

Experience This! Show Podcast  
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ExperienceThisShow.com

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## Episode 59:

### [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 59 INTRO]

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

**Dan Gingiss:** Join us for a special nonpartisan political episode as we discuss: how extreme political views can affect decision making, why the U.S. federal government shutdown had wide ranging impact, and how brands can help unite a divided nation. Liberals, conservatives, and can't we all just get along. Oh my!

### [SEGMENT INTRO][CX PRESS]

**Joey Coleman:** 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: Extreme Opinions Reduce Metacognition]

**Dan Gingiss:** Today CX Press comes to us from Popular Science of all places which recently published a fascinating article with the headline, "People With Extreme Political Views Have Trouble Thinking About Their Own Thinking." Then the subhead was, "Your Super Liberal and Super Conservative Relatives Might All Have One Thing in Common." Now the article refers to a recent study from University College in London that suggests that people who hold extreme beliefs (on either side of the political spectrum) seem to have a reduced brain function called metacognition. In other words they lack the ability to evaluate whether or not they might be wrong.

**Joey Coleman:** You're wrong, Dan!

**Dan Gingiss:** Haha, good one, Joey.

**Joey Coleman:** It's too easy, too easy.

**Dan Gingiss:** So the researchers presented the study participants with a question that had an objective answer rather than one rooted in personal values. So is two different sets of clusters of dots and they were asked to identify which group had more dots. Simple enough. Then they rated how confident they were in their choice.

**Joey Coleman:** What the study found is that while people with radical political opinions completed the exercise with roughly the same accuracy as moderate participants, and remember there is an objective right answer here folks. The radicals were much more confident in their answer; even if it was wrong. The researchers concluded that people with extreme political views actually can't question their own ideas the same way that more moderate individuals can.

**Dan Gingiss:** So what does this have to do with customer experience? Well there's a small but growing body of research that suggests it may be possible to help people gain better metacognitive skills which would enable them to get possibly along better and make more shared decisions. Does this sound familiar at all if you work for a major brand? Coke or Pepsi? Apple or Android? Starbucks or Dunkin Donuts? People have very strong opinions about these brands and often those opinions choose one brand at the exclusion of another. In other words, Apple fans rarely even think about switching to Android and likewise Android fans feel they'd be selling out to switch over to Apple. But is this rational?

**Joey Coleman:** You know I found this study fascinating and I also think there's a larger element here, Dan, and that is that once consumers form an opinion about a brand, just as with many political opinions, it's really hard to change them. So if a customer has just one negative experience with a company, they may not be willing to get past it and may instead search out your competitor.

**Dan Gingiss:** For sure, and I'd add that how companies respond to mistakes plays a huge role here as well. So a company that is truly apologetic and empathetic has a chance of keeping that business. The key here is understanding the psychology behind this political research and how it might apply to our customers who are equally strong minded. This goes for marketers too who are often, shall we say, thickheaded about focusing on what they want the customer to hear rather than what the customers actually want to hear.

**Joey Coleman:** Now I have to admit, Dan, that when you first brought this article to my attention as somebody who's spent a lot of time in the political arena, and grew up in a political family, and worked in Washington D.C., my politics are pretty clear and I was like all that's interesting. But where it really got my attention is when you started talking about Coke or Pepsi, and Apple or Android, or Starbucks or Dunkin Donuts. I mean for me when you said those things I was like Pepsi, Apple, Dunkin Donuts, right. Immediately like that was my instinct and I had a negative association with Coke, Android, and to a lesser degree Starbucks. Mainly because they don't have as many, if you're not a coffee drinker there aren't as many good options at Starbucks as there are Dunkin Donuts at least in my opinion.

**Dan Gingiss:** Well we only agree on one of those actually because we agreed on Apple, and I am Coke and Starbucks.

**Joey Coleman:** Yeah. There you go. So what's fascinating to me is we have strong opinions but you and I spend a lot of time talking about each other's opinions not only on the show but off the show just in our friendship. And I think this is a really interesting area of brain research for our listeners to be thinking about because on one hand you might feel that you're most zealous advocate raving fans are a big asset for your organization. But if you're asking them to effectively and accurately evaluate maybe a new feature or a new product or something you're planning to do and you're taking their word as gospel, it may be that their thought process around that is actually conflicted.

