMENT INTRO] [CX PRESS]

There are so many great customer experience articles to read, but who has 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: **Illusion of Control**]

Dan Gingiss: So, Joey, you know how I like to push your buttons, right?

Joey Coleman: Pretty much every single time we get together to record. You know, folks, for those of you listening along, what you may or may not know, is in between segments, while we're uploading files, we have a chance to chat and Dan pretty much spends the entire time pushing my buttons.

Dan Gingiss: Well, I think you are also a button pusher, Joey, and what I wanted to know was, do you ever feel like you push buttons that don't actually work? So, I'm talking like that button on a street corner in New York City that you're pushing to try to get that walk signal lit up, or maybe you're in a hotel and you're in an elevator, and you're trying to get the door to close and it won't.

Joey Coleman: Yeah! Yeah, that one! That's the one for me. I will ride the close button once I'm on, especially like lots of times, I am getting to a hotel late at night, as soon as I get in the elevator, I am pushing that close-door button like it is my job.

Dan Gingiss: Well so, this is really interesting and the subject of our CX Press today. It turns out that most of those buttons actually don't work.

Joey Coleman: Wait. Wait a second. I'm sorry. Wait, don't work? Like, just they don't work, or intentionally don't work?

Dan Gingiss: Well, you're about to find out because this article is called, ["Illusion of Control: Why the World is Full of Buttons That Don't Work."](#) And it comes from an author, Jacopo Prisco who writes for CNN Style. So, these buttons are called "placebo" buttons just like a placebo pill. They have actually no effect, but they can have a psychological one. In New York City, according to its own Department of Transportation, only about 100 of the 1000 crosswalk buttons actually work. Now... hang onto that stat for a minute...

Joey Coleman: ...just let that stat sit, folks. This is what we like to call in the business, a mic drop statistic - 100 of the 1000 crosswalk buttons in New York City actually work.

Dan Gingiss: So, in London, they actually have an audible voice that says, "wait" after you push the button on any of its 6000 crosswalk buttons. But that doesn't actually necessarily mean that the system is moving any quicker.

Joey Coleman: It's also like the verbal version of the "Spinning Wheel of Death" on your computer.

Dan Gingiss: Pretty much, exactly. And also, an interesting fact that I didn't know is that elevator doors in the United States, are required to have a delay before closing, because of the Americans With Disabilities Act or ADA. So, if you get into the elevator and you immediately start pressing that button, it will almost assuredly have no effect. Now in other countries, it may work, or it may not work.

Joey Coleman: Wowzah! I'm going to have to change my behavior in the elevator. Note to self, stop pressing the buttons, at least on the elevator. The author of this article, I think also interviewed Ellen Langer, Harvard psychologist, who pioneered this concept known as the Illusion of Control. She says in the article, "Taking some action leads people to feel a sense of control over a situation, and that feels good rather than just being a passive bystander; doing something typically feels better than doing nothing." And her argument is that the Illusion of Control is good for society because it makes people calm, and in the case of crosswalks, more aware of their surroundings. You know, I thought that this is a pretty interesting article, Dan, and I had certainly heard of placebos before, but I haven't really heard of placebo buttons. What were you thinking about when you finished reading this?

Dan Gingiss: Well, my first thought was, I knew it!

Joey Coleman: Dan's a smart one, folks.

Dan Gingiss: I too, have been known to push, especially that crosswalk button over and over and over again because it takes so darn long. And, I find it pretty frustrating when I know that the walk button isn't working, and so I hit it over and over again hoping that will

somehow make a difference. And, the fact that I now know it doesn't, actually makes me feel a little better.

Joey Coleman: Yeah, I can definitely see where the psychological effect, and impact of pressing those buttons, and sometimes hypothetically, one might even press them harder and faster because it didn't... the elevator didn't close the first time, for example.

Dan Gingiss: Wait... so, what do you mean hypothetically there, Joey?

Joey Coleman: Hypothetically somebody might do that. Someone I know...

Dan Gingiss: ... a friend?

Joey Coleman: I have a friend who might do that and might have a lot more insight now as to the science behind the technology of the elevator button.

