

Experience This! Show Podcast
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Episode 78
Learn How AI May be Guiding Your Customer Service Interactions

Dan Gingiss: Welcome to Experience This.

Joey Coleman: 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.

Dan Gingiss: Always upbeat and definitely entertaining, customer attention expert Joey Coleman.

Joey Coleman: And social media expert Dan Gingiss serve as your hosts for a weekly dose of positive customer experience.

Dan Gingiss: So hold onto your headphones. It's time to Experience This.

Dan Gingiss: Get ready for another episode of the Experience This show.

Joey Coleman: Join us as we discuss using AI to train your customer service reps. The internal path to entrepreneurial peace. And the ways one customer can positively and negatively impact the experience of another customer.

Dan Gingiss: Intervening, introspection, and interacting. Oh my.

[CX Press] Learn how AI is Guiding Customer Service Agents to Communicate with More Clarity

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

Dan Gingiss: We've spoken several times on the show about the way AI is becoming a bigger part of not only our everyday lives as consumers, but increasingly in our conversations as customer experience professionals.

Joey Coleman: Which is why we wanted to share an article we came across in Time Magazine by Alejandro Dela Garza. The article is titled This AI Software is Coaching Customer Service Workers. Soon, it could be bossing you around too. And it's about an Artificial Intelligence or AI program named Cogito. Cogito is designed to help customer service workers communicate more clearly, empathize with frustrated callers and improve their overall experience. It does this by listening to the tone, pitch, word frequency and hundreds of other factors in customer service conversations. When it detects that something is wrong, an irritated customer or a call center agent taking too long to respond, or an agent who sounds bored, tired, irritated, rushed, or otherwise unpleasant, it displays a notification on the agent's computer telling them to slow down or speed up or stop talking or start talking or try to sound more sympathetic.

Joey Coleman: Basically it's like having a seasoned veteran listening in on your customer service calls and providing real time actionable advice on how to respond to the situations you're facing.

Dan Gingiss: This is a pretty interesting application of AI in the customer service arena. Up until now we've seen AI play a more behind the scenes role as it's used to analyze data, track behaviors and route inquiries to the best channel for resolution. This new software Cogito is pushing beyond that. While once AI was seen as a tool largely under human control, Cogito is an example of an AI use case that is beginning to tell humans what to do.

Joey Coleman: You know Dan, I can definitely see some pros and cons to this type of tool. While on one hand it seems that Cogito can give someone a nudge in the right direction. It starts to get a little bit problematic if everybody relies on a nudge instead of changing their ways. Now, to be honest, the customer service representatives discussed in the article felt that in general the program is useful. Managers at one company said that using Cogito in their call centers improved first call resolution metrics by 3.5%, improved customer satisfaction by 13% and helped agents reduce average call time.

Dan Gingiss: I can't help but think of my dependence on my GPS. The more I use it, the more I depend on it.

Joey Coleman: Turn now, Dan.

Dan Gingiss: And yes. And I don't even bother trying to figure out the directions myself anymore.

Joey Coleman: Yeah. And I think that is a little bit of the problem, right? Because what happens when AI tools are, for lack of a better way of putting it, so involved with the conversation that customer service representatives are having, that the customer service representative doesn't need to improve. They don't need to get better. They don't need to learn because the AI is nudging them the right way all the time.

Dan Gingiss: Exactly. Well, interestingly enough, everyone in the articles seem to think that we were still pretty far away from AI tools like this taking over call centers. The Cogito scientists felt that it was at least a decade away and the call center representatives noted that they didn't feel threatened that Cogito would take their jobs because, and I'm quoting here, "People want to speak to a real person."

Joey Coleman: Yeah. One of the problems I see with this type of thinking is that humans have an incredibly difficult time understanding the exponential change that is happening on the planet today. I mean, if we look at science, our brains developed over millennia in an evolutionary fashion and now change is happening at an exponential rate. And our brains just aren't designed to be able to comprehend the speed and the significance of the changes. I had an experience not too long ago, Dan, where I was sitting at a table with a doctor, a lawyer, an accountant, a financial advisor, and me, a professional speaker.

