

Experience This! Show Podcast  
Hosts: Joey Coleman & Dan Gingiss  
ExperienceThisShow.com

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**Episode 80**  
**Discover the Power of an Unexpected Gift**

**Joey Coleman:** 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.

**Dan Gingiss:** Always upbeat and definitely entertaining, customer retention expert Joey Coleman-

**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.

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

**Joey Coleman:** Join us as we discuss how past experiences can trigger current emotions, how creative play can produce qualified employment candidates, and how strategic appreciation can keep your customers coming back for more.

**Dan Gingiss:** Gift-giving, code breaking and artifact creating, oh my.

**THIS JUST HAPPENED: Crazy Legs Podcast Gift**

**Joey Coleman:** Just because you have required elements of your business, doesn't mean they need to be boring. It's time to get creative, have some fun and make people sit up and take notice. Get your customers talking when you make the required remarkable.

I received a package the other day in the mail that to be honest, took my breath away.

**Dan Gingiss:** Really? I'm intrigued. What was it, Joey?

**Joey Coleman:** Well, I'm happy to tell you Dan, but first I need to share some backstory. A few months ago, I recorded a podcast with my friend Ben Oosterveld. He has a show called, From Within and it was a fun conversation about my book, Never

Lose A Customer Again, and the power of creating remarkable customer experiences at every step of the customer journey.

So that you have more context, we'll link to it in the show notes that [experiencethisshow.com](http://experiencethisshow.com), if you're interested in checking it out. During our conversation, Ben asked me a series of rapid fire questions, one of which was, what is something you're nostalgic about from when you were a kid, a toy, a video game, et cetera? I told him about something that happened to me when I was about nine or 10 years old.

I loved GI Joe figures and back in the day, the packaging for GI Joe characters included a dossier card on the back that detailed some key facts and stories about these fictional characters. I loved cutting these cards off the back of the packages and keeping them. I would read them, I would review them when I was putting together teams of characters for special missions, it was great.

And after I'd been collecting for a while, I realized that there were no GI Joe characters from my home state of Iowa, let alone my hometown of Fort Dodge. And what could be seen as an early indicator of my, let's see if we can just fix this problem, I decided to write a letter to Hasbro, the company that made GI Joe figures, to ask if they would consider making a GI Joe character from Iowa.

I never heard back from the company, but about a year later, a new GI Joe character was released named, Crazy Legs. And not only was he from Iowa, he was from Fort Dodge, Iowa. Now I don't know if my letter influenced the toy makers at Hasbro. But what I do know is that as a kid, this quickly became one of my favorite characters.

So the other day I received a package and when I opened it, I found a mint condition, still in the box, Crazy Legs action figure with the dossier on the back that said he was born in Fort Dodge, Iowa. I kid you not, it almost brought tears to my eyes.

In the package was a note from Ben thanking me for being on his show and apologizing that it had taken him a while to thank me because it took him some time to track down the character on eBay, but that he hoped I would appreciate it.

**Dan Gingiss:** Wow. I have goosebumps listening to that story.

**Joey Coleman:** Isn't that amazing?

**Dan Gingiss:** I was not a GI Joe fan as a kid, but I love that there is a GI Joey character from Fort Dodge, Iowa, named Crazy Legs. And I think that's now going to be my new nickname for you.

**Joey Coleman:** There you go. Nice. Well, it's interesting because my experience with receiving this Crazy Legs action figure from Ben, got me thinking about the key characteristics of good gifting in either a business or a personal setting. And I wanted to share some of those things that I've learned along the way with our listeners, especially as people start to think about end of year gifts for their clients and colleagues.

Number one, unexpected gifts are the best gifts. Many businesses talk about creating surprise and delight moments for their customers. The first word in that phrase is the key word, surprise. The fact that Ben's package actually came six months after I had recorded his show, was better than had it come almost immediately.

