

Experience This! Show Podcast
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ExperienceThisShow.com

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Episode 51:

[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! .

[EPISODE 51 INTRO]

Joey Coleman: Get ready for another episode of the Experience This! Show.

Dan Gingiss: Join us for a special "London Edition" as we discuss: avoiding turbulence at 35,000 feet, how to properly welcome someone at the border, and getting a haircut at the airport?!

Joey Coleman: Flyers, Criers, and Clippers. Oh my!

[SEGMENT INTRO][CX PRESS]

Joey Coleman: 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 Express - where we read the articles so you don't need to!

[CX PRESS][Avoiding Turbulence with Delta Airlines]

Joey Coleman: Dan my friend, what is the fastest way to get sick on an airplane?

Dan Gingiss: Errr... order the lukewarm beef stroganoff with jalapeno peppers sauce and maple bacon glazed Brussels sprouts?

Joey Coleman: (laughing) Well, not exactly what I was thinking but I like your specific and very vivid answer. What I was actually referring to was turbulence.

Dan Gingiss: Ooo turbulence! Nobody likes turbulence!

Joey Coleman: Nobody likes turbulence! The pilots don't like turbulence. The flight attendants don't like turbulence. The passengers don't like turbulence. Which is why our CX Press story for this episode comes to us from The Points Guy - a name familiar to most frequent fliers. What started out as a points and miles blog by frequent flyer Brian Kelly, The Points Guy is now a lifestyle media brand with 7 million unique visitors and a staff of about 40 people who write all

about the world of points and miles. They recently shared a fascinating article titled, "This is the Reason you aren't Feeling as Much Turbulence on Delta Flights." The article described a recent meeting between the personnel from NOAA - the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration - and the very fine folks at Delta Airlines.

Dan Gingiss: Now for those of you scoring at home, that is approximately 314 times Joey has mentioned Delta Airlines across our 51 episodes of the Experience This! Show.

Joey Coleman: Well, you know that may be true Dan, what can I say... I love my airline of choice. Anyway, the reason the team at NOAA wanted to meet is that they were tracking automated turbulence reports - because that's what you do when you work at NOAA - and they noticed that Delta was the only airline to show decreased encounters with higher level turbulence over the course of the last three years. Now as it turns out, Delta flights were actually smoother and that was based on three factors: (1) lines of code, (2) iPad's onboard the planes, and (3) a willingness to stop doing things the same way that they've been done for over 100 years now.

Dan Gingiss: So, let's talk about these lines of code and the iPads. Delta has a flight weather viewer app. It was originally developed in 2015 and it was recently updated to run on Apple iPad is available to pilots on all Delta flights worldwide. These iPad's and the app are used by the pilots on more than 80 percent of their flights.

Joey Coleman: So it seems that the passengers aren't the only ones glued to their iPad for the entire flight! What's even more interesting to me is this third factor - the modern take on a centuries old practice. Since the days of the Wright Brothers, pilots have tried to keep each other informed about weather conditions. They do this via the "pilot report" or "PIREP." I'm not exactly sure how they pronounce the acronym on the planes, but it's a pilot report. Right. And so, what happens is the pilot experiences turbulence, then the pilot reports that turbulence that they've experienced, then the other pilots do their best to translate that turbulence report into something useful for their flight.

Dan Gingiss: First of all, this sounds like Waze in the air...

Joey Coleman: Yeah exactly! It's not all-together different. And the article mentions, imagine cars shifting lanes like crazy... but now add in the additional dimension of height...

Dan Gingiss: Yeah - flying cars shifting lanes!

Joey Coleman: An airplane is a LOT bigger than a car. So this is causing a good amount of chaos in the air for the pilots, and the flight attendants, and the passengers - not to mention the other people, on other planes nearby.

Dan Gingiss: I mean that makes sense. Pilots aren't flying the same types of aircraft, they're not flying at the same altitude, and they're flying in different parts of the world. So what happens is a tendency to overcompensate - which means that one report of turbulence can be enough to close down entire lanes of traffic when the reality is that the pocket of turbulence is only in a very narrow slice of air.

Joey Coleman: So here's where Delta takes things to the next level... Their flight weather viewer makes the pilot report obsolete. It collects and analyzes hundreds of thousands of data points to create a turbulence forecast that is incredibly accurate. The app translates the data into a "0 to 100" scale that's very easy to understand. In addition to making for a smoother ride, the app saves time, fuel, and emissions because the pilot doesn't need to play a guessing game - climbing and descending to avoid turbulence; or trying to figure out when to fly over, or under, or through a

storm; or needing to discontinue drink service and that have upset passengers when the ride turns out to be smooth.

