

Experience This! Show Podcast
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ExperienceThisShow.com

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Episode 83
Enhance the Customer Experience by Making Their Needs a Priority

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.

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

Dan Gingiss: Join us as we discuss why trying to enhance the experience might actually lose you customers, how customers are affected after a corporate merger or acquisition and how to make standing in line fun.

Joey Coleman: Groceries, transitions and waiting. Oh my.

CX PRESS: Grocery Store: Is the best customer experience always the right customer experience? (SAP)

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.

This week's CXPRESS comes to us from our friends at SAP customer experience and can be found on their website the Future Of Commerce. The article was written by Jennifer Arnold and it asks the question, is the best customer experience always the right customer experience? Jennifer reminds readers that, "When planning for the best customer experience, don't forget the customer."

Dan Gingiss: Well hell, I'd say that's right on so far.

Joey Coleman: Yeah, I agree. Jennifer details' how her local grocery store has completely remodeled and as she writes, gone all fancy polished floors, marble checkout counters, floor to ceiling windows, cappuccino machines, and the store is three times bigger than the old one. The only problem Jennifer and her friends now shop somewhere else.

Dan Gingiss: Oh no. What happened?

Joey Coleman: Well, for Jennifer and for her friends, the main benefit of the local grocery store prior to the remodeling was convenience. Jennifer observes that pre renovation I could whip through and tick everything off my weekly shopping list in 15 minutes flat. Post renovation the trip takes nearly twice as long. What's worse? Those fancy marble checkouts are actually less efficient than the old conveyor belt. And of course prices have gone up through out the store.

Dan Gingiss: Ah, yes. The old, "We're making enhancements we think you're really going to like even though we don't know you, haven't you and are really only doing this because we think it'll make us more money situation." Followed by the, "And we're going to raise prices to pay for the improvements."

Joey Coleman: That's basically the way this goes Dan. It seems like you're familiar with this story. But what could the store have done instead to keep Jennifer as a customer? The answer they needed to understand their customer's expectations, listen so as to understand not just what they were doing but how they were feeling and not try to be something that they're not. As Jennifer Warren said in the article, "Only by understanding what your customers truly prioritize in the experiences they have with your brand can you then prioritize what customer experience enhancements will return the biggest bang for your buck and what to do to keep your customers loyal."

Dan Gingiss: You know, I really could relate to this article because the same thing happened to me at my local grocery store.

Joey Coleman: Really?

Dan Gingiss: And one of the things that they did, I could not understand this, is they changed the location of almost every product in the store.

Joey Coleman: Isn't that great when you're like, "So you've conditioned me to know exactly where the things are I want, and I came today and it's opposite day. Everything's in a different location."

Dan Gingiss: The funny thing was in some aisles, they literally just switched the sides of the aisle. So there was one aisle where one side was all the cereal and the other side was all the other breakfast stuff like oatmeal and granola bars

and stuff. And I showed up one day and they had just switched to the sides and I couldn't figure out why there were. There was no benefit that I could see. And all it did was confuse me. And so now I used to know where the bread is and now I've got to look all over for it, et cetera. And the interesting thing for me and the reason I stopped doing business with this particular grocery store was because the things that I didn't like about it were not improved at all with the refurbishing of the store. So for example, the thing that bothers me the most is I have to check my receipt every single time because I would say at least half the time there's a mistake on my receipt. There's a sale item that I didn't get the sale price.

Joey Coleman: Wait, there's a mistake on the receipt, meaning ... Okay.

Dan Gingiss: Like they charged me the wrong thing. Like there's a sale item of buy one get one free and so I got two but they charged me for two instead of for one or whatever. There's always something wrong. I bought one kind of apple and they charged me for the more expensive apple because the cashier typed in the wrong code. It literally happened every other time I was there.

Joey Coleman: Dan Gingiss pays attention to his grocery store receipts. We're learning a lot here, ladies and gentlemen. I'm learning new things I didn't know about Dan and I've known him for years.

Dan Gingiss: Dan Gingiss is the grocery shopper in the household. Fun fact, I actually like grocery shopping so I have not yet moved to mail order groceries or anything like that because I enjoy going to the grocery store. But the other thing that I didn't like about this grocery store is I'd go into the produce section and there were no prices anywhere and I called over a guy and said-

Joey Coleman: The old, "Hey, yeah, we've got it. Just guess how much it's going to cost. You'll find out when you check out."