Dan Gingiss: It sounds like the beginning of a really bad joke.

Joey Coleman: It does sound like the beginning of a horrible joke, right? But what was interesting is we were talking about AI and we were going around the table. And what was fascinating to observe is that everyone at the table could see how all the other professions were going to be eliminated except for theirs. They would say, "Oh yeah, we're not going to need doctors. We're not going to do to lawyers, but accountants. You know accountants will still be necessary." And it was fascinating to watch how people just couldn't comprehend when it was that close to home. And I have to admit, I kind of felt that same type of thing going on in the article when the call center

representative who was quoted was like, "Well, people want to speak to a real person." Well, not all people, and not if that person doesn't do what they hope they're going to do. And not if that doesn't resolve the way they think it's going to resolve.

Joey Coleman: It's just interesting to think about how these technologies are changing faster than our human brains are.

Dan Gingiss: Well, I'm a believer that AI can be really useful in helping humans do their jobs better. So I love the concept of having like an AI machine next to a call center agent telling them all of the details of the customer's previous experience with the company, so that they don't have to be on four different screens looking that stuff up. And then the agent can really spend the time giving that human to human interaction that I do think customers want. If you extend that out to a doctor, for example, there was this story about how IBM's Watson detected some disease in somebody that 15 doctors couldn't find. But that doesn't necessarily mean that Watson is going to do the surgery. I think it can definitely play that role in having access to so much data and being able to crunch it at a rate that our brains simply can't handle, but next to a human that makes all of us that much smarter and that much better at our jobs.

Joey Coleman: I think it does, but again, with all great new technological advances come new challenges. One of the things that I thought was interesting in the article is they told the story of a woman who explained that after working with Cogito for a series of time, when she was in conversation with her boyfriend, he noticed a change in her speech patterns.

Dan Gingiss: Oh, wow.

Joey Coleman: That she was speaking more directly, that there wasn't as much fluff or nuance. And the author alluded to the fact that isn't it the fluff and the nuance that makes conversation between humans, human. And so what happens when we strip all of that away to just be about call times and resolution and, oh, the AI can anticipate exactly what the individual wants. It makes a little less personal empathy and personal connection I think.

Dan Gingiss: Yes, I can definitely see that happening. So Cogito's chief behavioral scientist Skyler Place had some interesting and somewhat shocking

observations about how the world will change in the next three years. Place observed, and I'm quoting, "There's a future where AI software like this becomes part of our normal day to day in conversations with parents, with spouses and in preparing for job interviews." The team at Cogito is already using an AI application internally to coach and advise on everyday employee interactions, but the CEO is quick to acknowledge that they aren't, "Quite yet sure if the general population is ready for this."

Joey Coleman: Not quite sure if the population is ready for this? Yeah, I don't even think we're close to ready for any of this, Dan. But I think at the end of the day it's coming whether we like it or not. And so the question needs to shift, I believe from a place of are we ready for this to happen? To, what are we going to do when this happens? Because it's no longer a question of if, it's just a question of when.

[Book Report] Find Encouragement and Inspiration as a Self Reliant Entrepreneur

Joey Coleman: We spend hours and hours, nose deep in books. We believe that everything you read influences the experiences you create. So we're happy to answer our favorite question. What are you reading?

Joey Coleman: In 1841 Ralph Waldo Emerson, writer, speaker, and father of the Transcendentalist Movement wrote the following. "Is it so bad then to be misunderstood? Pythagoreous was misunderstood and Socrates and Jesus and Luther and Copernicus and Galileo and Newton and every pure and why spirit that ever took flesh. To be great is to be misunderstood."

Dan Gingiss: Have I stumbled into the wrong show? This is an interesting way to start things off. I don't think we've ever opened a segment here on the Experience This Show with a philosophical quote, let alone one from the 1800s.