Dan Gingiss: I hate when they do that.

Joey Coleman: Well that's Dan's big pet peeve on airplanes folks...

Dan Gingiss: Well Delta takes their weather very seriously. They actually have a team of over 20 meteorologists and I love this quote from the article it says, "[w]hen local Atlanta schools are curious if a looming snow storm will be significant enough to trigger a delay or cancellation, they don't call a weather center. They called Delta."

Joey Coleman: So true. I love it. I can imagine, I don't know about you, when I was a kid growing up it was always like staying up late to see if school was going to be canceled. Little did I know if I would have lived in Atlanta I could have called in and asked Delta whether we would have school or not. But the ability to navigate this weather doesn't just make for smoother flights, it often makes for the only flights. So here's how that happens: Last year Delta was the only airline operating flights into and out of San Juan Puerto Rico (or SJU for those of you that like to play airport code games) despite the fact that Hurricane Maria was roaring towards the island. They've also been able to get their planes in the air faster after a hurricane as they did this year after Hurricane Florence and Hurricane Michael. So not only is this making Delta. A better customer experience in the air, but they are able to serve more customers faster because of their ability to read weather patterns.

Dan Gingiss: Yeah, I think that's really cool. I've written about airlines and specifically PR nightmares that airlines have had over the last few years and a lot of it comes down to canceled flights and this idea that, you know, when people's flights are canceled they're missing weddings, they're missing funerals, graduations, major events in people's lives that you can't just recreate or delay. And I almost feel bad for them in a way because, you know, obviously it's a very complex business but when things go wrong and when flights get canceled, it's not just that people are upset because they're delayed, but there really are sometimes life changing things that happen when you miss your flight. So this is pretty cool when they've got the ability to, you know quite literally, have fewer flight delays and fewer flight cancellations than other airlines.

Joey Coleman: I agree and I think what's fascinating and useful for passengers to remember, and I try to remember this when we're delayed for whatever reason when I'm flying, is that yes, it's an inconvenience and you may be missing the important event. But at some point they have to put customer safety first. And we've probably all heard the horror stories of planes running into turbulence, and dropping, and people breaking bones and flying out of seats, and being really seriously injured. I respect the challenge that they have. What I think is interesting about the story...

Dan Gingiss: And if I could just interrupt Joey, I'm always surprised when you get an announcement that says, you know, that there's an equipment problem or something, and people are rolling their eyes and I'm like, "Don't you want them to fix the equipment problem?"

Joey Coleman: I just had this experience... We were flying from a city and they came on and they said, "The brakes on the landing gear are giving us an error message. So we're going to need to wait while the mechanics come to check whether it's just a faulty warning light or there's actually an issue," and the person next to me was like, "Ugh, I can't believe it! We're going to be late!" and I was like, "I'd rather be late than slide off the runway."

Dan Gingiss: Being away is always better than being dead.

Joey Coleman: Yes! In my world, I agree with you. So I think at the end of the day, what's most interesting about this story is that while most people think of Delta as being an airline and being in the airline business, they're also clearly immersed in the innovation business and, as luck would have it on our show, the customer experience business. This is a perfect example of using big data to save money, reduce emissions, and create a smoother ride for everyone involved.

[SEGMENT INTRO][THIS JUST HAPPENED]

Joey Coleman: 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][Entering England]

Dan Gingiss: So we had a unique confluence of events last month my friend...

Joey Coleman: And what would that be Dan?

Dan Gingiss: Well, we both went to London to give speeches - unfortunately not on the same week, but in the same month.

Joey Coleman: You are indeed correct. It would have been better if we had a chance to go at the same time, or if you could have stayed a little longer and I could have arrived a little earlier, but nonetheless we both got our chance to "travel across the pond" and experience life in London.

Dan Gingiss: Yeah... well, I'm not sure the United Kingdom could handle both of us being in the country at the same time so it's probably just as well, but I had some interesting experiences entering the United Kingdom at Heathrow Airport that I was hoping to share here on the show.

Joey Coleman: Ironically enough, I had similar awesome customer experiences at Heathrow.

Dan Gingiss: Wow. Shocking! Two customer experience experts enter the same airport and they have things to say about it. Fantastic. Well, why don't you go first, my good sir...

Joey Coleman: Nice, nice - this is the London Episode. I like that. Okay, so as we know from the last segment, I fly Delta Airlines and we know that from most of the shows where I talk about it...

