Experience This! Show Podcast
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Episode 82
Begin Considering how to Make Things Accessible for an Aging Population

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 retention 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. Get ready for another episode of the Experience This show.

Joey Coleman: Join us as we discuss a restaurant designed to create an inclusive experience, the challenges of becoming an older customer, and how healthcare is failing the customers that need it most.

Dan Gingiss: Pizzability, usability, and adaptability. Oh my.

ET LIVE: Pizzability

Joey Coleman: Sometimes we need to get out of the recording studio and experience things in person. Get ready to feel like you're standing right next to us as you Experience This live.

Not too long ago, I heard about a restaurant concept that so piqued my interest I had to go check it out for myself. The restaurant is based in Denver, Colorado, and is called Pizzability. Pizzability is a pizzeria completely staffed by individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. It was founded by Tiffany Fixter, a special needs teacher who saw a need for jobs and training for adults with disabilities. Not only does Pizzability provide job training and skill development that will translate into future job opportunities for their employees, they also make a pretty delicious pizza as well.

In fact, they've taken their philosophy and applied it to all aspects of their business. They work with a Colorado farm that employs people with intellectual and developmental disabilities to provide produce for toppings. They're constantly on the lookout for other vendors and suppliers that have a similar commitment to working with individuals who have disabilities.

Given that I live just up the road in Boulder, Colorado, I decided to take a little road trip to Denver and asked my good friend Nick Hemmert to join me for lunch at Pizzability. What follows is a recording of the conversation that we had while we were in the restaurant waiting for our order to be prepared.

Pizzability is a fascinating restaurant in Denver, Colorado in that the staff all have disabilities. The restaurant was designed to create a place where folks who had disabilities could actually come to work. As I've walked into Pizzability on a Friday afternoon at about 12:30 for lunch, the restaurant is absolutely packed. Packed to the gills. It's almost standing room only.

What's really fascinating to me and my buddy Nick Hemmert, who I'm sitting here talking with and we're having lunch, is the fact that in many ways the customers are the staff and the staff are the customers. You were saying something about that, Nick.

Nick Hemmert: Yeah. What I appreciate about what I'm seeing here with 30 to 40 people that are literally standing, [crosstalk 00:03:41] finish their lunch and they're just hanging around socializing. It's a place for them to be able to do that at lunchtime.

Whereas, you just hear another person just get excited here a second ago. That's accepting for this place. I think if they went to another restaurant for the traditional lunch on Friday, I don't think they'd be able to have socialized time. Even if it was a coffee shop or a place that would be more socially acceptable.

I think it's really great just to see that there are people of all different abilities here for lunch, not just those with unique abilities, with all abilities, having conversations and being able to be themselves.

Joey Coleman: Yeah, there's so many things about the restaurant that are incredibly thoughtful and clearly show that a lot of consideration has gone in not only to the customer experience but to the employee experience.

For example, when we walked up to order our menu was a single sheet of paper that had photos of the different types of pizza you can get. You circle the photo of the type of pizza that you want and then whether you want a single slice or a full pizza and then you write your name at the bottom. What becomes very apparent very quickly is that regardless of someone's ability to maybe read or speak English, they're able to look at the pictures and know

exactly what you want. I'll include some photos in the show notes, not only of the menu, but also of the recipes for the different pizzas are listed above the pizza preparation area. So it becomes very clear that anyone, just by looking at the pictures, is going to be able to build out the various recipes for the pizza that folks would order.

They also give us two little tickets for the gelato. This restaurant, Pizzability, serves pizza, they have drinks, and they have gelato for dessert. We got two tickets for gelato, which the staff person who gave them to me shared that the reason they give out the tickets is then when we come up, all we have to do is exchange a ticket and their staff know that one ticket is good for one scoop of gelato. It's a great way to not only have some efficiency and how quickly they can turn tables, something that most restaurants pay attention to, but it really allows anyone on the other side of the counter, the staff member, to be able to take the order and process the order regardless of what their abilities may or may not be.