**Dan Gingiss:** Well absolutely and I talk a lot about how companies are often afraid of complaints and ignore complaints because, obviously, those are generally not coming from your biggest fans,

right? So they hear what they want to hear and they sort of tune out the stuff that they don't want to hear, and frankly that's the same with politics as well, right? Is that we build stories around what we believe in and that we believe in the stories that we've built. And it's a very circular thing. I think it happens with brands all the time. Yeah I was thinking just now with this Coke versus Pepsi thing is that one of the Super Bowl commercials that I remember this year was Pepsi. And they set the scene in a restaurant where the person orders a Coke and the waitress says, Is Pepsi ok? Now I am a person that says, "No Pepsi's not okay, thanks for asking. I'll have an iced tea." Right? And then the obviously because this was the Pepsi commercial, there are a bunch of singers came out and said yeah Pepsi is great but it does play to a real aspect of sort of brand engagement and brand loyalty. And I think it's something that we have to consider as marketers and his customer experience people and some of it is, you're not going to change people's opinions about certain things. Right? There's just- I mean, I don't know the stats behind the number of people that switch from Android to Apple or Apple to Android, or the people that have been loyal to Pepsi for 30 years that suddenly switch to coke or vice versa. But I would imagine it's a relative minority. And so we have to look for the opportunities where we can influence behavior and where we can change opinion. And I think this research on politics kind of supports that and that's why I thought it was pretty interesting.

**Joey Coleman:** I agree and I'm left thinking that there might be an interesting question or exercise for our listeners to consider. We talk a lot in the business world about not discussing politics or religion in the workplace and that can be dangerous. There's a politic and there's a religion around brands as well. So maybe the interesting way to create a little more unity in our country and in our society and in our planet as whole is to avoid the conversations that we know are going to be polarizing and instead jump into ones that are also strongly opinionated if you will but there might be a little room to talk. Like having a conversation with your team about Apple or Android, which is better and why, and try to objectively have that conversation as a way to strengthen those muscles for the other conversations you might have. Either way just go out and vote.

#### **[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: Be Generous Towards Your Customers During Hard Times]**

**Joey Coleman:** Ladies and gentlemen we don't usually discuss politics here on the Experience This! Show.

**Dan Gingiss:** And we're not going to start now... right, Joey?

**Joey Coleman:** All right. All right. Fair enough, fair enough, but I'd like to have a discussion about something that could easily be seen as a discussion about politics. But I promise it isn't. If you're willing to stick with me, move through the subject matter, and hear me out till the end.

**Dan Gingiss:** OK I'm a little nervous but I'm going to give it a try because I trust you Joey.

**Joey Coleman:** I appreciate the trust in the vote of confidence, my friend. What I want to discuss is the recent shutdown of the U.S. federal government.

**Dan Gingiss:** And that's a wrap today guys, we're done!

**Joey Coleman:** I had a feeling that might get your attention. OK so here's the thing. Bear with me I promise. Some of you: your blood pressure is already going up but stick with me I promise there's a

silver lining here. So for those of our listeners that don't live in the United States or maybe don't pay as much attention to national politics as I do allow me to explain. The U.S. Federal Government recently experienced a shutdown when members of the legislative branch and the executive branch couldn't agree on something. Now a discussion of that something is surely important but, for the purposes of this segment of the Experience This! Show, I want to look past that to discuss the impact of the federal government employees that were caught in the shutdown, and how third party businesses navigated the situation.

**Dan Gingiss:** Yeah it was a little something, something wasn't?

**Joey Coleman:** It was but we're pushing through, we're pushed through. We're talking about the employee. The federal government employee experience.

**Dan Gingiss:** Not only was this recent shutdown the longest in U.S. federal government history (35 days) but it impacted a significant number of people approximately 800,000 employees. And when you add in their families about two point three million Americans. Now approximately 380,000 of those employees were furloughed: which means they were told they couldn't work, and they were not paid. Another 420,000 were deemed "essential" which meant that they needed to keep coming to work but weren't paid for the work they were doing. This was a tremendous impact as many employees were forced to rely on savings as well as the generosity and kindness of friends and relatives in order to make ends meet during the shutdown. While salaries of government employees can vary drastically, the average federal employees weekly take home pay is about \$500, according to a labor union for government employees.