Dan Gingiss: I remember grabbing a guy once and saying, "Well, how much are these peaches? And he said, "Oh, well they're 2.99 a pound." I said, "And how am I supposed to know that?" "Oh well there's a sign there." I said, "Really? Come show me where the sign is." And he walks over. He goes, "Oh, Oh yeah, somebody must've moved the sign." Yeah, well don't expect me to-

Joey Coleman: Did they move it to the banana section or like-

Dan Gingiss: Who moved my sign?

Joey Coleman: Yeah, exactly.

Dan Gingiss: But I mean, how do you expect me to buy peaches when I don't know how much they cost? This is pretty simple. And anyway, long story short, my grocery store also went through this big change where they made things a

little fancy or whatever, but they didn't fix any of the core problems. And finally I had had enough, I actually had to get myself to stop looking at the circular because every time I got the circular I'd be like, "Oh, grapes are on sale. I'm going to go there." And it would draw me in. And so I've learned, I trained myself to just recycle the circular so that I don't get teased by it. And I'm now going to a different grocery store that isn't as fancy, but that the prices are always right. I don't have to be worried about the receipt. I can find right produce and the right price and it's just easier for me.

And so last thing I want to say on this is that Jennifer points to the word convenience. And as you may remember last season we talked about our mutual friend Shep Hyken's book, *The Convenience Revolution*. This is absolutely something that people are looking for today. And so as you make changes you should be looking to make them more convenient, not less. And taking a grocery store where everybody knows the layout and the map of the place and completely shuffling everything is an inconvenience. Not an added convenience.

Joey Coleman: I have to admit Dan. Two things. Number one, I'm often left wondering when grocery stores move everything around why they did it. So we had a similar thing in our grocery store recently and I don't know. I'm sure there's science behind this and maybe you know the answer to this question. The little board that hangs above the aisles that tells you where things are and it has maybe 50 things listed in their aisle that is completely wrong now. Completely wrong cause it's the old board. I would have thought that one of the first things you do when you move everything is fix the map to your store, which is basically the board that lists out all the items.

The other day I spent what must have been a good 20 minutes trying to find olives. I had no idea where they were. I'm looking all over. I'm trying to find them. The board says they're in aisle 11, I go to aisle 11, it's toilet paper. I'm like, "Olives are definitely not in this aisle. Something has been moved." I'm looking all over and no one in the store ... The staff didn't know where things are.

So I agree with you. This really is a question of convenience. The second thing again, I want to reiterate, wow, Dan Gingiss has some interesting behaviors around grocery stores. I love it. I have actually ... our family, we've started to migrate a little bit more towards the convenience of fact of having the groceries brought to the house cause we live in town now. It's closer to the grocery store and it's really much easier to do it that way because neither my wife or I super love going to the grocery store, but a lot of people do. And so what are you doing when it comes to convenience? I think the takeaway here is we don't want to make changes for changes sake.

So as you're looking at your business, you're looking at improvements that you that you can potentially make. Choose the ones that are actually important to your customers so that you improve their experience in the process

Dan Gingiss: And for more great customer experience content, please visit our friends at SAP customer experience either on Twitter ,if you're so inclined to Joey, @SAP_CX or at their website at www.the-future-of-commerce.com. So that website again is The Future Of Commerce with hyphens between each of the words.

DISSECTING THE EXPERIENCE - Post merger or acquisition

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: Recently I had the opportunity to speak with Darren Hakeman, the head of corporate development and strategy for 8x8 A cloud based contact center solution that includes voice, video and chat. 8x8 has made several acquisitions of other companies over the years, and Darren was discussing the customer experience elements that must be considered in such a transaction. I'm going to share some of his comments here.

Darren Hakeman: Yeah, so, so I think one of the really important things is that a company understands why they're making the acquisition and especially in the tech space. There's a variety of reasons for pursuing different things. It could be specifically about acquiring a talent or team. It can be about acquiring a product or technology or in the best case, it's about acquiring all those things, plus the solid and growing customer base.

Dan Gingiss: I then asked him, which has had more of an effect on the customer experience for his existing clients after an acquisition, the technology they acquired or the people, and he said, "Definitely the people."

Joey Coleman: You know, it's so funny. It's always, always the people, but when you think of a corporate acquisition, you usually think of the product or technology being acquired. In fact, that's usually what is touted in the press releases and the marketing and sales speak. It's not, "Oh wait, we've added a bunch of quality team members to work on your project or your account or your service that we're delivering." Instead it's, "We've got this really cool new technology that's going to make it faster and louder and sleeker than ever before." Folks, it's not about the technology, it's about the people.