Nick Hemmert: The other thing I'm noticing too is the variety of different areas that they've created for people to sit. They have outdoor furniture. We're sitting at a table that's not the traditional outdoor table with an umbrella underneath it. Inside they have a traditional restaurant setting where they have small tables for two, tables for groups, they also have a bar where people can sit and actually watch the pizza being made or checkout the environment that's going on.

Someone just came in with a dog mat and set it down next to their spot at the bar for their dog to just enjoy the environment as well.

Joey Coleman: Yeah. I think what the thing that is most amazing to me is, I don't know the last time I ate at a restaurant where the customer base was as diverse as it is here. Just based on observations, you pretty much can see folks of all races, all genders, it appears to be all walks of life if one were to just base an observation based on dress or where people are at, and the entire space has a very fun, inclusive, open feel to it.

What's interesting is the doors to the restaurant, we're sitting outside, the doors to the restaurant are propped open and it appears, again not entirely sure. They've got a garage door on one side that's up and on this side of the restaurant are regular just double doors, but they're propped open and I get the feeling based on looking at the ground and where their prop is, that they're propped open all day, every day.

So unlike a typical restaurant, where lots of times even opening a door could be a challenge for someone depending on some physical challenges they may have, here you can roll in, you can walk in, you can just enter the space

without any encumbrances and be right up to the bar, placing your order, right up to the counter, placing your order.

It's got a great energy and a great vibe to it. I think so many businesses, so many restaurants, try to create a theme or a vibe. If I had I had to describe the vibe of Pizzability in one word, it's inclusive.

Nick Hemmert: I agree.

Joey Coleman: Fantastic place. If you get the chance, highly recommend come to Denver, Colorado, come to Pizzability, you won't be disappointed. There are some great lessons that we can take away that Dan and I are going to talk more about.

But thanks for joining us for an experience live and thanks to Nick for letting us record our conversation. Thanks so much.

Nick Hemmert: Thanks for having us.

Dan Gingiss: Wow. This sounds like an absolutely amazing place, Joey. I'm so glad that you found it because it's just a perfect example of something that we like to share on this show. I'm reminded back in episode 42 where we talked about the Starbucks outside of DC, right near Gallaudet University that committed to having an entire store filled with employees that could speak sign language and that the store was a lot quieter than other stores because of that.

But I think this is such a great idea on so many fronts. I think it, number one, I love the fact that it is providing job opportunities and skill development. Number two, I think it's providing for customers. I think some exposure to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and the fact that they can work regular jobs, and that they can be a contributing part of society, I think it's probably a MythBuster in a lot of ways for consumers.

Obviously because it is a restaurant, you did mention that they have delicious pizza too. And I think that's really important, because I don't think this experiment would work if the food wasn't good.

Joey Coleman: Absolutely. I think if the food wasn't good you'd go once to say that you did it, or to say that you supported the cause, but it wouldn't keep you coming back for more. And I have to tell you I was surprised not only at the inclusiveness of the restaurant, but the way they had everything set up. The pizza was great, the gelato was great. This is a place that I absolutely will go back to again. I also find myself thinking that when I have clients or friends come to Denver, I want to take them there because I think it's so beautifully illustrates inclusive design and being conscious of the fact that you may have customers that are different than you and what can you do to design your business for that?

Dan Gingiss: It's just if I can jump in. When I worked, particularly at Discover, also at Humana on the websites, a lot of the work is having to develop features and functionalities that are based on the rules outlined in the American Disabilities Act, that requires certain ways of consuming. What I found over time is that almost everything that we "had" to do, that the lawyers say, "Well, you have to do this to be in compliance with ADA," ended up creating a better experience for everyone. Because it's making things often simpler to read, or easier to manually click on, or whatever it is, whatever disability you're trying to address, it actually makes the whole experience for smoother for everyone.

Joey Coleman: Absolutely, and I think what was fascinating is after we finished recording, I was in the restaurant walking around and I noticed some other things that I hadn't noticed the first time when we walked in. The restaurant has a menu of adaptive utensils. They have special utensils designed for different types of customers, including easy hold utensils that strap to your hand, for people that struggle to maintain grip strength, they have bendable utensils that have an adjustable head to make it easier to move the food to your mouth, and they have weighted utensils that help reduce spilled food caused by shaking hands.