Joey Coleman: I think we have Dan and I appreciate you and our loyal listeners for humoring me. But I thought this quote was interesting for two reasons. First, I think it describes most people working in customer experience today. I think we're frequently misunderstood by our coworkers and peers and colleagues, and yet I think that's great. Customer experience while familiar to all of us is still a pretty evolving

discipline in the corporate setting. But second, while I've heard that quote I shared before I came across it recently while working my way through a book that my good friend John Jantsch wrote. The book is called *The Self-Reliant Entrepreneur: 366 Daily Meditations to Feed Your Soul and Grow Your Business*. Now, you may be familiar with John's Duct Tape Marketing series of books, which are fantastic by the way. Especially *Duct Tape Marketing* and *The Referral Engine*.

Joey Coleman: But his newest book is a bit of a deviation in terms of topic and format. And so I wanted to discuss it in this segment of what are you reading?

Dan Gingiss: Okay, I'll bite. How is it different from his other books?

Joey Coleman: Well, the self-reliant entrepreneur is more akin to a workbook than a typical business book, but the overall goal is pretty similar. It's meant to inspire, to encourage, to provoke, to educate. Each day of the year receives its own entry, which includes inspirational writing from a transcendentalist movement writer, basically enough to get you thinking, pondering. And then each day's entry concludes with a challenge question, asking you to apply the thinking from that day's entry to your own life. Now, what does this have to do with customer experience? You might be wondering. Well, to be honest, many people who work in customer experience are either entrepreneurs or within their own organization, they play an entrepreneurial role leading the change to create organizational change.

Joey Coleman: Being an entrepreneur or even entrepreneurial can be quite difficult at times and frankly can feel pretty lonely. The book with its powerful self-reliance message, I think could be pretty useful to folks in those positions.

Dan Gingiss: But based on the way you describe the book, you don't need to be an entrepreneur to get value it seems. Purchasing a copy to read the incredible text and make time to answer the questions at the end of the day's entry could provide some fantastic introspection for anyone.

Joey Coleman: Yeah, I think it could Dan, and that's again why I was excited to talk about the book a little bit. I think there's something for everybody in John's book, *The self-reliant entrepreneur*. You should definitely consider picking up a copy on Amazon at Barnes & Noble or your local Indie bookstore. In passing I'll share another quote from the

book that I think describes a mantra that all CX professionals can follow. "Reason of course, keeps us out in jail, prudently employed and modestly goal oriented, but achieving the impossible, implausible or heaven forbid, unconventional, better way of doing something requires setting unreasonable ambitions buttressed with unreasonable actions. In fact, progress depends on it. The only truly unreasonable act is to believe that everything is okay as it is." Irish playwright George Bernard Shaw put it this way, "The reasonable man adapts himself to the world. The unreasonable one persists in trying to adapt the world to himself. Therefore, all progress depends on the unreasonable man. Today pledge to free yourself from the limitations of reason and give yourself permission to dream of things no reasonable person could."

[Start the Conversation] Avtex: Leveraging Data to Personalize Experiences

Joey Coleman: Sometimes all it takes is a single question to get your company thinking about an improved customer experience. Here's an idea for how you can start the conversation.

Joey Coleman: This week, start the conversation topic is, leveraging data to personalize experiences. Customer data can be used for many purposes, including tracking interactions, charting transactions, and managing marketing outreach. Data gathered during customer interactions can also be used to personalize future experiences which often foster a deeper relationship with the customer.

Dan Gingiss: Here are three ways data can be used to personalize interactions. One, using portal interaction data to automatically surface support content that better meets the customer's needs and historical approach to seeking resolutions. Two, streamlining contact center interactions by comparing the customer's phone number or IP address against past interaction reports. Three, using trend data to identify common pain points and eliminating them or creating specialized journeys for individual customer segments.

Joey Coleman: We talked a lot on the show, Dan, about the power of personalization. And I think this has been proven time and time again. I know as a consumer when I call in to a call center and because I'm calling from my cell phone number, they recognize that and they answer the phone and call me by name and immediately

get to anticipate what I might be calling about. Like for example, when I call Delta and they recognize me and they say, "Oh, Mr. Coleman, are you calling about your flight tomorrow to LaGuardia?" It just speeds the conversation. It makes me feel like I matter. It makes me feel like they actually care about my business. And so I think every business should spend more time thinking about creative ways to personalize their interactions.