Dan Gingiss: So, I want to talk a little bit about this Illusion of Control as it pertains to customer experience, because in some ways I look at this and was like, alright I get the argument about the placebo being good for society, and if people are aware of their surroundings they are less likely to jump into the street and get hit by traffic, etc. But on the other hand, I also found it to be a little manipulative, and that made me feel that maybe it was intentionally creating a negative experience. What did you get out of reading the article?

Joey Coleman: Well, at the risk of saying I'm pro-manipulation, you know there's a part of me that believes that when it comes to the customer experience, it's okay to do things by design that makes people feel a certain way, or makes them feel like they have that control, or that they're in charge of their own destiny. You know we talked in an earlier episode this season about wait times at amusement parks, and I think when they give you the option to choose which line you go down, when there's kind of a couple different choices, you know paths that all pretty much go to the same place, I think that illusion of you got to decide whether to go left or right, even though it's the same amount of time, calms people and gives them a thought of I'm not just being herded like cattle.

Dan Gingiss: Yeah, and truthfully, people are manipulated all the time. Most consumers I think know that. I would say that most advertising and marketing, the goal is in some way to manipulate you into thinking something. This was a little bit different in the sense that it is meant to manipulate you into doing something, or at least into believing that what you're doing has some sort of an impact, and I thought that was, you know, again it was just curious, and my sort of fear went to, well what if companies started thinking of lots of ways to basically pull the wool over our heads, and to me I always try to think about well so, what would a better experience look like, what would I advise? To me, a better experience would be setting reasonable expectations. So, if you saw a sign when you walked into an elevator that said, "this elevator door will remain open for 5 seconds," you're probably not going to sit there and push that button very hard because you know you're going to wait for the five seconds. You're going to be okay with it because the expectations have been set. And, as long as the door closes after that, your experience is kind of okay. It's this idea of your flustered. You're frustrated because your flight was late, you're in this elevator, and you push the dang button as hard as you can and it's still not working which is making you even madder.

Joey Coleman: Yeah. I feel like it's a fine line, right? Are you going to be ramping things up or is it maybe a release? Does it maybe, calm them down to feel like, oh I'm going to press it a bunch of times and then feel better even if nothing actually happens. Are they tracking the fact that nothing's happening? You know when I'm in the elevator and I am pressing the button, when it finally does start to move I'm kind of like, "Haha I did it" when the reality is it would have moved at that time no matter what.

Dan Gingiss: Yeah exactly. And so, I would say be careful about inserting too much manipulation into the experience because you may upset people when they find out. I fully expect that our listeners are going to be very angry at hearing that that elevator button and that crosswalk button does not work, just as you and I were Joey, because now we're going to have to change our behavior. So, be careful about that. There are definitely ways, subtle manipulation is again commonplace and can be successful. But I think you need to be careful with it.

So, we're interested in knowing when you think about this idea of the Illusion of Control. And, many examples where you've seen this at work. Maybe it's at your own business. Maybe you've been traveling somewhere, and you've seen it. We want to hear about it. So, here's how you can contact us. Go to our newly revamped website at www.ExperienceThisShow.com, find the little SpeakPipe widget and what this is, it's basically like sending us a voicemail, except we get a recording that we then can use for a future episode of our show, or we'll come back to this topic and hear from our listeners like you.

[SEGMENT INTRO] [THIS JUST HAPPENED]

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

[This Just Happened: **Pulling Teeth**]

Dan Gingiss: So, Joey, have you ever arrived on time, or perhaps even early to a doctor's appointment, and then been kept waiting for a long time?

Joey Coleman: To say that has happened once would be a gross understatement. That pretty much happens every single time I've gone to a doctor's office in my life. Yes, I have had that experience.

Dan Gingiss: And, then when they finally do call your name, do they apologize for the delay?

Joey Coleman: Really? Come on! We are talking about an office where while "bedside manner" is supposed to be part of the story and part of the training, the reality is the patients are the ones who have to be patient.

Dan Gingiss: Exactly, exactly! As the doctors must have slept through that class. So, here's what happened at my daughter's orthodontist. First of all, they have this electronic check-in that she literally runs over to every time, because she gets to check herself in. She's only 10 and it's a touchscreen and she finds her name, and I think it has her birthday in it and she can check-in herself, which I think is a just an awesome start to the experience...