Pizzability also had a wall filled with items to assist those dealing with sensory challenges, including a half dozen pairs of noise canceling headphones and textured mats for guests that benefit from tactile stimulation.

In short, my time at pizzability was incredibly eye-opening about the ways that customer centric design can anticipate the needs of many different types of customers that might come into your business.

Now, let's be honest, not every business is going to be specifically designed to be as open and inclusive as Pizzability. That being said, there are dozens of little things you can do to make the people that purchase your products and services feel more comfortable, more considered, and more valued.

Dan Gingiss: If you want to see photos of Pizzability, their creative menu solution, and some of the other experience enhancing features that we spoke about in this segment, check out the show notes at experiencethisshow.com

CX PRESS: The World is Designed Against the Elderly

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.

I've got a question for you, Dan. Do you know what the average life expectancy is for a man and for a woman here in the United States?

Dan Gingiss: Well, I know that women tend to live longer then men and so I would guess that it's maybe for a man say 75-ish and maybe a woman 80.

Joey Coleman: Very, very close, my friend. According to the US Department of Health and Human Services, the average life expectancy is 78.6 years for men and 81.1 years for women. But what's more interesting is that as people grow older, life expectancy is actually increasing. What that means is that as time goes on, we're continuing to live longer, and so for those people who are now 65 years old, the average life expectancy is actually 83 for men and over 85 for women. And this is only going to keep going up.

Now while generally speaking, this is certainly a good, there's some pretty big problems with this shifting life expectancy, and a big concern is outlined in today's CX Press article from the Fast Company website, and don't worry folks, we'll link to it in the show notes over at the experiencethisshow.com.

The article is titled, I Wrote the Book on User-friendly Design. What I see today horrifies me. And was written by Don Norman. Don is the 83 year old author of the industry Bible Design of Everyday Things, and a former Vice President at Apple.

Now Don Norman knows a thing or two about user-friendly design, as is probably obvious by his background and bio. He wrote the book. And in our article he explains the challenges that he faces in his own home. As a reminder, Don himself is 83, and I'm quoting, "Everyday household goods require knives and pliers to open. Containers with screw tops require more strength than my wife or I can muster. We solve this by using a plumber's wrench to turn the caps. Companies insist on printing critical instructions in tiny fonts with very low contrast. Labels cannot be read without flashlights and magnifying glasses. And when companies do design things specifically for the elderly, they tend to be ugly devices that shout out to the world, I'm old and I can't function."

Dan Gingiss: I love that quote. I'm reminded of my mom, who both on her computer and her iPhone, has the font setting to something that is so big that to me it looks like she fits about three words on a page. But this is how she consumes.

I remember when I worked at Humana having to focus on that senior population that you can't design it like you're designing it for a millennial. It's not how they consume, it's not how they read. I think that obviously Don Norman, he's the king and the emperor of design thinking, and it's very

interesting that he's now at an age where he's starting to experience this himself.

I often find that I'll be sitting somewhere and even if it's not a physical thing, for example, signing up for healthcare. Every year when I was in the corporate America and I was signing up for healthcare and I had this big spreadsheet going with all the comparisons, I was like, what do the dumb people do? Because, I'm pretty smart, I feel, and this is really hard and taking up a lot of time. It's not designed to be easy.

Joey Coleman: I definitely had a variation on that theme. Having gone to law school, I often find myself reading things going, I'm struggling to understand this. How would you understand it if you didn't have a law degree? But I think what's interesting about the points that Don makes is not only is there a growing population of senior citizens, but we also have an increasingly large number of active healthy 65 plus year old people on the planet who aren't a small market, and these people, in fact, usually have more time and more discretionary income that they're happy to put into the marketplace if the marketplace is willing to design things that will meet their needs.

Now Don points out a few different challenges that older people face that businesses should take into consideration. The first one is reduced vision. When you think about your own products and services, how much of the associated text, whether it's directions or warning labels, identification marks, etc, is written in a typeface that is so small you need a magnifying glass to read to?

Nick Hemmert: Or what about hearing loss? Don notes in the article that it's become difficult for him to eat in a loud restaurant. He calls it torture and observes that quote, "More and more my wife and I select restaurants by their noise level rather than by their food quality."