Dan Gingiss: 315th reference.

Joey Coleman: Anyway... Right before we were landing we were given a special "fast pass" card that gave us access to a faster lane at Immigration and Customs.

Dan Gingiss: Wait, this sounds a little bit like that FastPass you used at Universal Studios back in Episode 41.

Joey Coleman: Yes indeed - similar, but a little different. Like the Universal Studios FastPass, I was allowed to move through the lines efficiently and effectively. The good news is this was a free perk, well "free" if you're willing to fly 150,000 plus miles a year on Delta. But with this pass, I could avoid the long lines at Customs and proceed to a much faster lane, where my passport was quickly processed and I was able to grab my bag and be on my way.

Dan Gingiss: Man - maybe I should start flying Delta?! I mean, I notice that the first few minutes in the country usually set the tone and I felt that way as I walked up to the Customs area as well.

They had these huge floor-to-ceiling murals of famous "types" of Londoners: the town crier in full uniform, and the stunning Shakespearean actress with outstretched arms. The images were a fantastic visual welcome to the country I would say.

Joey Coleman: I saw that too and you know, it's almost as if they were, kind of, welcoming you with a warm embrace to our country. And that visual, as you're walking through the hall, certainly set the tone and then it was expounded on by the Border Patrol agent who, of course asked the usual how long are you going to be in the country, etc. etc. and when I explained I was only going to be there for about 46 hours, he actually apologized to me and said, "I'm sorry that you need to turn around so quickly... you're probably going to be really tired for the flight back." And I thought to myself, that's a pretty awesome example of really showing empathy towards a customer and let's be candid, as a general rule Border Patrol, around the world, not considered to necessarily lead with empathy. Right? So I thought that was pretty special.

Dan Gingiss: It was cool and I have to say, I was not and you know your "super-duper, special 150,000 mile line" at Customs but mine actually went pretty fast as well. Very fast in fact, and you never know quite what to expect, but I loved that it was efficient. One of the things that I noticed when I was there (both times - when I arrived and also when I was departing) is they have these visual indicators, these signs that were showing both the north and the south security lanes, and they had a kind of a numerical system that was indicated by little icons of people to tell you how busy the lines were. So when I looked at the sign for example, the North one had five little people icons and the south one had only two. So, hey - I'm smart. I speak British English. That means I should go to the south one right because it's got a shorter line, and I was like, "boy this is such an easy - this is one of these 'do simple better things' we always talk about" where instead of leaving it to the customer, to the passenger, to have to kind of guess and you know we always guess the wrong line of course, even within a line I usually guess the wrong x-ray machines or whatever...

Joey Coleman: There is actually great research behind this on how humans have a tendency to be horrible judges of the speed of lines.

Dan Gingiss: Exactly. Well, here it is, this electronic sign that tells you which line to go to. I thought that was brilliant.

Joey Coleman: That is brilliant. I did not get a chance to see that this time. But I agree with you, I mean, I think the point of this segment is, there are a lot of different entities that are at play in creating the experience at an airport. Right? So the airlines are creating an experience. TSA (or security) is creating an experience. The Border Patrol (if you're going into a different country) is creating the experience. The airport itself, in your example of the lines and building that sign in the airport to show the lines. There's a lot of different factors at play here. And I think what happens, and this would be my guess - I don't have any insight to prove this point so it's anecdotal data or "anecdotal" at best - but when we look at this, when one piece of a multi-contributing experience, when that group raises the bar - when security says, "Hey, we're going to make it easier to go through our lines and we're gonna make it go faster," than that kind of calls on Border Patrol to make their experience better. And it makes the folks at luggage claim make the experience better, and it makes the restaurants make the experience better. And I know we talk about this a lot on the show, but I really do believe sincerely that when one brand starts to enhance the customer experience, all the other brands around it are almost forced to follow suit. You know most of them do it out of a, out of a good nature of "oh wow, they're raising the game, I have to raise my game too." But I think that ripple effect can be really powerful.

Dan Gingiss: Well yeah, and I think some of the reason for that is that oftentimes, companies' customer experience or at least the perception of their customer experience, is actually due to the

experiences being created by an ancillary company. So if you think about, you know, you flying you often give a lot of the credit to your flying experience to Delta, but yet your experience in the airport and getting to and from the gate and all that, is not really Delta, but it does sort of color your day right? If you end up, you know if you can't find the gate, or if you find yourself as I've done a few times, sprinting through the airport because security took too long, it's not that you blame Delta for it, but it's that as you look back on the entirety of your experience, Delta is one of those brands that comes up because you flew Delta. And so I think it's really interesting when there is this interdependence between different entities and that's frankly, not Delta's fault if you stand in line at security and it takes longer because they're not in charge of security.