Joey Coleman: ...a great experience, yeah! Allows the kids to be involved. Now everybody's part of the experience.

Dan Gingiss: Yeah. So, I had my father take her recently to get a new retainer. And unfortunately, when they arrived the retainer wasn't ready, and it just hadn't been completed yet, and they had forgotten to call us to tell us not to come.

Joey Coleman: Whoopsie!

Dan Gingiss: Yup... but what happened next was amazing. So, the staff immediately apologized. The woman behind the counter reaches into a drawer and hands my dad a ten-dollar Starbucks gift card and I quote, "for being the chauffeur."

Joey Coleman: Ooooo... I like it! Nice...

Dan Gingiss: ...and then, hands my daughter a ten-dollar Dunkin gift card.

Joey Coleman: Nice, because let's be honest, while your daughter is very sweet she doesn't need to be drinking coffee... she's 10.

Dan Gingiss: That is true. So, we had to set-up another appointment, obviously when the retainer actually was ready, which was about a week later and this time I brought her in, instead of my dad. And, they apologized again to me and gave me a ten-dollar Starbucks gift card.

Joey Coleman: Nice. Nice going above and beyond! I love it. And what I love about this is, I think so many businesses are afraid to admit they made a mistake. And then if they do admit it, they want to admit it quickly and move on. And what I love about this example is it's not a huge thing, I mean it's certainly an inconvenience, right? And it certainly wasted your father's time and your daughter's time, and then your time going back the second time. But it's not like they pulled the wrong tooth, or you know what I mean, it's not a tragedy but it is something that was deserving of an apology. And what I love is that they did it twice, and then they upped that by also giving you the gift cards.

Dan Gingiss: Well, and I think it's important to look at here is the difference in the two potential outcomes, because it's a huge difference. It's like when you're in a pennant chase in baseball, and you know you have the opportunity to win a game and move up by an entire game in the standings, or lose a game and go down by a game in the standings. The net difference is two games so it's really big. And so here, rather than having an upset customer who feels like the office didn't respect his time or simply wouldn't admit a mistake, now you have a customer that understands the situation, is satisfied that the office cares because they acted in that manner, and they're going to remember the orthodontist later, when they're not even there when they use that gift card. And, that was what was really key for me is that when my daughter goes to Dunkin and gets those free donuts, she's going to remember it's from the orthodontist, and my dad and I will remember it when we get our cup of coffee. And most importantly, the office has retained a high-value customer. And by the way, that's not my ego; I'm not saying that I'm high-value, but I do have another kid who's going to be in need of orthodontia soon. And so, it's probably a good thing that they kept me happy.

Joey Coleman: Yeah! That ten-dollar gift card, ladies and gentlemen, is going to produce the most incredible return on investment of a gift card in the history of gift cards. I love it.

You know what this story is so great for a number of reasons. It touches on a couple of themes that we refer to regularly on the show and folks, for those of you paying attention at home, the reason we refer to them regularly on the show is because there's a huge opportunity in every business to incorporate these things. The first one being make the required remarkable. So, when you go to a doctor's office, you have to check-in. Why not make it a remarkable process? Why not make it digital? Why not make it something that the 10-year-old who you're bringing to the appointment can do, and feel a sense of agency, feel a sense of control, feel that she's part of the experience as well. Additionally, I love this story because it's about doing simple better. It's about turning a mistake into a heartfelt apology and then adding on the gift card. You know my buddy Clay Hebert and I have a presentation that we do called, *Carpe Defect - Seize the Mistake: Turn your Mistakes into Marketing*. It doesn't require technology, it doesn't require a major investment, it just requires empowering your employees to do the right thing and turn these disappointing interactions, or experiences into positive ones. That by the way, if you do it right, then those customers not only will love you, but they will tell the story. Kind of like Dan is doing right now. This could have been a story of, "oh my gosh, my doctor didn't respect me." Instead, it's a story of, "oh my gosh, look how much they cared!"

Dan Gingiss: So, creating a great experience doesn't have to be like pulling teeth, people. See what I did there?

Joey Coleman: You know, I thought it was bad enough that we went to a baseball reference before we had made it halfway through the episode. But then the pulling teeth... okay, okay that's it. That's okay. That's fine. That's good. I'm aware. Now I understand what's happening.