Dan Gingiss: I then asked Darren what the top priorities should be when making an acquisition.

Darren Hakeman: We had to make it really clear across the board, priority number one was about taking care of the existing customers and growing the existing business. Very often everyone gets very excited about a new acquisition and all the possibilities and what ... We wanted to make sure everyone stayed very focused on all the great stuff that was already in hand and this amazing customer base and continuing to take care of those customers as, as the team had been doing up to this.

Dan Gingiss: Darren went on to say that customers tend to be uncomfortable with change and they really hate uncertainty, so it's very important to communicate to customers on both sides of the transaction very quickly. Letting them know what's happening and that things won't be changing dramatically on day one. Importantly, he also said that, "There is a concerted effort to keep clients with the same account manager so that the human relationship stays intact."

Joey Coleman: I love this for so many reasons. First and foremost, pace yourselves. Humans don't like change and I understand there might be legal or regulatory or financial reasons why you want the acquisition to close quickly, but lots of times that energy and that excitement and the anticipation around closing the deal spills over into the first few days of onboarding the new clients and everybody feels rushed. As a general rule, human beings don't like change. They get nervous, they get anxious. This is going to be something new. It's something that they're unsure of. It brings back all the doubt and all the buyer's remorse that they had when they originally decided to do business with you. What I love about Darren's philosophy is that they focus on keeping a common point of contact, the same account manager, so that even though that account manager may have a different brand name on their business card, they may even report to a different office or have a different email. It's the same person because at the end of the day, even in a B2B environment, people don't do business with a business. People do business with people.

Dan Gingiss: I would say especially in a B2B environment. And I think one of the things that B2B companies often mess up is they use the salesperson to get the sale. And why does somebody buy? Because they like the salesperson because there's a human connection. And then the first thing that happens when they sign the contract, they yank the salesperson away so he can go sell to somebody else.

Joey Coleman: And you'll never see the sales person again. I mean literally you will never see the salesperson again.

Dan Gingiss: Exactly. You get handed off to a brand new account team and you have to start over from square one creating that doubt that buyer's remorse. So I think in a merger and acquisition transaction, this becomes even more important because the whole company name might be changing, the branding might be changing and customers are going to be nervous about this, but if they see that they're working with the same person, it's going to make them a lot more comfortable. Finally, I asked Darren, what are some of the key things that companies need to think about from a customer experience perspective when they enter into an M and A or merger and acquisition transaction? Here's his answer.

Darren Hakeman: So as companies enter into an M and A transaction, they really need to be focused on the customer experience and ensuring that they're ready to designate that as a priority. Because if it isn't, you know, doing an acquisition is extremely difficult and there are a lot that draw the attention in time of employees on both sides. If you're not really focused on that so absolutely critical that customer experience gets drawn out as a top priority, if not the number one priority. And it's something that needs to be repeated day in and day out. As your integration teams start to come together from both sides, they're going to be delving into the details of IT systems and the HR policies and accounting procedures.

And so without the daily mantra of take care of the customers, it can very easily be forgotten and to the team being acquired, but also to the acquiring team that may not have a full perspective of the challenges on the time of all the people in the new organization because it's typically a ... And they're running 120 miles an hour and so both sides need to be cognizant of this. It's really important, as you bring a new acquisition and that you ... The new team, that key part of their value is their customers and what they've been doing to make those customers so happy along as something they need to keep, keep pushing and their number one job and the rest will take care of itself.

Joey Coleman: The takeaway here is that when companies go through a merger or an acquisition, everything must come together. The products and the services, the employees, HR and finance and legal departments and the customers. Done right, the combination of two companies can have benefits for everyone involved, but it's critical to ensure that customer relationships don't fall through the cracks while everyone is paying attention on how to get the technology to line up.

START THE CONVERSATION: Avtex, IVR Modernization

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.

Dan Gingiss: This week's start the conversation topic is IVR modernization. Interactive voice response or IVR plays a critical role in many of today's interactions between customers and a brand's context. Center executed properly and IVR system can greatly streamline a customer's interaction and improve their perception of the experience, but done improperly and IVR can lead to additional customer and employee frustration. Think pounding zero with your finger over and over and over again. Can cause unnecessary confusion and negatively impact customer relationships.