How many restaurants, coffee shops, and places where people gather are adding to the noise with loud music, loud machines and the hustle and bustle of customer traffic without considering the fact that some customers may be choosing not to do business with them because of the loud sounds at their business?

And don't even get us started on technology that increasingly requires on touch. The increase in devices using display screens often with tiny lettering and touch sensitive areas. It makes it a challenge for anyone with diminishing eye hand coordination.

Joey Coleman: You know, the sad thing Dan, is that it's actually even worse than this. As if the status quo wasn't challenging enough. The companies that are targeting the senior market often do so in less than design conscious or experience

conscious fashion. Products that are designed for the elderly, I'm just going to say it straight, they tend to be ugly.

Back in my great-grandmother's time, a cane was often seen as a functional tool with an artistic accessory element. I remember very well, she had a black wooden cane with a silver eagles head on top of it with green jewels in the eyes. It was stunning. You could see it from across the room. Now canes and walkers look like they were designed to use the most metal, in the boxiest format, and ideally be strapped on the side of a rocket going to space. Today, a cane isn't an accessory, it's a medical device.

Dan Gingiss: It's so funny you should bring up that example, because my mom had hip surgery last year, and she had to use a cane for a little while, and she asked her grandchildren to decorate it with stickers. So, all four grandchildren brought stickers and made her... She had the coolest cane around, and she said that people stopped her in the street because they thought her cane was so cool.

Joey Coleman: Right. And so we shift from having a cane being a sign of maybe things in your life that aren't going the way you'd like them to go, a decrease in mobility, to a cane being a topic of conversation.

Dan Gingiss: Exactly. In the field of design, paying attention to the potential use cases of all customers is called inclusive design. It anticipates a variety of needs and in the process helps everyone. Don notes that curb cuts, those gentle slopes between the sidewalk and the street were meant to help people who had trouble walking. But it turns out they help anyone wheeling things, carts, baby carriages, suitcases, and more.

Joey Coleman: You know, this is exactly what you were talking about from the work you used to do around ADA compliance. When we make a website more compliant with the Americans With Disabilities Act, it makes the website more usable for everyone.

So this isn't just about, hey, let's be kind to the elderly and do better designs for them, this is, let's be more conscious of our design and design things that are going to help everyone experience our products and services better.

Let's be candid, everybody listening to this show will at some point be older than they are right now and probably significantly older.

Dan Gingiss: That's pretty deep.

Joey Coleman: Pretty deep. You like that?

Dan Gingiss: In fact, they are older than they were just a few seconds ago.

Joey Coleman: And that's one to grow on. No, probably significantly older. We need to start thinking about more inclusive designs now and if not for the benefit for those who are elderly today, then we should do it for more selfish reasons, because we're going to be the elderly of the future.

Here's how you can start working on this now. Look at your products and services and honestly ask whether they're user friendly for users of all ages. And don't just take your own theoretical opinion on this. Talk to people who are elderly, give them your products, have them experience your services, and see what they have to say about your products.

Do a focus group with people over age 65, instead of just a focus group with the millennials. If we want to build something that is longterm, if we want to have products and services that can stand the test of time, we need to design those services and design those products to work for customers who are longterm themselves.

START THE CONVERSATION - DESIGN THINKING

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 the art of design thinking. Designing new experiences isn't easy. Many organizations default to just fixing broken experiences, and in many cases that simply isn't enough to meet your customer's expectations. To amaze customers, you must design new experiences, or redesign old experiences with an intentional focus on the customer and with their point of view in mind.

Dan Gingiss: What exactly is design thinking? Here are three key components. One, exploring innovative ideas and solutions beyond what you think may be currently possible. Two, empathizing with customers, keeping their needs and point of view at the forefront throughout the design process. And three, creating experiences that address customer needs and expectations first, and business needs and goals second.

Joey Coleman: Interestingly enough, Dan, I think this is what actually got me interested in customer experience in the first place. Because I had been running an ad agency where we were doing a lot of design, literal design, designing logos, designing ad campaigns, graphics, business cards. And the more I started to think about all the experiences that folks were having, I realized that we could take that design thinking and extend it into the actual experiences, taking it beyond colors and type faces, and instead making it about how folks interact with all of the various products and services we offered.