Joey Coleman: So I think you're right. It's the contributing factor of all the different folks who are involved influence to make our customer experience. And it's interesting how all those interlocking pieces or interconnecting pieces works together.

Joey Coleman: OK, so one last example as we close out. As I picked up my luggage at baggage claim, there had actually been a slight delay in it reaching the conveyor belt. Now I had, like I said, hustled through the airport and through security and Customs so I was feeling really good, but when I got there, my bag wasn't there and so there was a little delay. And as I grabbed my bag off the conveyor belt, a representative from Delta - the person who normally unloads the luggage when customers aren't there to get it - came over and said, "I'm really sorry that it took a while for your bag to get here. Thanks so much for flying with us." And that little personal touch - it speaks to that issue where we talk about finishing strong and "lean at the tape" - this is the last experience I was having before exiting the airport, and that luggage representative made sure that I had a personalized, positive experience with Delta before we left. Which is why you'll see me on my next Delta flight!

[SEGMENT INTRO][DISSECTING THE EXPERIENCE]

Joey Coleman: 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][A Haircut – at the Airport?!]

Joey Coleman: Alrighty Dan, we talked about traveling to the U.K. and avoiding turbulence, as well as the first impressions upon entering the country, now I'd like to talk a little bit about my trip back to the United States.

Dan Gingiss: Well, it was a rather short stay in London...

Joey Coleman: Yes indeed, we could measure it in hours! That being said, I wish my stay not only in London had been longer, but I wish we stay in the airport on the way home would have been longer.

Dan Gingiss: Wait, wait, hold on. You want to be at the airport longer? No one ever says that.

Joey Coleman: That's correct. That's because, I had never had this experience and I wonder how many people have ever had the experience of visiting the Virgin Upper Class Lounge at Heathrow Airport.

Dan Gingiss: Well that's a heck of a name for an airport lounge. I haven't been there either. What was so remarkable about it?

Joey Coleman: Okay... so where to begin? So many things. Basically, as a Delta frequent flyer I had gotten the invitation to come to the lounge at the same time I got that fast lane access that I talked about earlier in the episode. And so, when I came back -and you always want to get to international airports a couple of hours before your flight - I decided I would take Delta up on their generous invitation. I got to go through a special security line - which was super-fast - that was right in front of the area where you went into the lounge, and when I went into the lounge, this airport lounge - I've had the pleasure of visiting airport lounges at dozens and dozens of airports around the world - this airport lounge was unlike any I'd ever been to. So first of all, it obviously had the Virgin brand right? So there was great music playing and you felt "cooler" when you crossed the threshold. It was very "Sir Richard Branson-esque." You came into the space and it was like, "I instantly just became cooler," and I grabbed a seat and they had the usual Wi-Fi, and lots of outlets, and TV, and magazines, and those type of things. But as I sat down at one the tables I noticed there was a menu - and this wasn't a typical "hey, here are the three items you can choose from." This was an incredibly robust - I mean it wasn't Cheesecake Factory-esque in terms of - the menu, but it wasn't far from it. And you had the opportunity to order really custom made-to-order food items including three different kinds of eggs Benedict. I guess I should say, they had Eggs Benedict, Eggs Florentine, and Eggs Royale - the eggs Benedict with salmon instead of ham. They had custom crafted drinks with tons of non-alcoholic options - which as somebody who doesn't drink, was both appreciated and not something that I usually see. From the moment I sat down, they were like, "we are going to serve you really tasty food." Oh, and by the way, you're at the airport when this is happening! Those things usually don't go together.

Dan Gingiss: Yeah, I mean, for those that aren't in lounges very often, I've had the pleasure being in a number of them (not this one) but you know, the food is usually, you're talking like chips and crackers, maybe some cheese, maybe some fruit, or a small sandwich, or something like that, and it's fine because obviously, it's complimentary so you're not going to argue, but made to order Eggs Royale? That is something special.

Joey Coleman: It was ridiculous. So first of all, we're in this setting, the music's playing, it's got a cool vibe, amazing food and drink, and then I look over and there is an area where they have massages. You can go over and get, they have some massages that you can get are free massages (15 to 20 minute massage for free), or you can get the hour to two-hour-long, full on massage - and they have massage rooms, and you can pay a little for those, although it's totally reasonably priced. You can basically relax before you go through the stressful experience of flying. A massage parlor, in the lounge, at the airport.