Dan Gingiss: For sure. I mean, as consumers or even as a business's clients, we know that the companies we do business with have data on us, so you might as well use it.

Joey Coleman: Absolutely.

Dan Gingiss: And use it to our benefit. And now for this week's question about leveraging data to personalize experiences, what customer data are we tracking and are we effectively using it to drive better experiences? We encourage you to start the conversation within your own organization and then continue it with Avtex at experienceconversations.com. That website again is experienceconversations.com.

[Love It, Can't Stand It] What Happens When One Customer's Experience is Impacted by Another Customer's Behavior

Joey Coleman: Sometimes the customer experience is amazing and sometimes we just want to cry. Get ready for the roller coaster ride in this edition of, I love it, I can't stand it.

Joey Coleman: I was thinking about something the other day while I was flying, Dan.

Dan Gingiss: Congratulations Joey.

Joey Coleman: Oh, I set myself up for that one, didn't I? Didn't I? Nice. Oh, well actually what I was thinking about was how on an airplane, one customer's experience can be dramatically impacted by another customer's behavior. And when that happens, the affected customer associates that experience not only with the other customer who quote unquote, caused it, but it also spins off onto the airline for better or for worse. And this got me thinking that it would be interesting to explore all the ways someone's experience on an airplane could be dramatically impacted by the other customers. In

short, how one company's customer experience could be completely out of their control and what a company could do to monitor and adjust these feelings as need be if another customer infringes on the experience they're trying to create.

Dan Gingiss: I'm guessing there might've been an incident on this plane that triggered this idea.

Joey Coleman: There was, but to be honest, it didn't happen to me personally. I was on the plane thinking about a story a friend had told me, who this happened to them. They spend a lot of time on planes. They're professional speakers as well. And at the risk of grossing anyone out, I will share this story, but I would encourage you folks, please stop eating or drinking if you're doing either of those things right now while you're listening to this show because you're probably not going to like this story.

Dan Gingiss: Okay. Putting the coffee cup down. I'm getting a little nervous here Joey.

Joey Coleman: Yeah, let's, let's not have a spit take. And this is pretty intense. Okay, here it goes. My friend was flying in first-class here in the United States and noticed that a gentleman across the aisle and a row ahead of her had taken off his shoes while they were in mid flight. He then proceeded to take off his socks and just when my friend thought it could get no worse, the other passenger started clipping his toenails.

Dan Gingiss: Oh, come on.

Joey Coleman: I swear it's a true story, it was terrible for everyone involved because not only were the toenails being clipped, but it's not like they were being clipped onto a paper towel, they weren't just being clipped onto the floor and onto the other people. And I don't know how it works for you all, but sometimes when you cut a toenail, it doesn't just gently fall right below the toe, it shoots off. There literally were toenails shooting across first-class.

Dan Gingiss: Oh, thank you for making me put that coffee down.

Joey Coleman: I know, right?

Dan Gingiss: I'm absolutely disgusted right now.

Joey Coleman: And this is why I thought my friend was lamenting that the flight attendants didn't do anything about it. And they also commented on the fact that given this airline's reputation for having maybe not the best attention to detail, that would those toenails be picked up by the cleaning crew or could it be several flights later and someone would still be finding the biological matter of a passenger who flew several flights before.

Dan Gingiss: Okay. I'm kind of in shock. Let's change the subject.

Joey Coleman: Fair enough. Fair enough. Okay. Here's the thing, and again, apologies to any of the listeners that were as disturbed and disgusted by that story as much as Dan and I were. But let's change gears a little bit, and no pun intended, pull this back to 35,000 feet. I'd like to talk about all the things that can happen on a plane, stemming from one customer's behavior, impacting another customer's behavior. And I think what we can show here is how this impact can be positive or negative. And as a result, I thought it might be fun to talk about some of the things we love and can't stand. So Dan, why don't you kick us off?

Dan Gingiss: Good. I want to go first.

Joey Coleman: All right?

Dan Gingiss: I cannot stand it when people bring smelly food onto a plane because sometimes it's great and it smells like nice French fries and sometimes it's a little fancier of a meal or a little spicy or what have you. And it permeates the entire plane.