I personally don't think it's ever too late to send a gift or a thank you and if the recipient is surprised to receive it, you've actually created a great emotional reaction.

**Dan Gingiss:** I definitely agree and I often say that surprise and delight is not a strategy. It has to be something that comes naturally because the harder you try to do it, the less personalized it becomes. And so I think what was great about this is that it was absolutely a surprise.

The six months thing certainly helped. And clearly he knew this, it was going to be something that was also a delight. But it's not something that's repeatable or scalable for him because his other customers or his other podcast guests are probably not GI Joe fans.

**Joey Coleman:** Agreed. Or they may be GI Joe fans, but they're not necessarily Crazy Leg fans. So you're right, that the personalization really is key. Which brings me to my second point, Dan. Thanks for that segue. The more personalized, the better.

Anyone can send a gift, but the more personal the gift, the happier the recipient. Now I know you mentioned you weren't a GI Joe fan as a kid, Dan. What did you play? What was your toy, did you [crosstalk 00:06:18], like go to guy?

**Dan Gingiss:** Actually, I'm thinking here because now I want to go on this guy's podcast because what I loved as a kid were pinball machines. So maybe I could get one of those.

**Joey Coleman:** Six months later, Dan gets, a freight truck pulls up to his house with a pinball machine. No, I hear you. You know, what's interesting to me is how Ben pulled this story out of me that I hadn't thought about in many years and then he acted on it.

Now this actually brings me to the third secret of quality gift-giving. Listen for the golden nuggets to fall from the sky, and I must confess, I borrowed that phrase from my dad. My dad would sit in the courtroom, he was a criminal defense lawyer and he would listen intently for the golden nuggets that might fall from the sky.

What I mean by that is the things that would be said by a witness or an expert or a police officer on the stand that he could catch, latch onto and make a central part of his argument before the jury, as to why they should find his client not guilty.

Now in the corporate world, this technique is not that different. We need to actively listen during our conversations to identify the interest and the hobbies and the personal likes and dislikes and desires and basically anything that is hyper personal about the person we're speaking with, whether that's a customer, an employee, a colleague, a vendor. We can then use that insight to identify personalized gifts and opportunities to surprise them.

**Dan Gingiss:** I think one of the companies that does this the best is a company that we've talked about several times on the podcast and I love to talk about onstage because it gets the best reaction of any company, which is [chewy.com](https://www.chewy.com).

And in fact, true story, Joey and I were together yesterday and in the car I got a phone call from a really good friend of mine who recently had his dog die and he called to cancel his order for dog food. And the next day he and his wife got flowers in the mail from Chewy and were absolutely stunned.

And so it's very similar in the sense that that was their golden nugget falling from the sky, is they heard that one of their customers had had this negative experience. And they acted on it.

**Joey Coleman:** So true, so true. So the gifts don't necessarily have to come as a moment of delight. They can come as a moment of sorrow, but the key is to make them personalized. The final thing I'd like to note is that nostalgia works even better with each passing year.

I know that sounds a little silly, but by definition, nostalgia refers to a sentimental longing or a wistful affection for things from the past. What I found over time is that as I get older, the things that tie me back to my childhood, where I grew up, the old toys I played with, the games I played, the hobbies I had produced an even stronger emotional reaction for me.

So what can we learn from this story of an unexpected thank you gift for being a guest on a podcast? Why I think we can learn a few things. Number one, unexpected gifts are the very best gifts. Number two, the more personalized the better. Number three, don't forget to listen for the golden nuggets to fall

from the sky. And number four, nostalgia works even better with each passing year.

One final thought if I may. During that series of rapid fire questions on his From within podcast, Ben asked me, "What's the best physical gift you've ever received?" Well, let's just say that Ben's gift of a vintage Crazy Legs, GI Joe figure just rocketed into the top three physical gifts I've ever received from anyone on any occasion. Thanks Ben. It meant the world to me.

