

Experience This! Show Podcast  
Hosts: Joey Coleman & Dan Gingiss  
[ExperienceThisShow.com](http://ExperienceThisShow.com)

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## Episode 48:

[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 experience.

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

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

[EPISODE 48 INTRO]

Join us as we discuss how the words you use in your website navigation really do make a difference, how saying the right thing can turn a failure into another try, and why aligning your internal culture with your brand may be the secret to some of the world's most successful companies.

Navigating, Motivating, and Integrating. Oh my!

[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 happen. Join us while we're Dissecting The Experience.

[Dissecting The Experience: **Website Navigation**]

**Dan Gingiss:** So, Joey I know you know this, and some of our listeners know this, but I spent three years at Discover Card as the head of digital customer experience. It was the last of many roles that I had at Discover over a ten-year career there, and I was in charge of the website which at the time was garnering nearly 50 million visits per month.

**Joey Coleman:** That's a lot of visitors...

**Dan Gingiss:** That's a lot of people...

**Dan Gingiss:** And, navigation was always one of the really hot topics and for those that don't know, navigation is really part of something called user experience, which is really a

subset of customer experience. And there's a lot of guidelines. There's even an International Organization for Standardization which...

**Joey Coleman:** Ooh la la

**Dan Gingiss:** Yeah, it defines user experience and the way it defines it as a person's perceptions and responses resulting from the use and or anticipated use of a product, system, or service. And, it's a consequence of brand image, presentation, functionality, system performance, interactive behavior, and assistive capabilities of the interactive system. So, I would say the navigation of a website definitely fits that description, wouldn't you agree?

**Joey Coleman:** I do, and you know by definition, navigation helps the customer get where they want to go, or at least that's what website navigation is supposed to do.

**Dan Gingiss:** Suppose too... you nailed it on the head, my friend. You see, according to new research conducted by branding design and marketing agency, Tank Design, navigation labels are absolutely essential and many companies, especially in the B2B space, are messing it up.

**Joey Coleman:** Now, I think by messing it up that's a technical term. What do you mean thereby messing it up, Dan?

**Dan Gingiss:** Yeah, so the International Organization for Standardization defines messing it up as a means that many companies are using the exact same generic navigation labels on their websites. You've been to these companies before when you look up any sort of software or business-to-business technology platform. They all say something to the effect of products, solutions, services, resources which leads to no differentiation for either their potential customers, or more importantly, for the SEO gods at Google.

**Joey Coleman:** Now wait a second. You know in many ways a lot of those words are basically interchangeable. I mean what's the difference between saying, these are our solutions, and these are our services. You know if I'm a prospect, or frankly even a customer, I'm confused as to which button I'm supposed to click on.

**Dan Gingiss:** Exactly! So, the user experience team at Tank Design knew this was a problem and they were having trouble convincing their clients to do anything about it. Care to guess why?

**Joey Coleman:** I imagine it's similar to that excuse teenagers around the world use, "...but everybody else is doing it that way."

**Dan Gingiss:** Exactly! Everybody else is doing it. One of the worst reasons to do something! Tank's Senior User Experience Designer, Hilary Basch - who is now getting her MBA at MIT's Sloan - and Senior Manager of Data Insights and Analytics, Laurel Marcus, conducted an in-depth survey of what site users think certain navigation labels mean. Let's take a listen to Hilary describe the issue and their approach.

**Hilary Basch:** One of the most important parts of the website is the navigation. The top section is sneaky critical to a good user experience. It communicates your brand offering at a glance. It helps funnel users through your content and it drives organic search performance. The problem is when you implement in vague and confusing labels for your

website navigation, you undermine all of these important functions. We were seeing a pattern emerge with our clients where labels, like products, services, features, solutions, and platform kept popping up in website navigation. And, while we cited research and made our cases as user experience design and search engine optimization professionals, we struggle to convince our clients that these specific labels were dangerous. Other people were doing it and, honestly, these held meaning to our clients. They really saw a difference between products and features, and solutions from services. So, we decided to formulate an experiment. We asked a couple of hundred people to find specific information on a website with these vague navigation labels, with the hypothesis that we'd see users going to all different areas to find the content and no clear consensus on where the information actually lives. Our results proved as much no matter how you slice the data by age, location, small business owner versus not, education labels, race gender, you name it - it didn't matter. There was not one task, or more than three quarters of the users agreed where to find the information. This is an experience fail. We know users have little patience and will abandon a website within 30 seconds if their attention isn't held. The navigation labels costs you by increasing the likelihood of drop-off and, as a result, reducing the opportunity for conversion. Not to mention missing opportunities to have Google elevate your website in search results. The moral of the story is that navigation labels should be created with the user in mind. How did they think about your brand offering and how did they expect to find information organized? Navigation is not a time to get overly creative, nor a time to do what everyone else is doing. Utilize a creative agency to help survey your competitors. Talk to your users. Understand your business needs. Your organic search opportunities as well. Let us do the research and help get the navigation labels that work for your business, not against them.