**Joey Coleman:** Now we can have an entire conversation about how the employee experience affects the customer experience, and we can have another entire conversation about the government employee experience in general, and specifically during the shutdown. Again these are important and valuable and worthy points of discussion, but what we want to talk about, here, is how companies responded to the shutdown and the ways that it was impacting their customers. For example, I am a proud and longtime American Express credit card holder. Now while I'm not a government employee I noticed that during the shutdown when I logged into my online credit card account there was a message across the top of the Amex home page that said, "We're here to help our card members facing financial difficulties as a result of the US government shutdown. If you need assistance, please reach out to our customer care professionals via the mobile app, chat, or call the number on the back of your card." Now I found this fascinating for a few reasons. Number one, American Express recognized that people would be having trouble paying their credit card bills during the shutdown. They realized that something that was happening that was completely outside the purview of their business operations was going to be impacting the success of their business operations because of the impact it was having on their cardholders. But number two, the message didn't say the federal government employees. It said folks feeling financial difficulties as a result of the shutdown. Now what's interesting is the shutdown impacted employees and their families directly. But it also impacted government contractors: businesses that are paid by the federal government for the work they do. As a matter of fact, as a result of the shutdown, many federal contracts were suspended which meant that those people weren't getting paid by their companies either. So some of the things that American Express did to help their card members during the shutdown included waiving all late fees, waiving return check fees (if a check bounced that you were trying to pay your credit card bill with), and waiving future interest charges on charges made during the shutdown.

**Dan Gingiss:** Yeah I love this example and in fact I saw the Discover Card did something similar on their website and I think it does go beyond government employees because you even have a lot of retail and restaurants in Washington D.C. that didn't have as many customers during that time

because people weren't coming into work so it wasn't as busy. So restaurants also took steps to ease the pain caused by the shutdown. The famous D.C. based chef Jose Andres offered free sandwiches at his six Washington D.C. restaurants to government workers affected by the shutdown. Now he did this during the shutdown in 2013 as well dozens of other D.C. based restaurants and bars did the same offering, free or significantly discounted cocktails with names like, "The Bipartisan," and, "Wake Me up When," as well as entire meals. But these deals were not just limited to folks living in Washington D.C. in cities around the country if you showed your federal government ID you could get discounted or free food and drink. In short, while the shutdown started in D.C. the impact and the response happened throughout the country.

**Joey Coleman:** Which brings us to the opportunity for every brand, business, organization when dealing with these type of external factors. When things happen that impact your customers, or even a segment of your customers, that are outside the purview of your general business operations, don't miss the opportunity to go above and beyond to empathize with their situation. A generous act performed for a customer is having a tough time is an act that will not soon be forgotten and the loyalty that is created with your customers by acknowledging the tough times they're going through and being there for them is the kind of loyalty that every brand is striving to achieve.

**Dan Gingiss:** And sadly, if history is any indicator (and it usually is) federal government shutdowns are going to continue to occur, and so are hurricanes, and other weather events that cause trouble for your customers. And that's certainly bad news for them, for their families, for contractors, and for the country as a whole but customer experience professionals have the opportunity to take a bad situation and make it even a little bit better by thinking of creative ways to help those.

**[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 Press, where we read the articles so you don't need to!

**[CX PRESS: Can Brands Unite the People?]**

**Joey Coleman:** We actually have two CX Press's in today's episode.

**Dan Gingiss:** Is that presses or pressi?

**Joey Coleman:** Not sure, but I mean, we have several pressi... This is one of those where I would just rewrite the sentence to say we have a second CX Press story for you today but this comes in the form of a new study out this month by Sprout Social. The study titled, "What Customers Want from Brands in a Divided Society," suggests that brands have the unique opportunity to mend a country that has become polarized politically.

**Dan Gingiss:** Now the study looks at the United States but its findings could easily be applied to other countries with similar political divisiveness. Brexit anyone?

**Joey Coleman:** Oh don't even get them started, Dan, don't even get them started.

**Dan Gingiss:** The study reveals that 72% of U.S. customers cite government and political leaders as playing a significant role in dividing society. But the interesting part is they are looking to brands to fix it. Interestingly, 85% of consumers who identify as liberal want brands to use social media to help individuals better connect with each other and 72% of those who identify as conservative

agree. Perhaps not surprisingly moderates landed in the middle of the two with 80% sharing the same belief.