Joey Coleman: Yeah, it really does. And if you don't like that particular type of cuisine, if you like that type of cuisine, it's usually fine.

Dan Gingiss: Well no, because then you're hungry and you really want it.

Joey Coleman: But fair enough, fair enough. But if you don't like that type of cuisine, it can get really ugly really fast.

Dan Gingiss: It's bad.

Joey Coleman: The one that is showing up pretty much every time I fly now that is just ridiculous, is when passengers are playing games or watching

videos on their phone and they've decided not to wear headphones. Because they're like, I'm sure you want to hear the cards sliding across as I play solitaire. The little... Honestly?

Dan Gingiss: I kind of like that sound.

Joey Coleman: Oh my gosh, you like it?

Dan Gingiss: Only when I'm playing.

Joey Coleman: You like it at the beginning. But after two hours of a flight... The other day I finally was, "I can't handle it anymore." And I actually leaned forward and said to the person, "You do realize that this entire section can hear you're playing solitaire, right." And the person was like, "Oh no, sorry." And I'm like, "How did you not know? Are you so numb and so unaware of your own behaviors?" Okay. I'm getting worked up.

Dan Gingiss: Speaking of which, I cannot stand it when there's someone on the plane that believes that he is the most interesting man in the world and is going to talk loudly and share his knowledge with us for pretty much the entire flight.

Joey Coleman: Yeah, and I love the gender specificity of that statement because it's always a guy. It's never a woman pontificating about the deals she's closing and all the promotion she's going to get. No, it's some dude just harassing the person next to him. Totally agree. It's ridiculous. One that I think I've observed people doing lately on flights is watching their favorite news channel, which is often fairly sensationalized in an age where news is a negative trigger for many people. I've actually seen the energetic shift when somebody flips on a news channel in front of them that clearly isn't the news channel preference of the person sitting next to them and suddenly they realize they might be on opposite ends of the spectrum.

Dan Gingiss: Yes, and I'm not going to go back to your opening story because I'm still disgusted. But I have also seen people perform other personal grooming activities on a plane. Flossing teeth, putting on deodorant, that sort of thing.

Joey Coleman: Yeah. the putting on deodorant while sitting in the chair that that one's, it's rare, but when it happens, I'm just like, "How is this

happening? Is somebody filming this? Are we in an episode of the Twilight zone or funniest home videos because I'm confused."

Dan Gingiss: Yeah. There's a bathroom on the plane for a reason.

Joey Coleman: Yeah. I'll say the last thing. Let's do one more that we can't stand. The last one is one that I'm personally sensitive to because I have a six year old and a three and a half year old. It's when the person sitting next to us on the plane is watching clearly non age appropriate content when they have a child or children sitting next to them. Now thankfully when I fly with my kids we take up a row, so it's not really an issue. But I have seen unaccompanied minors flying next to again, mostly guys who decided that they want to watch something like John Wick 3, which is an incredibly violent movie sitting next to two six-year-old twins and I'm thinking you do realize that they see the screen, right?

Dan Gingiss: Although to be fair, I'm going to push back on this one because you could flip the script and say that to that guy, the problem is the thing he can't stand is having to sit next to two six-year-olds, right? Because now have to dictate what he gets to watch.

Joey Coleman: Fair enough, fair enough. But also when you get on the plane and there are 50 movies to choose from, I think it's okay to say, "Look, I don't care if you watch something that's maybe a little more adult in its nature, but it doesn't have to be pushing the adult with a capital A, boundaries."

Dan Gingiss: True.

Joey Coleman: All right, so that's enough bad news. What about the impact of positive experiences? What are some of the things you love, Dan?

Dan Gingiss: Well, I appreciate it when the person on the window seat or the aisle seat understands that the person in the middle is really uncomfortable and allows them to have the armrests or at least most of the armrests rather than trying to fight them for it and make their experience even more miserable.