**Dan Gingiss:** So, to break this down a little further, the researchers developed a realistic scenario of a small business owner searching for a conference call solution that works across multiple countries. They asked 217 respondents to imagine that they went to a company's website and encountered a fairly typical navigation strip containing five options similar to the ones we discussed before - features, platform, products, services, and solutions. Then they asked the respondents to find five pieces of content, like where would you find information on international call rates. Their hypothesis was there will be no clear consensus as to where the content would be found, and they were right for each content piece every navigation label was selected by at least some of the respondents, often a double-digit percentage.

**Joey Coleman:** So, in layman's terms, the people who participated in the survey had no idea where to find the stuff they were looking for?

**Dan Gingiss:** Exactly. Now I got to interview Hilary Basch for an article in Forbes and one of the ways she summarized the data was perfect. She said and I quote, "the results translate to if ten people visit your website, three people are looking in the solutions section for this content, two were looking at platform, two in products, two in services, and one in features. That's a failure."

**Joey Coleman:** Yeah, I think the calling that a failure is a gross understatement. I mean, if customers coming to your site, or prospects coming to your site, can't find the information they're looking for because of the navigation titles that you chose, that's a major problem. So, out of curiosity, Dan, what was the answer? Is there a solution to this problem?

**Dan Gingiss:** Well, Hilary said that quote... "labels should be as specific and clear as possible" unquote and, she pointed to our old friends at Chewy.com. Remember them

from Episode 17 last year? She referred to them as a great example because after you choose Shop By Pet on their website, you're presented with clear descriptive labels, such as food, treats, and supplies. Now, this is also very good for search engine optimization, because Google picks this up and knows what kind of business you have and what kind of products you're selling. Now, Hilary also suggested that companies perform adequate due diligence before choosing navigation labels. How? By talking to your customers! They'll tell you where they expect to find things.

**Joey Coleman:** Dan, I'm shocked and stunned that Hilary would recommend talking to your customers! That's so novel. It's so unique. Folks, come on, we have to put ourselves in the shoes of our customer. We have these internal languages and phrases and nomenclature that we use within our organizations, but at the end of the day, it's not your employees coming to your website. It's your prospects and your customers and in fact, I would argue that more often than not, it's prospects who have little to no understanding of what your offerings are. And if the navigation isn't clear, how are they supposed to find what they want? And I would take it one step further, at least thinking of my own behavior and I know your behavior, Dan based on some of our conversations, and probably the behavior of most of our listeners, I'm not going to spend 20 minutes trying to figure out the navigation on your site to see if you have the things that I'm looking for. If I can't find it quickly, I'm out.

**Dan Gingiss:** Exactly. And I'm glad you talked about nomenclature because I think that that happens a lot where we, and we talked about that last year as well with the insurance company using the research about health insurance, and all the words that customers don't use except insurance companies continue to use them. I think another problem also is that companies often build their websites and their navigation based on their own org chart. Their own organizational structure which, of course, the customer doesn't know about or care about. But the way that its built is by org structure because, if you think about it from an internal perspective, the person building the site has to answer to lots of different masters, right? You have product owner number one over here and he wants these pages, and he wants this look and feel, and you have product owner number two over here and she has a very different view on what the site should look like and so she needs these tabs and this look and feel. And so, you end up with a website that if you really peel back the onion, is essentially the organizational structure of the company which is exactly the wrong way to develop it. Now we'll include a link to the full research results in the show notes at [ExperienceThisShow.com](http://ExperienceThisShow.com). But I did want to leave you with one last quote from Hilary that I found to be particularly impactful she says, "By using vague navigation labels, we've proven that you are creating space for failure and missing an opportunity to create clarity around your brand and offering. If users are failing to find the content they're looking for, they will go to your competitors or somewhere else to find it." Just like you, Joey.