## **CX PRESS - Recruits from the Escape Room**

**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 CX Press, where we read the articles so you don't need to.

Okay Dan, this is a bit of a random question, but you're used to it by now. Have you ever been to an escape room?

**Dan Gingiss:** I have not, but my kids have been pestering me to go and I really do want to try it out.

**Joey Coleman:** Oh man, you definitely need to go and I think you might even want to go more after you hear this story. So first of all, in case some of our listeners haven't been to an escape room or aren't familiar with that phrase. According to Wikipedia, an escape room is a game in which a team of players cooperatively discover clues, solve puzzles and accomplish tasks in one or more rooms in order to progress and accomplish a specific goal in a limited amount of time.

The goal is often to escape from the room in which the game is being played. Craig Lorde recently wrote a story in the Ottawa Business Journal, titled, Solving Escape Manner's new room could land you a job as a Canadian codebreaker.

The story is all about an Ottawa based business called Escape Manner and their new cybersecurity focused experience. The escape room partnered with the Communications Security Establishment or CSE, which is a federal agency in Canada that houses the Canadian government's top code breakers.

Basically, it's the Canadian version of the United States NSA, National Security Agency. Working with the CSE, the Escape Manor designed a new room called, The Recruit. In this game, participants will pretend to be a CSE freshman going through orientation when disaster strikes. As is usually the case in an escape room, the group will have to rely on quick thinking to solve the puzzles and save the day before it's too late.

**Dan Gingiss:** It sounds amazing. Kind of sounds like Jack Bauer in an episode of 24.

**Joey Coleman:** Totally and it happens in a room. So because you mentioned you haven't been, lots of times if you're going to escape room, instead of like going out to a bar for the night or a restaurant, you get a couple of friends and you go to the escape room and it often takes anywhere from half an hour to two hours. You're against a time limit, you're solving clues, you're having fun, you get to see which of your friends are smarter or clever than the others and you have a good time.

But what's particularly interesting to me about the partnership between Escape Manor and the CSE is that CSE's technical experts actually provided input on the puzzles and codes and the videos and imagery used in the game were filmed at CSE's Ottawa headquarters. So this adds an incredible level of realism to the overall experience.

**Dan Gingiss:** As it turns out, the idea to collaborate on a cybersecurity and espionage themed escape room came up when CSE's marketing team was looking for new ways to spread the word about the agency's work processing foreign signal intelligence and protecting Canadian computer networks.

Interestingly enough, as an agency that employs professional code breakers, CSE already had a lot of escape room fans among its staff. As such, the hope is that fans of escape rooms will potentially be good candidates for employment with CSE.

**Joey Coleman:** I absolutely love this idea and having worked in the intelligence community myself, I can honestly say that this sort of government/corporate partnership is something more countries should be considering.

In a world where cybersecurity is becoming more vital every day, finding creative and engaging ways to recruit new code breakers is something every intelligence agency on the planet is thinking about.

In addition, more and more corporations are bringing cybersecurity teams in house, so in the future, the need for these types of team members is only going to increase. But to be honest, this isn't an entirely new idea.

Back in 1942 during the second world war, the British government worked with The Daily Telegraph to develop a very difficult crossword puzzle. Those who successfully solved it were encouraged to share their victory and later, at least as the story goes, some of these people were drafted by the war office to help break German codes.

**Dan Gingiss:** What the escape room is going to do to help CSE identify candidates isn't that different than what was done back in World War II. If a group successfully

completes the recruit game, they'll be given the chance to do a bonus cryptographic puzzle.

If a player solves that puzzle, they will have the opportunity to voluntarily leave their contact information with the folks at Escape Manor, who will then pass it on to CSE. If a recruitment officer feels a candidate could be a good fit, they'll reach out to discuss opportunities with the agency.