Joey Coleman: Oh, yes. We have talked about this before on the show when we talked about the changes that are coming to the middle seat. Yes. The rule is the person in the middle seat gets both armrests. I also

really like it when people don't put their seats all the way back or sometime, the best ones don't put them back at all. It's so ridiculous when I'll be sitting on my laptop and next thing I know either the laptop is being jammed into my chest or it's flipping off the table because the person in front of me has decided to throw their seat back with careless abandon, not even... I don't know, if you're going to put it back, at least go back slow, but just throw it back like, "Hey, don't mind me while I sit in your lap?"

Dan Gingiss: Yeah, I think the sounds like you're taking an, I can't stand it and just flipping it into an I love it. Making it negative.

Joey Coleman: That's kind of what happened right there. That's true. That's true.

Dan Gingiss: Tell us about your biggest mistake in business. Well, my biggest mistake is that I'm just too good at what I do.

Joey Coleman: It's called taking a negative and turning it into a positive, Dan.

Dan Gingiss: But actually I believe that the airplane should just stop making the seats go back.

Joey Coleman: Agreed. 100%

Dan Gingiss: Like today with the amount of leg room there is, it's not necessary to go back even three or four inches, just to stop it. Don't make it [.

Joey Coleman: 100%.

Dan Gingiss: But I also appreciate... I love sitting on the aisle because I get a little extra leg room and can put the legs out into the aisle, et cetera. But when somebody wants to get up, I always stand up so that it's easier for them to get out.

Joey Coleman: Of course it's because you're a decent human being.

Dan Gingiss: Yes. And I like it when people do that to me versus me having to... That whole dance of trying to climb over someone and not touch them or their things. Is just so uncomfortable and all they have to do is stand up and it would eliminate that.

Joey Coleman: It really would. Another thing I love is when passengers decide to follow the rules and use the storage above their seats, only after they've used the storage under the seat in front of them. It never

ceases to amaze me when you get on the plane. And lots of times I'm doing quick turns and quick connections. So I've got my carry-on backpack as well as my small carry-on bag and I get on the plane and the cabin space above or the luggage space above is taken by tiny purses and tiny backpacks and little things where I'm like, "Seriously, that could go under the seat." So I love it when people do that.

Dan Gingiss: I do too. And I also appreciate when somebody takes the time to read their seatmates body language. And what I mean by that is, do they want to talk and be spoken to or do they just want to read and work quietly and watch a movie? It's oftentimes people will act the way they want to act, not how the receiving person wants them to.

Joey Coleman: Yes, the pro tip on that folks. Get the headphones out of your bag immediately upon being seated. Put those in if you want to avoid the conversations. Well, I think what's interesting here is, all of these examples are about the airlines, but let's not get caught up in thinking that this is only an airline problem. Many of our listeners have interactions where they can have more than one customer in their place of business at the same time, restaurants, movie theaters, doctor's offices, and someone who is a customer that's not you, could be impacting or influencing your experience. And so I think there's an opportunity for businesses to think a little more strategically about what kind of behaviors happen within their place of business from other customers.

Dan Gingiss: Yeah, I agree. And I think this is also true in the B2B world too. Is that we do business with companies and sometimes those companies annoy us in how their employees behave. Maybe they email us too often. Maybe the salesperson is calling me too often and I've asked him to stop or that I only want to speak to him once a week or whatever it is. You have to be able to read the other people in your environment and act accordingly.

Joey Coleman: Interestingly enough, it's pretty easy to see how the behavior of another customer could dramatically impact your customer experience for better or for worse. What can a company do about it? Well, one option would be to adopt a code of conduct for your customers. Set clear expectations on what's allowed and not allowed, and then be ready to celebrate or enforce the code as need be.

We're seeing this more and more with youth sporting events, for example, that have specific rules around parental behavior as opposed to child behavior.

Dan Gingiss: [inaudible 00:30:15].

Joey Coleman: Which is so needed, so needed. And I think it's just a matter of time before we actually see this start to show up more in customer environments like restaurants and retail establishments and modes of transportation. Ask yourself this, if your customers are in the same place at the same time, how are you making sure that they enjoy the experience without infringing on another customer's enjoyment?

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 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: Experience-

Dan Gingiss: This.