[SEGMENT INTRO] [THIS JUST HAPPENED]

We 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: **Karate**]

**Dan Gingiss:** We got another listener submitted experience, which Joey and I love when that happens.

**Joey Coleman:** Whoo-Hoo! Thanks for submitting this sound bite. We love them! Keep them coming!

**Dan Gingiss:** And, we know you love them too because it means you get to listen to some other voice besides Dan and Joey, which in itself is an experience.

This one comes from Jonathan Hsu (Su) who is a part-time karate instructor and he shares with us what happens when one of his students fails. Let's listen in.

**Jonathan Hsu:** Hey, Dan... Hey Joey... enjoy the show. My name is Jonathan Hsu and I want to go ahead and share a good customer experience story that I have. I work in a small software company in the DC area, but the story is actually going to be from my former life as a karate instructor. Part of teaching karate is the kicks and the punches but what people don't really talk about, very often is the fact that you are trying to enforce standards on small children. It's pretty hard to tell a parent that their five-year old girl isn't going to get the next promotion because she wasn't good enough yet. Right away it puts you in a scenario where the parents get very defensive, the kid is upset but I've always treated these as a great opportunity to build trust with the parents, especially those who are newer at the school. So, the one thing that I always tell parents whenever I feel their student is that it's not that their student is not good enough, because they're not good enough yet. And moreover, what I'm really doing here is making a promise to them that I'm going to get their kid there. So, anytime I tell them their kid hasn't passed, what it really is a commitment to them that I'm going to be working with that student extra time, whether it's before class, after class, I'm going to be checking in with them. I'm going to make sure the other instructors know that the student needs a little bit more attention. And it's a great opportunity to build a real trust equity here. Things whenever they go well, you never really know how the other party is going to respond, but any time you run into a scenario where the outcome is not what you expect, you now get to see what everybody's made out of. For me, as an instructor, I got to see if the student was going to be able to develop the right type of skills necessary to move forward and face challenges. And, as a parent, they get to see the same thing out of their kid. They get to see their child grow, not just have fun, smile, and learn new activities but really grow as a person and grow character. So again, I'd like to take these opportunities to teach the kids that even though something doesn't go well. Even though they don't get the result that they wanted initially, they're going to still be able to achieve what they dream for just through hard work. And again, I take this experience and I turn it into a positive thing because they are happier, and not only are they happy that they earn their next promotion, but they're also happy because they appreciate it more because they know they've had to work harder at it and the parents now trust me next time something like this comes up.

**Joey Coleman:** First of all, thanks so much to Jonathan for listening to the show and for sending us your experience. As Dan said, this is what really makes our show - we love it. Love it. Love it when people do this. Second of all, I think Jonathan's story raises a larger point, which is that in every business, there will be times when things don't go as planned. And when you have to deliver the message to your customer that what they had planned on having happen, or it hoped what happened isn't going to happen. Projects fail. People mess up. Employees miss a promotion. And how a company responds in that moment to this type of quote unquote "failure," says a lot about the character of the company and the overall brand experience and customer experience that they're creating.

**Dan Gingiss:** Yeah, you know I thought the same thing and it actually reminded me of one of my favorite topics which is customer service in social media. And, the reason it

reminded me of this is that when people complain in social media, they're obviously saying something negative about a company. But the way that a company responds, or even if they respond, and I can't believe that I still have to say that if today...

**Joey Coleman:** Shocking...

**Dan Gingiss:** ...but the way they respond, if they respond, says a ton about them, and you know I've given examples before about how you can turn a detractor into an advocate on social media just by responding the right way, and showing that you acknowledge a mistake and are willing to try to fix it. And I think there has been great examples of this over the years, both United and Southwest Airlines have had big system problems during many, many hours during a day in which tons of flights were canceled. And both of them, in their own way, handled those situations really, really well so that even though that people are upset about being delayed, they understand that the company made a mistake. They took ownership of the mistake and they were working as hard as they could to fix it. And I thought about this as I was listening to Jonathan's story because in this particular case, he's basically telling somebody else about their mistake or about their failure. And I think it does require some of the same skills, which is this idea of empathy, of having really good communication skills, and choosing just the right words. And really what I think is remarkable is that he ends up motivating his students to do better next time, so they don't necessarily leave crying that they didn't pass this time, but they leave feeling like they're energized and motivated to do better next time.

**Joey Coleman:** What I loved about his comment is that he actually shares how important it is to him that the parents and the student understand he is going to give them extra time and attention to get them there. See, when you make a mistake as a business, I think the secret is to let the customer know that you're right there next to him. Instead of hiding behind policies or procedures, to show that empathy as you mentioned, Dan, but to also let them know that you're going to double down on your time, your attention, your focus in order to get things back on track. And I think that's how you can turn your mistakes into your marketing.