Dan Gingiss: Now I'm impressed. I'm not a massage guy personally, but I'm impressed.

Joey Coleman: Aw brother?! You've got to get massages. Massages are where it's at! They help you de-stress. You know, you're a hardworking guy. You need to kinda relax and let loose, and you know, there are ways other than going to a Cubs game to do that. You know, massage is not bad, I promise you. But here's the thing, that all was impressive and that all made me kind of sit up and take notice, but it was the last piece of the puzzle that really surprised me. They actually had a hair salon, in the lounge, where you could get a haircut.

Dan Gingiss: No you didn't.

Joey Coleman: Oh yes I did! I decided I was looking a little shaggy folks, I must admit. I'd been on the road for a while and I was like, "you know what, I've been having a hard time scheduling a haircut when I'm at home because my time at home is kind of limited, I should just get a haircut while I'm here." And so you put your name in, they you know tell you what time you have to come

back. I went back, I had my Eggs Royale. I came back and I got a haircut. And to be honest, I got off the plane, my wife Berit picked me up and she said, "you got a haircut in London!" I said, "I got a haircut at the airport!" She said, "that may be an airport worth flying back to! That's a really good-looking haircut." I couldn't believe it. I mean to earn the compliment of it being a good haircut - and it was from the airport?!

Dan Gingiss: Well, you are you are a good-looking guy Joey...

Joey Coleman: You are too kind, you are too kind. But you know, and I do, you know your version of a haircut is a little bit different than my version of a haircut...

Dan Gingiss: Hey now! Watch it there fella!

Joey Coleman: There's no judgment in that - it's just yours involves a razor. You know, just kind of repeatedly run across your skull. Mine? There was product involved. It was crazy. But long story short, what I loved about this experience is (and we've talked about this on the show before), if you're going to make your customers wait, or if there is a transition period before you're able to deliver on the product or the service they've purchased, look for opportunities to make that wait time special. Look for opportunities to make that required time, remarkable. The airlines want you to be at the airport two hours before the flight - or three hours if you're flying internationally. What can you do to make that time really something that sets the tone. Because I'll be honest, I got onto the plane and it could have been the worst flight ever (it wasn't, it was a great flight) but I was (and I mean no pun intended) I was on cloud nine. I was feeling good. I'd had a haircut. I'd relaxed. I'd had a nice breakfast. I was feeling good and I got onto the plane and was like, "Here we go. We're off to the races. Feeling good." So that's why the next time I fly to London, I'm going to make sure to arrive at the airport a few hours before my flight back to the U.S. - so that hopefully I can fully enjoy a massage, and a haircut, and the total customer experience at the Virgin Upper Class Lounge.

[SEGMENT INTRO][THREE TAKEAWAYS]

Joey Coleman: 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][Episode 51]

Joey Coleman: Takeaway #1 - How can you use innovation to create a smoother customer journey? What happens when you look at customer pain points and try to use science and data to reduce them or eliminate them altogether? Every business has elements that for years have been seen as "necessary evils." What happens when you invest in creative solutions to eliminate those elements? How can improving the customer experience help you save money, help the environment, and increase employee morale in the process?

Dan Gingiss: Takeaway #2 - Are you making your newly arrived customers feel welcome? New customers show up at your business all the time. Are you going above and beyond to welcome them? How can the design of your welcome space treat them like royalty? How can you use playful imagery to calm nerves in an otherwise anxious time? How can you empower your staff to say the little things that make your customers feel seen, heard, and appreciated?

Joey Coleman: Takeaway #3 - Are you constantly raising the bar to surprise and delight your customers? Your top customers are familiar with your bonus offerings. What are you doing to

consistently raise the bar and deliver even more remarkable experiences? Is the food in your waiting room the standard fare available in any vending machine? What would happen if you hired a private chef? Do you take into consideration the many different types of customers you have - or just the most common ones? Do you offer interactions and experiences that are completely unexpected - like a massage, or a haircut? Think about ways to wow your customers by making time spent with you convenient, customized, and creative.

Dan Gingiss: And those, are the Three Takeaways for this episode.

[SHOW OUTRO]

Joey Coleman: Wow! Thanks for joining us for another episode of Experience This!

Dan Gingiss: 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.

Joey Coleman: 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 enjoyed, 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.

Dan Gingiss: Thanks again for your time and we'll see you next week for more...

Joey Coleman & Dan Gingiss: Experience This!