**Joey Coleman:** So how can you apply this kind of thinking to your organization? When it comes to recruiting new employees, consider the types of things your current employees like to do and then explore creative partnerships in a similar space. If your startup is filled with hard charging, type-A personalities who like to do adventure sports, you may want to partner with your local skydiving or mountain biking groups to find new candidates for employment.

If your business thrives based on a group of employees that are book club members after hours, you may want to offer to spend some of your marketing dollars to bring authors into your local community and then invite local book clubs to attend the event. Folks, you're only limited by your own imagination. Who knows? Your next great hire could be hiding very close by.

## **START THE CONVERSATION - AVTEX**

**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

This week's Start the Conversation topic is CRM as a customer experience tool. Many organizations utilize CRM or customer relationship management systems to track relationships with customers and prospects.

But a CRM isn't just a tracking tool. It's also a customer experience tool. If you aren't using a CRM and the data captured within it to drive your customer experience transformation, you're missing out on a huge opportunity to deliver better customer experiences.

**Dan Gingiss:** Here are three ways that CX leaders can use a CRM to improve customer experiences. One, make it easy for customers to do business with you. Use customer data within the CRM to map journeys and eliminate pain points and personalize experiences based on data to streamline interactions.

Two, use customer data to continually improve experiences. Gather and use customer feedback and track engagement trends, where and when customers are interacting with you the most. Three, use customer data to look for new ways to foster loyalty.

**Joey Coleman:** Now, what's really interesting is when we think about CRM at most companies, especially big companies, two major problems emerge. Number one, not everyone is using the CRM, so it's difficult to get the salespeople to put in data about prospects that people are actually serving the customers aren't necessarily recording every interaction. And so the data that's in the CRM isn't always as accurate as it could or should be.

Secondly, there's a huge problem in many organizations that the CRM for an individual customer or the data on an individual customer can only be accessed by certain departments. This blows my mind that a company would have different CRM software tools for different departments, but it happens all the time.

You need to have a unified approach. You need to have all the data about your prospects and your customers stored in one place that is accessible by everyone in your organization, not only for them to add to it as they learn new things and catch those little golden nuggets that may drop from the sky. But also to make sure that when they do interact with a customer, they are referencing the most up to date customer interactions recorded in the CRM.

**Dan Gingiss:** And now for this week's question about CRM as a customer experience tool, what are the specific ways we are using our customer resource management tool to enhance the experience with our customers? We encourage you to start the conversation within your own organization and then continue it with our friends at Avtex by going to [experienceconversations.com](http://experienceconversations.com). Again, that website is [experienceconversations.com](http://experienceconversations.com).

#### **BOOK REPORT: Giftology by John Ruhlin**

**Joey Coleman:** 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.

**Dan Gingiss:** I know we spoke about gifting earlier on in the show and it's something that we both speak about regularly in our keynotes and workshops, but I think it would be in service to our listeners if we took some time to dive deep into this practice of giving gifts in a corporate setting.

**Joey Coleman:** You know, Dan, I wholeheartedly agree and this is a topic that comes up a lot, so I couldn't think of a better way to discuss this than to do a book review of the best book I've come across on the topic of corporate gifting. In fact, it takes gifting beyond the usual behaviors and elevates it to strategic appreciation.

Now the book I'm speaking about is by my good friend, gifting expert, speaker and writer John Ruhlin. His book is titled *Giftology: The Art and Science of*

Using Gifts to Cut Through the Noise, Increase Referrals and Strengthen Client Retention.

It's a quick read. To be honest, the first time I read it was cover a cover on a flight and it's full of fantastic advice and examples for how to think differently about your business gifting activities.

**Dan Gingiss:** Let's let John explain in his own words what his book Giftology is all about.

**John Ruhlin:** Most business leaders agree that relationships have been, are and always will be the most important asset they have for their professional careers in growing their businesses. However, most business owners don't properly utilize the most simple, oldest and most powerful tool in their relationship building arsenal, the gift.