**Dan Gingiss:** So, we want to hear your stories. Thank you again to Jonathan for submitting his but we want to hear yours as well. How do you do that you ask? Well, the easiest way is to go to our website at [www.ExperienceThisShow.com](http://www.ExperienceThisShow.com) and check out our Speakpipe widget. Guys, this is super easy. It's basically like online voice mail. You click a button and you can record a message to us. Now we ask that your message be less than 2 minutes long but tell us your story and we will include you on a future episode. If that's uncomfortable for you, you can also record it in any audio format and send it to us. You can e-mail it to us or hit us up on the website, and we will figure it out with you, but we really want to hear your stories because we love telling stories from our listeners on the show. Thanks to Jonathan and thanks to all of our listeners for being part of The Experience This! Show.

[SEGMENT INTRO] [BOOK REPORT]

We're excited to give you an overview of an important book you should know about, as well as share some of our favorite passages as part of our next Book Report.

[Book Report: **Fusion**]

**Dan Gingiss:** A new book came out recently by Denise LeI Yohn called, "Fusion - How Integrating Brand and Culture Powers the World's Greatest Companies." I thought it a great book for us to talk about on the show because it's much more inward facing than the topics we usually cover. Denise's philosophy is that a company's employee culture must be tied to the external brand image. Now, this makes sense because we know that happy and engaged employees are much more likely to have happy and engaged customers, than are unhappy and disgruntled employees. Let's hear Denise describe Fusion in her own words.

**Denise Lee Yohn:** What do the leaders at companies like Southwest Airlines, Starbucks, and Google do to put the organizations at the top of the most admired companies list, and the best brands list, and the best places to work lists? It's the same approach that distinguishes those companies that are disrupting business today as we know it. Such as Amazon, Airbnb, and Salesforce. It's what I call brand culture fusion. The integration and alignment of a company's external brand identity and its internal workplace culture. Culture is such a hot topic these days because of the war for talent, issues of diversity, equality, and sexual harassment, and just the general lack of employee engagement. But to date, little has been published about how to cultivate a valuable, healthy culture. And whatever rhetoric that exists about culture, doesn't explain how your current brand and culture must be fused together. My new book "Fusion - How Integrating Brand and Culture Powers the World's Greatest Companies" explains why, if you want to lead your field and to produce exceptional results, your brand and culture must be mutually reinforcing. More than that, it shows you how to achieve brand culture fusion. The book teaches you how to lay a solid foundation for fusion by setting an overarching purpose and a single set of core values, conducting an assessment of your current state so you know where the gaps are, and taking up the leadership responsibility for cultivating your desired culture. And then, the book provides five strategies for achieving brand culture fusion, including creating culture changing employee experiences and building your brand from the inside out. It gives you the entire roadmap for how to achieve sustainable, competitive advantage, futureproof your business, and drive new growth.

**Joey Coleman:** It's interesting to me that Denise calls out Southwest and Starbucks and Google as some examples of where this fusion is happening because it's actually pretty easy to observe the employees of those companies really buying into the culture and the brand identity. I also like that connection between companies that are the most admired brands and the best places to work.

**Dan Gingiss:** Exactly. Southwest is the company it is because of its flight attendants and other staff who really embody the company's vision of being a great customer service company and providing a unique flying experience. And as we know, most Starbucks baristas have pretty good personalities, and they enjoy engaging with all the customers waiting for their daily caffeine fix, and Googlers, by the way as they're called, can often be seen wearing clothing, emblazoned with the familiar multicolored Google logo, and even have some of their own secret nomenclature.

**Joey Coleman:** Well, Dan if it's a secret, how do you know about it?

**Dan Gingiss:** Let's just say I know people who know people. One of my favorite secret phrases is GTS, which is the answer to almost any question. It stands for Google That Sh...

**Joey Coleman:** HEY, HEY, HEY! Whoa, whoa, folks! We're a family show here but you're probably familiar with the explicative, Dan's referring to. Without further ado, let's jump into our favorite passage. I believe Denise has one for us right, Dan?