I think adopting this type of design thinking is not only a must for the success of your business, but it's something that's really fun too. It's a great way to engage your employees in a conversation that makes them feel that they have a voice, makes them feel that they're being heard, and it allows them to build more empathy and connection with your customers and the types of people you serve.

Nick Hemmert: And now for this week's question about the art of design thinking. Is my organization actively engaging in design thinking? We encourage you to start the conversation within your own organization and then continue it with Avtex at experienceconversations.com. Again, that's www.experienceconversations.com

DISSECTING THE EXPERIENCE: The Healthcare System is Failing Seniors

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.

Dan Gingiss: I recently published a three part series on Forbes about the state of healthcare in the United States and the many, many customer experience opportunities that exist in an industry that is continually ranked at the bottom of most customer satisfaction surveys.

The first article in the series was called Why Treating Patients as Consumers Can Improve the Healthcare Experience. And the second one was, As Healthcare Goes Digital, Consumer Engagement and Experience Improve. But I really want to discuss the third one today, which fits in so well with this episode. Why an Aging Population Means HealthCare Customer Experience Must Adapt.

Now we're all familiar with how difficult and unsatisfying the healthcare experience can be in the United States. It's hard to sign up for healthcare. It's hard to understand healthcare jargon, something that we talked about in episode 13. It's often hard to schedule an appointment with a doctor unless you're willing to wait weeks or even months, and there's still tons of literal paperwork, stuff that should be digitized. Just try to piece together your entire health history in any meaningful way. Now imagine how much tougher this is on the older population.

Joey Coleman: You know, Dan, I thought there was one really poignant quote in your article, it came from David Stewart, a founding partner at Ageist, a company that is dedicated to promoting life after 50, and he said, "We have found that treating people as intelligent, informed adults gets better outcomes and a more positive view of the brand or a company." I found that quote poignant, but the

fact that it even needs to be said is pathetic and it shows that we've lost our way in the healthcare industry.

Dan Gingiss: Totally agree, Joey. That's why I included it.

Joey Coleman: I get it. Well, let's say the desired effect of creating an emotional rise out of your readers was achieved.

Dan Gingiss: Exactly. Thank you. I also got to talk with Geeta Wilson, who is the founder and CEO of a company called Consumer Society. It's an early stage tech and experience design company building an enterprise experience management technology platform to connect all of the major industry players in healthcare, the insurance companies, healthcare professionals, and consumers. Now, full disclosure, Geeta and I worked together at Humana and she's a good friend, but I asked her, is the healthcare system failing seniors today? And here's what she said.

Geeta Wilson: The short answer is yes. While there have been gains in precision medicine, life sciences, and medical treatments, the administration and navigation of healthcare as a system remains complex and confusing to all consumers. When you add to this population differences related to aging, such as chronic conditions, digital literacy, and social determinants of health, the age and experience in healthcare falls short.

The industry is unprepared for a very different aging population than it has traditionally served in the past, for the last 30 plus years. Commonly known as the Silent Generation, accepts a more passive approach to health and receives medical opinion and authority without question. Very different from today.

The newer aging population will nearly double in size to about 80 million by 2030 and the industry is not prepared for this unless it starts to aggressively address some of the gaps in the consumer experience we're seeing today. Older adults are poised to shape consumer and healthcare experiences in the years ahead.

At Consumer Society, we design experiences for specific segments and personas who have defining motivations, attitudes, and behaviors, in addition to their preferences and demographic characteristics. While all consumer needs are important, we think solving for the most complex demographic, that is an aging population with at least one chronic condition and perhaps an indifferent or antagonistic attitude towards their health, will set the stage for all populations and their needs to be met.

Dan Gingiss: Healthcare is obviously not alone. As we've discussed in this episode. The aging population in the United States will be the largest of all time, and the 50

plus cohort controls 70% of consumer discretionary spending in the United States. Designing for seniors is no longer optional. It's now a core responsibility for nearly every company in every industry.

Joey Coleman: 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 This.