Dan Gingiss: I kind of thought it was full of wisdom. Wisdom! Anyone want more dentist jokes? I got them.

Joey Coleman: Oh....please!

Dan Gingiss: Anyway, I forgot what I was saying, but I think it had something to do with if you make a mistake, own up to it and show the customer that you really care. I'm pretty sure that four out of five dentists would agree.

[SEGMENT INTRO] [DISSECTING THE EXPERIENCE]

Sometimes a remarkable experience deserves deeper investigation. We dive into the nitty-gritty of customer interactions and dissect how and why they haven't. Join us while we're dissecting the experience.

[Dissecting The Experience: **Sipsmith Gin**]

Dan Gingiss: So, Joey I know that you don't drink, but I think you will nonetheless still appreciate the experience that I had recently that involved an alcoholic beverage at a Chicago neighborhood festival. There is this gin called Sipsmith, it's a London dry gin...

Joey Coleman: ...say THAT five times fast when you've had some gin... Sipsmith, Sipsmith, Sipsmith

Dan Gingiss: Yes, and you haven't had some gin!

Joey Coleman: Exactly!

Dan Gingiss: Anyway, there's a London dry gin that is starting to catch on both in the U.S. and, specifically in Chicago. It was new to the Chicago area, so they had set-up a tasting tent at this festival, but it wasn't like when you go to the grocery store, or the warehouse club and they just kind of give you a sample. The first thing that was interesting was they handed you this little plastic cup, and they filled it with ice and a little bit of gin. And then, you had a choice of the three different tonics to mix in with your gin. I will be honest, I didn't know that there were three different...

Joey Coleman: ...I didn't know until this moment. I did not know there were three different tonics.

Dan Gingiss: Yeah, there was sort of a standard tonic, there was an Indian tonic, and there was a Mediterranean tonic and all...

Joey Coleman: Oooolala...

Dan Gingiss: ... and the bartender explained the difference between all three of them. So, then you add your tonic, and they move you then on to what they called the garnish station. Now...

Joey Coleman: ...everybody's gotta love a good garnish station...

Dan Gingiss: ...you got to love a good garnish station, yeah! And I know you'll have to imagine this listeners, but we will post pictures, of course with our show notes at www.ExperienceThisShow.com. But this garnish station was packed with things that you could now put in your drink. There were your standard lemons and limes, which certainly make sense it.

Joey Coleman: Well sure. I mean once you get to lemon and limes, that's usually where it ends, right... maybe a maraschino cherry... maybe.

Dan Gingiss: Yes, but we had blood orange, we had grapefruit, we had raspberries. If fruit wasn't your thing, we had rosemary, juniper, chili peppers, black pepper, lavender, rose petals... all of this stuff...

Joey Coleman: Rose petals? Good Golly, Miss Molly, this was a garnish station galore!

Dan Gingiss: Yes... tons of garnishes and then what was cool, because it could be a little bit overwhelming is they had suggested combinations. So, one was called a "bold and beautiful," which involved mixing the blood orange and the juniper together. It was so cool because there were all these different combinations that you could come up with and personalize the drink. But the last thing that they did was they recognized this idea of personalization, and they offered you this itty-bitty, teeny-weeny clothespin that had a little card attached to it, and they gave you a marker and you could name your drink and write it on the card, and then use the itty-bitty, teeny-weeny clothespin and actually clip it to your cup. So, that as you were drinking it other people could see the name of your drink.

Joey Coleman: So, you could boldly proclaim your talents at the garnish station. I like it. I like it.

Dan Gingiss: Exactly! And, what I loved about it was, it wasn't just the standard taste tests where somebody is handing out samples, and you can take your gulp of whatever it is and you leave. It was a carefully designed, immersive experience that included the product, and certainly the product was important, but it wasn't just about the product. In fact, what I thought was the best part about it was that it was personalized to me. I went and did the math, and I know we always say there will be no math here on the show.

Joey Coleman: Wow, Dan, yeah I was going to say. Sorry, ladies and gentlemen, we have a rule here on Experience This!, you are not required to do the math. So, Dan did the math on his own time, thank you.

Dan Gingiss: I did for you, yup...

Joey Coleman: ...did it for us, and for me too because I wasn't going to do the math.