Joey Coleman: In order to be effective, your IVR system must do the following things. Number one, be intuitive and easy to use. Number two, be clear and comprehensible by the customer, not your internal team who wrote the IVR. Number three, be consistent in options and call routing. Don't make me press eight this time and press four next time. Number four, be integrated with multiple departments and technologies and number five, be properly supported by knowledgeable agents during the interactions and technicians for ongoing maintenance and improvement.

Dan Gingiss: So I'm going to share something here that you may not know, Joey, because it really doesn't apply to our generation. There actually is a big part of the population that likes interacting with the interactive voice response system. We all think of it as being a pain in the neck, in the credit card industry, almost always the first choice to press one is to hear your balance. That's because it's usually the number one reason why people call and many people, many, many people hit one, hear their balance and hang up. So it actually prevents having to talk to an agent. That's when an IVR works well. When it doesn't work well is when the menu items have changed because they've always changed.

Joey Coleman: They're always changing, always.

Dan Gingiss: And we listened to nine choices and we can't figure out which one is actually what we're calling about. So we hit zero and I'm sorry there's nobody available to talk to you and we get into this mess where we feel like we're not being heard.

Joey Coleman: I absolutely agree and I think it also is the ones where you call in and there's a limited number of things you can do. Like press one to change your flight, press two to hear the weather report, press three to see how much baggage fees are. And you're like, "No, I wanted to find out if there was even a trip that I could take, wanted to book a flight or whatever." It's not even one of

the options and instead I'm left pounding zero. But regardless, I think it's time for this week's question about IVR modernization. Does our IVR system meet the needs and expectations of our customers? We encourage you to start the conversation within your own organization and then continue it with AV Techs at experienceconversations.com. That's www.experienceconversations.com

THIS JUST HAPPENED: Making the Most of the Line

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?

Dan? I think I may have determined the most overlooked customer experience at the typical retail establishment.

Dan Gingiss: I don't know Joey. There are so many.

Joey Coleman: Fair enough, fair enough. But this is one that I actually experience on a pretty regular basis that I think is a hot topic for discussion. What I'm talking about is the line. All too often companies make their customers stand in line. Want to place an order? Stand in line. Want to pick up your order? Stand in line. Want to pay for your order? Stand in line. Lines, lines, lines. They seem to be everywhere when you go into a brick and mortar establishment and in many ways I wonder if lines are partially the cause for the shift to more people shopping online, but I digress.

Dan Gingiss: This seems to be a topic that you're pretty worked up about Joey.

Joey Coleman: To be honest, I am because for a couple of reasons. Number one, I think it is a super easy thing to fix and I think it's something that most businesses are paying zero attention to. But to be honest, why I'm a little hyped up about it today is because in the last week I had what may have been my worst and my best line experiences in recent memory.

Dan Gingiss: I always like to end with the good news. So let's start with the worst and then we can feel a sense of progress when you get to the best.

Joey Coleman: I like it. I like it. So picture the scene. I'm flying to Halifax, Canada, and I get stranded in LaGuardia overnight.

Dan Gingiss: Not my favorite place to be stranded.

Joey Coleman: Oh my goodness. I'm getting choked up just thinking about it. Absolutely not the place to be stranded. I ended up needing to get a hotel. I need to come back the next morning for an early morning flight.

It has messed up my entire schedule. I get to the airport. I wasn't able to eat dinner the night before and I'd like to get some breakfast. So I'm waiting in line to get my breakfast sandwich. I get to the front of the line and I placed my order and the gentleman there hands me a little slip of paper that says my order on it and says, "Now you have to go pay for this. I said, "Okay." And I looked to my left and my right thinking, well of course I'll just shift over and pay right here. Au contraire, mon frère. Instead I was sent back about 40 feet to a line that looked like it ran from LaGuardia through JFK to somewhere near Montreal. Okay. And I go and I stand in this line. Now this line, snakes along the front of four or five different eating establishments that are all using the same bank of three cash registers.

Now this probably makes sense to the business because they own all of the eating establishment, but as the person eating this makes zero sense. So I stand in this line and I get closer and I get closer and I get closer and I finally pay to which the individual hands me another receipt showing that I had paid and encourages me to go back to where I ordered my breakfast sandwich to then get in line to pick up my breakfast sandwich. It was madness. No one knew what was going on. The customers were frustrated. The employees seem frustrated, but as of course, they're all having to explain this ridiculous line set up to every new customer and Oh, by the way, did I mention that this was at an airport? So guess what? There's pretty much new customers every single minute of every single day.