Giftology is this study of growing relationships through strategic gift giving. It is the science behind who to gift, when to gift, how to gift and the tried and true ROI driving method of what to gift. This is not a book about what gifts to buy. This is a book about what types of gifts create the most emotional impact, that get talked about the most and that when delivered with the right attitude, presentation and timing, win. over the entire inner circle, including assistance, family members and spouses.

Why is it important to get the inner circle on your side? Because five words about you from them, means more than 5,000 words from you about you. Giftology is the study of winning hearts, cutting through the noise and creating unbelievable experiences. Gifting is a business leader's most powerful form of marketing for increasing referrals and cross selling and upselling opportunities.

And it is the marketing that up until now, has been the most poorly executed and vastly under utilized. If you're a business leader who believes in generosity but doesn't want to come across as [bribery 00:00:44] or back scratchy or quid pro quo, follow the methods of Giftology and watch as your ever deepening relationships, open doors and grant you access you never thought possible.

**Joey Coleman:** I love that. John is so right. Gifting is both an art and a science and it's something that most businesses are giving little to no thought to. And I must confess, I've received some amazing gifts in the past and I think I've given some pretty great gifts too, but I am by no means as consistent about it as I could or should be.

**Dan Gingiss:** You know, I often bring up something that you mentioned in your book, because I see it so often, is that companies are giving branded or [logoed 00:00:44] items to their customers thinking that, that's a gift.

And I seem to remember, I think it was you that said, or perhaps you were quoting John, that when you give somebody a branded item also known as swag, that that isn't a gift, it's marketing.

**Joey Coleman:** Absolutely.

**Dan Gingiss:** And that that's a big difference.

**Joey Coleman:** It's a gift for you. It's a gift for your business to have them market. It's not a gift for the recipient.

**Dan Gingiss:** Exactly. And so one of the passages that I loved in the book addresses this mistake directly. It says, and I'm quoting, "You would never go to someone's wedding and give them a crystal vase from Tiffany and Company engraved with your name on it. So why would you give a corporate gift with your company name on it? Is it a promotion or a gift?"

This goes back to the idea of making sure something is personalized and not just branded. If it's something all about them, it's a gift. If it's brand focused and all about you, with your colors, your logo, what you love, it's a promotion.

**Joey Coleman:** You know, Dan, you're right. This is something I talk about with clients and on stage all the time. Most companies are fooling themselves, that they're gifting their customers. When in reality, they're sending promotions to their customers. And if any of the listeners doubt the validity of this statement, I'd like you to imagine this scenario.

It's Christmas morning or one of the nights of Hanukkah or your birthday and you receive a package from your grandmother. You open it up to find a sweater with her name on it. Now, you love your Nana and it was kind of her to get something for you, but you are not going to wear that sweater.

The same holds true for your customers. If you're sending them apparel and swag that has your logo and marketing messages all over it, it's not a gift. Stop it. Stop kidding yourself. Stop the behavior. It's okay to send that stuff, but acknowledged that it's a promotion.

As John noted in the passage that Dan has shared, if it's something all about them, it's a gift. Now, speaking of favorite passages from the book, to be honest, I have dozens, but the one I want to share is this, "Instead of gifting your clients with something that will register as a blip on the radar, choose an item that will serve as the artifact of your relationship, something that becomes woven into the very fabric of their lives."

**Dan Gingiss:** Wow. An artifact of your relationship, I definitely like the way John phrased that

**Joey Coleman:** I do as well, Dan, and you know, just the language he uses. Doesn't that raise the bar when we think about gifting, instead of giving a gift, giving an artifact. It's interesting, the first gift I ever received from John was indeed an artifact.

I had met him at an event, we had hit it off. We have similar messages and similar audiences. And a few days after I arrived back home, I received in the mail a custom engraved knife set for our kitchen. Now, these were beautiful Cutco butcher knives and a butcher block for them to go into. And the knives were all engraved with a message that said handcrafted exclusively for the Joey and Barrett-Coleman family.