Dan Gingiss: I looked at all of those choices of all of the toppings and the garnishes and even the three different kinds of tonic, and I figured out that there were more than a billion different combinations that you could have put together in that little cup. And here this is, just a little pop-up, you know tasting station at a festival.

Joey Coleman: I love it and I love it because to your point by not having it be only about the gin, I presume it made it feel less "salesy" too, right... because it wasn't just about trying our gin, try Sipsmith Gin. You would kind of be in this place where it was like, ok thanks, yeah, I'll try it. But by making it an experience, they kind of took you out of the fact that this was promoting a product or kind of a marketing experience. You know, it's funny because it reminds me of a segment we did back last year in season one, episode 14 where we talked about scotch and experience, and the fact that some things need to be seen, tasted, smelled, heard, or felt in order to be believed. And, if I'm recalling correctly, the article we were talking about at the time mentioned that in the liquor industry, in particular, allowing people to experience the product before buying it has become one of the most successful marketing tactics, because people get used to a certain drink and certain types of liquors and then they kind of stay part in that choice for decades. And so, if you can get someone to try your liquor and they like it, the good news is there is a high likelihood that they will be a customer for a very long time.

Dan Gingiss: Absolutely and by the way, I am impressed that your memory goes all the way back to Episode 14.

Joey Coleman: Well, I appreciate that! It could have been because I was sober when we recorded the episode. I'm not sure.

Dan Gingiss: For sure. But honestly, what they did worked. I mean, I left there thinking, man I should pick up a bottle of this Sipsmith the next time I'm looking for a gin because it left an impression on me. And either way, I left with a very positive view of the brand, which is important because you, for example, Joey, may not go out and buy a bottle of Sipsmith, but if you have a friend who asks you whether you know any gin brand, you now know one that you can confidently recommend. And I talk about this a lot. It's one of the things I love to talk about when I'm on stage, is that there are lots of haters out there talking negatively about brands and social media and it's really hard to stop the haters. But one of the best things that we can do is create remarkable experiences, and you always remind me that the definition of remarkable is that which is worthy of comment. And, when you create a remarkable experience people share those as well. This experience from

Sipsmith was specifically crafted and designed, even though it never said anything for Facebook and Instagram, it was designed for that generation. So, of course, you take a picture of your drink with your garnishes and your sign attached to it, and you share it. It was immersive. It was photographable, and it was a very, very shareable. So, cheers to Sipsmith for creating a great experience.

[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 46**]

Dan Gingiss: Takeaway #1: How much are you manipulating your customer's experience with your company, and is it in a positive or negative way? The illusion of control may be a proven psychological phenomenon, but we should be careful about how much manipulation resides in our customer experiences. Companies do it all the time. Hiding important disclosures in mountains of fine print, for example, or cable companies throttling internet speeds without customers really understanding when or why. We preach simplicity and transparency on the show, so look at your business and see where you can improve in those areas.

Joey Coleman: Takeaway #2: What happens when your company makes a mistake? Is there a protocol in place to fix the error? Are employees trained to genuinely apologize? And, is there something you could give a customer as a token of your appreciation for their patience? These are things that go a long way with customers and turning negative experiences into positive ones is one of the most powerful customer experience tactics around because it really counts as double. You still have your customer, and you didn't lose one.

Dan Gingiss: Takeaway #3: Can you provide a truly immersive experience for people who are not yet customers? Sipsmith Gin didn't just want to do a taste test. They wanted people to experience their brand in a unique and memorable way. How do you show people your product or service before they buy it? Is it remarkable - literally worthy of comment on social media or elsewhere? And how can you personalize the experience, even if it doesn't include a billion choices?

Joey Coleman: Those are the three takeaways for this episode.

Dan Gingiss: And one more thing we'd like to ask of you before you go. We really appreciate you listening to The Experience This! Show. What we really need from you is an honest review on iTunes or wherever you listen to podcasts because this is how people find new podcasts. They read what other people say, and we want to hear what you have to say about our show. And we very much appreciate and genuinely thank you for listening to us each and every week on The Experience This! Show.

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new segments you'd like to hear. This show is all about experience, and we want you to be part of The Experience This! show. Thanks again for your time and we'll see you next week for more Experience This!