**Dan Gingiss:** She sure does and here it is.

**Denise Lee Yohn:** With Fusion, I hope to crack the code to culture building because it is all too often misunderstood. As I've spoken to executives around the world over the past decade, I've met leaders who incorrectly assume that there is a right kind of culture, a warm and benevolent one that works in all companies to produce happy productive employees. I've met leaders who champion culture bullying tactics that don't even align with or seem relevant to their business goals. And leaders who think culture building is exclusively the purview of the human resources department to work on through recruiting, training and development, comp, and benefits. Leaders who try to improve their culture by giving employees perks and throwing parties, which these days, are mere table stakes for most employees. And leaders who believe culture is out of their control, that it grows organically so they shrug off any responsibility for cultivating it at all. It is true that culture can't be imposed, but you absolutely can and should set the conditions to cultivate an organizational culture that deeply influences the way your employees perform daily. This is one of my favorite passages from the book because there are so many misperceptions about culture building and, it seems like such a mystery and I wrote fusion to dispel those myths and to show how to cultivate a culture that produces the results that people are looking for.

**Dan Gingiss:** Not to say this passage really hit home for me because as you know I've been in the workforce for 20 plus years at this point, at a variety of companies of different sizes. And Denise is right, that culture can't just fall under the purview of an H.R. department. It has to be embodied by executive management. It can't be forced, and it has to have time to manifest itself. This doesn't just change overnight because of one holiday party or a surprise bonus. Joey, what was your favorite passage from the book?

**Joey Coleman:** Well, my favorite passage is as follows, and I'm quoting "quote Benjamin Franklin once said, "Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I remember. Involve me and I learn." Learning and engagement are indeed most effectively accomplished when you involve people experientially. That's why staging experiences for your employees to engage personally and interactively with your brand is crucial." Folks, it probably comes as no surprise that I would pick this as my favorite passage because everything we do here at Experience This! show is about the experience and I believe that you can't expect your employees to deliver a remarkable customer experience for your customers if they don't know what a remarkable experience is; they need to know what a remarkable employee experience is. So, it's really about providing the opportunities for your employees to be blown away, to be surprised, to be wowed, so that they have a context for how they can do those same type of actions when they interact with your customers. Dan, what was your favorite passage?

**Dan Gingiss:** I particularly liked this one later in the book. "What you say matters but just as important, what you do provides models of action for your people and telegraphs how committed you are to aligning your culture with your brand. As a leader, you must be a paragon of your desired culture." And Yohn cites a study where she says 61 percent of managers' report that actions by leaders were the most likely to influence the behavior of others in the organization. Now I've seen this countless times at work. The H.R. department will introduce a brand-new program and you know who doesn't use it? Senior

management, leadership, and that makes it a lot tougher to motivate middle management and junior employees to participate in the new program. Why? Because they were taught to follow the leader.

**Joey Coleman:** Folks, it worked on the playground in kindergarten, and it will work in your business. Follow the leader. Check out Denise Lee Yohn's book, "Fusion" and learn how your internal and external brand experience can become more connected. You can find it on Amazon, at your favorite bookstore, or via our brand-new website at [ExperienceThisShow.com](http://ExperienceThisShow.com).

[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 from Episode 48**]

**Dan Gingiss:** Takeaway #1: Are you speaking your customer's language? Tank Design surveyed hundreds of real customers to prove that words matter in website navigation, but they matter everywhere else too. Are you using language that your customers understand? Are you relying on industry buzz words that are confusing or genericized categories that are just plain unhelpful? Take a look at your company's language to see where you can simplify and clarify to create a better customer experience.

**Joey Coleman:** Takeaway #2: How do you share bad news? Most people can handle negative feedback if it's delivered in a constructive manner with empathy and encouragement. Jonathan Hsu has not just mastered karate, he's mastered the art of having the tough conversations with students and their parents when they aren't successful. This is an important skill for marketers and customer service professionals to learn, because sometimes companies have to share bad news, like the removal of a product benefit, or a favorite item from the menu. Take the time to plan out what you need to say, set an expectation for what is going to be done in the future, make sure the feedback is helpful, not hurtful, and leave everyone feeling positive about what is to come.

**Dan Gingiss:** Takeaway #3: Has your company achieved fusion? Does your internal culture reflect your brand promise? Do your employees believe in what you're selling. We know that happy employees mean happy customers, but they also mean more sales. Employees who are truly bought into the company's vision and mission; more than just posting a PowerPoint slide at their cubicles. They do a better job of communicating the benefits of doing business with you because they are credible.

Those are three takeaways for this episode.

And, if you'll do us just one more favor, tell one person, one friend or relative this week about The Experience This! show. We would so appreciate it because we know that if you like listening to us, your friends and family will as well. Thanks so much for listening to this episode of Experience This!

[SHOW CONCLUSION]

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](http://ExperienceThisShow.com) and let us know what segments you enjoy, what news 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!