**Joey Coleman:** Wait a second did this study actually find that liberals, conservatives, and moderates agree on something? This is a study everyone in the country needs to read right now. You know what's interesting is, that a healthy majority for each group. The study also found that while more than half of consumers, 55% to be exact, say social media is a cause for societal fractures, 91% still believe in social media's power to connect people. In fact, 79% of people agree that brands are well positioned to connect people of varying backgrounds and beliefs because they already appeal to a wide variety of people and have the marketing platform to do something about it. And a little more than half of both conservatives and 54% of liberals say they would like to connect with people who are different from them.

**Dan Gingiss:** So I thought this was really an eye opening study and it's one of the reasons why I like social media so much. I mean, the study cited social as the number one channel for brands to connect with consumers over any other marketing channels which I think has become somewhat obvious at this point. But for sure that was not true just, you know five or six years ago, and Sprout Social concluded that and I'm quoting here, "The brands who focus on building genuine relationships among their consumers, rather than strictly selling to them, will differentiate themselves from the competition." And obviously this is something I think that you and I Joey agree on which is that people don't want to be sold to most of the time, right? If you're looking to buy something sure you're okay being sold to. But what more and more consumers are asking for is to have a relationship with a company and to be heard and understood.

**Joey Coleman:** Don't we all just want to be heard and understood? I agree. Another interesting tidbit that came out of the study, and frankly this is consistent with something we've been saying here on the Experience This! Show for a long time now, is that customers' expectations for brands are sky high. Their expectations for brands are high. Another interesting tidbit that came out of the study, and this is consistent with something we've been saying on the show for a long time now, is that customers' expectations for brands are sky high. According to the study, consumers expect brands to serve as connectors, which could include connecting with their own customers or bringing them together with people that have different perspectives. 72% of consumers in the study said they expect brands to be positive contributors to society, and nearly two thirds, 64%, of consumers want brands to connect directly with them and bring people together towards a common goal. Now no pressure at all, folks. You know what I think is fascinating here is that the research is showing, what I think at least for me is happening in a lot of the conversations I'm having with my colleagues these days, which is why is it so hard to hear another perspective? Why is it so hard to get along? And we do see more and more brands running ads in the Super Bowl, taking clear positions on major issues that can be seen as polarizing but really aren't affecting their consumers. It's almost as if their consumers or their specific customers are kind of slowly but surely falling under the umbrella of the position that the brand is stating.

**Dan Gingiss:** Absolutely and you know I've seen other research that actually says that consumers want brands to take a stand on issues, political and social issues, and that they respect them for doing so now. I think this can be a little bit dangerous because as we've noted you know our society right now is somewhat polarized. So you kind of take the wrong stance and then you risk alienating some of your constituents or your customers. But I think that it is important for brands to realize that customers are looking for them to do that. And so the summary here is that, as we said before, customer expectations are continuing to be very high for companies and it's not just in the product and service and experience that you provide. But it's in what you stand for, and how you act, and how you bring people together.

## **[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: Questions to Consider for Episode 59]**

**Dan Gingiss: Takeaway #1** - Are you aware of the potentially extreme beliefs of your customers, and even your employees, and how that might affect your customer experience? Make sure that you are considering all perspectives in your marketing and customer experience. Try to become more aware of your own biases, and seek out people with different perspectives from your own. And make sure to respond to customer questions and complaints with appropriate empathy and understanding.

**Joey Coleman: Takeaway #2** - Are you making the most of negative situations that are not of your own doing, but are impacting your customers nonetheless? It may not be your fault, but it's your problem. When your customers are going through a situation that impacts their ability to keep doing business with you or pay you in a timely fashion. What are you doing to make things easier on your customers? How can you adjust or amend your policies and procedures to acknowledge the challenges your customers are dealing with and, in the process, really let them know that you care?

**Dan Gingiss: Takeaway #3** - How can your company contribute to uniting the country? How does your company meet customers' expectations of serving as a connector between people of different backgrounds? How can you ensure that you are a positive contributor to society? Take a look at your social media presence and determine how you can leverage this public stage, and large audience, for more than just marketing.

**Joey Coleman:** And those are the three takeaways for this episode.

**Dan Gingiss:** Don't forget to get your take it to the team worksheet at [ExperienceThisShow.com](http://ExperienceThisShow.com) Episode 59. This is where we allow you to take our three takeaways from every episode and bring it back to the office to talk about it with your colleagues and to solve problems together in a united way.

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

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

**Joey Coleman & Dan Gingiss:** Experience This!