Dan Gingiss: Well, first of all, this sounds exactly like LaGuardia to me. If you had said, "What airport do you think this is?"

Joey Coleman: That's what it should've been? It should've been a guess this airport episode.

Dan Gingiss: Yes. However, if you are asking me to guess, just fun fact, you would have had to describe this a little bit differently because you may or may not know, but in New York they don't stand in line.

Joey Coleman: Oh, excuse me.

Dan Gingiss: They stand on line.

Joey Coleman: You are correct. My friend. I did misspeak. I was in New York so I was standing on line.

Dan Gingiss: So that sounds like a pretty ridiculous experience. I feel your pain. Let's get to the good experience though. What did that one look like?

Joey Coleman: All right, let me take some deep breaths here, calm down a little bit. So during this same week, I also had the chance to travel to the other side of the United States to California. I led a private workshop for a group of

business owners and after it ended, I met up with my good friend, Clay, Abear. We had dinner and I was going to fly out the next morning.

Well after dinner, clay suggested that we grabbed some ice cream at his favorite ice cream shop, Salt and Straw.

Dan Gingiss: That's a curious name for an ice cream place.

Joey Coleman: I have to admit, I too was intrigued and so I actually asked why it was named Salt And Straw. And as it turns out, they chose the name because their ice cream is handmade in small batches. The way they used to make ice cream back in the day. Ice cream was made by using rock salt to make it freeze and then it was packed in straw to keep it cold, hence Salt and Straw. And what I realized after seeing the name and experiencing the line at this store, it became very clear that they are all about thinking through the customer experience at every step along the way.

Dan Gingiss: I see what you did there.

Joey Coleman: You like that?

Dan Gingiss: It's a line. You said steps.

Joey Coleman: We tried to keep this exciting for you folks. All right, I'm glad you caught it. So here's what happened at Salt and Straw. When we walked up, there was a line that went down the street and around the corner. Now it was not as long as the line in LaGuardia, but it wasn't that much shorter. I mean it was probably three quarters of the length of the line from LaGuardia. So it was really long.

Dan Gingiss: And usually when I see a lot of this going down the street and around the corner, I just keep walking around the corner.

Joey Coleman: Me too. It's like, you know what? Life is too short. I'm not going to wait in line and I admit I was skeptical, but my buddy Clay was like, "Joey, this is worth it. We're going to stand in line." Because now we were on the West coast so we were in line and as usual Clay was so right.

First of all, the line moved very quickly. It wasn't as much that you were standing in line as you were walking in a line. Okay. Second, as you approached the door to the ice cream shop, there was a Salt and Straw employee there with a big smile welcoming everyone in and telling them, "You're getting close." They brought a little humor to it.

Dan Gingiss: I like it.

Joey Coleman: And this the line snaked through the store cause there was a line inside the store as well. There were signs on the walls and on the shelves that told the

story of Salt and Straw, their commitment to quality ingredients. The fact that at each of their seven West coast locations, they have at least one custom flavor, that you can only get in that store. The reason they like to be part of the local food community, it was amazing. So as I'm working my way up to order my ice cream, I'm being sold on the history and the story and the mission and the values of this ice cream shop. And with each shift forward in the line, I was able to read more about the story and get more excited about their commitment.

Dan Gingiss: Well thanks a lot Joey, because now I'm hungry for ice cream.

Joey Coleman: Yeah, sadly I did not bring samples to our recording session. But guess what? When I finally got to taste the ice cream, it was delicious and any memories of needing to wait in line faded faster than I could eat the ice cream. Interestingly enough, though, the story of Salt and Straw stayed with me long after the flavors of the ice cream had faded. By making the most of my time in line. Salt and Straw sold me on their story, their commitment and their reason for being in business. I became a fan while I waited - something that is completely contrary to the emotions one usually feels when waiting in line to purchase, pick up or pay for something.

Now, let's be candid. I'll fully acknowledge that businesses can't always eliminate the weight or the lines associated with using or experiencing their offerings. What they can do is make waiting in line an experience in and of itself. Tell your story, share your commitment, entice intrigue, educate, entertain, and before you know it, people will be standing in line and won't mind one bit.

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. Thanks again for your time and we'll see you next week for more Experience ...

Dan Gingiss: This.