Now, here's the crazy thing. This gift is prominently displayed in our kitchen and it receives two touches every night. My wife uses the knives to prepare the meal and I clean and wash the knives every night after dinner. It's truly become an artifact that serves as a reminder of my relationship with John and it's been woven into the fabric of our day to day lives.

**Dan Gingiss:** I love it, but I'm sure that some of our listeners may be wondering how they can afford these types of gifts. How should they be thinking about their gifting budget?

**Joey Coleman:** Well, I've certainly wondered the same thing in the past, Dan. And I think it would actually be best if we turn to the author of Giftology, John Ruhlin, as he shares his thoughts on this specific question of how much to spend.

**John Ruhlin:** How much should I give is the number one question I am asked regarding Giftology. Gifting should be a part of your overall marketing and Biz Dev efforts. It should be something you actively budget for. If you do not have yet a budget, rely on the handwritten note, as we've talked about before.

But when you are able to invest money into gifting strategies, what you choose should be comparable to what it would cost for a nice dinner out with wine, great tickets to a ball game or a round a golf at an upscale club, an amount that typically falls somewhere between \$100 and maybe \$2,000 at the most.

Essentially, you're gifting budget to retain and maintain clients should always fall somewhere between 2% and 10% of your current net profits or it should be a 20% redirect of your current marketing efforts overall.

Again, always ask yourself, what's the most that I could do? Since it's not uncommon for us to ask ourselves, what's the least I can do without looking cheap, reprogramming your mindset might require some effort. Be honest. How many times have you been invited to a wedding or high school graduation and the first thing that comes into your mind is, do I really have to spend \$250 or can I get away with \$150?

Our natural tendency is to cut corners and go with the bare minimum. Most gifting strategies don't work well because those implementing them are not willing to go out on a limb. They want the safe bets done as economically as possible. As a result, they typically reap few benefits. Remember that slow and steady wins the race. Be patient, invest in strategic gifting with a longterm view of the future as you would with a growth stock or asset allocation.

Over time, your investment will naturally compound. I always tell my clients, "If you're not willing to commit to three years of hiring our outsource gifting agency, then I'm not going to guarantee any of the results." You would never take a potential client out to dinner and demand their business before they've even opened the menu.

Giftology is a slow build, encouraging the relationship to develop over time. It's an ongoing process. Again, it's all about minimizing risk. People need to see what your true intentions are, that they're genuine with no strings attached. Over time, you'll tip the scales in your favor.

Don't get me wrong, there are instances when you'll see short term results, especially when you're prospecting. But even when you invest a significant chunk of money to get someone's attention, that's what you're getting, his or her attention. You're not getting his or her loyalty or business. Not yet.

**Joey Coleman:** If you want to get someone's attention and their loyalty or their business, you need to up your gifting game. There are two great ways to do that. Number one, go purchase and read John's book, Giftology: The Art and Science of Using Gifts to Cut Through the Noise, Increase Referrals and Strengthen Client Retention.

You can find it on Amazon or wherever you buy your books and we'll link to it in the show notes at [experiencethisshow.com](http://experiencethisshow.com). Secondly, you can reach out to John directly via his website, [giftologyplan.com](http://giftologyplan.com) that's Giftology, G-I-F-T-O-L-O-G-Y, plan, P-L-A-N, .com.

Or if you prefer, go to [experiencethisshow.com](http://experiencethisshow.com) and leave us a voice message on our contact page and we'll make a personal introduction. John and his team are incredibly skilled at helping you maximize the impact of your gifting budget by finding personal and meaningful gifts that your clients will see as an artifact of your relationship.

Please don't waste another dollar on an impersonal gift card or an everyone gets the same fruit basket, annual gift to your customers. Start practicing Giftology and get ready to take your customer experience to the next level.

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](http://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, Experience This.