

Experience This! Show Podcast
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Episode 92
Immersing the Customer in the Experience

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: Hold on to 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 an immersive experience meant to inspire creative design, one place where the robots may be meeting their demise, and how to improve the most maligned industry of all.

Dan Gingiss: Operatories, restaurants, and post offices, oh my.

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.

Experience This! Live - Benco CenterPoint

Dan Gingiss: Pittston, Pennsylvania, about two and a half hours northwest of Philadelphia. Tucked away in an industrial park, up a long driveway, past a large sculpture of a tooth, sits Benco Dental. The largest privately owned dental equipment and supplies distributor in the United States. Inside, among the corporate offices and the hundreds of historical dentistry artifacts from the owner's personal collection, sits CenterPoint Design. Home

to an incredibly immersive experience for Benco's dentist customers.

Dan Gingiss: CenterPoint is a showroom, one of three in the United States, featuring 25 fully equipped dental operatories. That's the little room patients go into to get their teeth cleaned or for other dental procedures. Dentists are invited to spend a day touring the facility to get design ideas and inspiration for their own dental offices. Whether they are just starting out or perhaps redesigning an existing practice. Melissa Sprau is a design manager at Benco Dental, and recently led me on the same tour she gives to dozens of dentists each year.

Melissa Sprau: Welcome to CenterPoint, we're so glad that you're here and that you made the trip. Believe it or not, here in little Pittston, Pennsylvania, we actually have the largest dental equipment showroom in the world. We're going to have a great day today and we encourage you to make yourself at home.

Dan Gingiss: Each of the operatories is filled with real dental equipment and supplies in order to replicate actual working conditions and help the dentists envision what a final design might look like.

Melissa Sprau: You'll see, as we're walking through the showroom, that we have our operatories set up in lots of different ways. You might even notice some redundancies in the equipment and the delivery systems. There's more than what you might need in your typical work day in each operatory. We do this on purpose. We do this so that you can get in and get comfortable, and position the equipment in exactly the way that you want to work. We want you to try it as if it's your own and really experience all of the different manufacturers, all of the different ways that you can set up a room, so that you leave here today feeling confident about the purchase that you're going to make.

Dan Gingiss: That purchase just might be the biggest purchase a dentist makes for his or her practice, which is why Benco wants to ensure that its clients are completely comfortable with the design before making the decision to buy. Benco sells

everything in the operatory, from the flooring tile to the box of exam gloves on the counter. Since every dentist is different, the showroom is meant to display all sorts of concepts, in a flexible manner that allows for mixing and matching

Melissa Sprau: To your patient, every operatory might look the same. They come in, they sit down in the chair, there's a light overhead. But to you as the dentist, you've got a lot of decisions to make. In addition to just the nuts and bolts of the equipment and where it's placed and how it affects your workflow, there's also flooring, wall covering, ambient lighting and task lighting, all of these different elements to consider. As you walk through our space today, take these things into consideration and notice that they're a little bit different in each of the rooms that we go to. We do that, purposely, to show you different approaches and really get you thinking bigger and thinking differently, and to show you all of the possibilities of the total aesthetic of the operatory, in addition to the functional elements of the operatory equipment.

Dan Gingiss: A stop at the design library allows the dentist to peruse hundreds of flooring samples, everything from carpet to vinyl tile to porcelain. There are also tons of wall coverings, ranging from fancy to fanciful, from upscale to made-for-kids. Everything is pre-qualified as appropriate for a commercial healthcare environment. And if a dentist doesn't see exactly the right design, Benco has a solution for that as well.

Melissa Sprau: This portion of our showroom is a whole lot of fun. This is what we call our Sandbox. It doesn't look like much. You'll see these are some nondescript white boxes. They're actually here to represent dental equipment. You can move and change the sizes of these boxes, they're on castors, you can wheel them around, and if you look down, you'll notice there's measuring tapes all along the floor. The goal is to get in, make yourself comfortable, move these boxes around, put them anywhere you want, manipulate the sizes and the positions, until you create the ideal operatory space for you.

Melissa Sprau: The rulers down on the floor are going to help guide you so that you can understand the dimensions of the room. When

we're all done and you have everything place exactly where you like, look up, there's a GoPro that's hanging from the ceiling. It's going to capture an image of the operatory layout that we've designed together so you know exactly the way you want to plan your space.

Dan Gingiss: Remarkably, Benco provides this experience free of charge, including travel, to dentists whom they know are looking to design or redesign an office. Why do they invest all this time, effort and money into prospective customers who may not even end up buying? Because they know that customer experience is their true differentiator.

Melissa Sprau: We're not just trying to make a one time big purchase and walk away. We care about their long term health and their long term success, as a business, and we want to give them the tools to support that. We make these deeper level connections with customers, where we're not just talking about how many operatories and what color to paint the walls, we're talking about, what do you want your patients to feel when they come in and what do you want them to remember when they leave? Or "Doctor, what do you want to do to differentiate yourself from the practice up the street? What makes you love what you do and how can we help show that to the world through the design of your practice?"

Dan Gingiss: The result is that most dentists, after immersing themselves in the CenterPoint experience, go from thinking they might want to create a new office design to knowing they have to in order to stay modern and relevant. When they're ready, Benco's team of commercial interior designers will help them sketch out the entire office, up to and including, where those boxes of gloves go. Live from Pittston, Pennsylvania, this is Dan Gingiss for Experience This! Live. Full disclosure, Benco Dental is one of my consulting clients.

CX PRESS - Robot-Run Restaurants

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.

Dan Gingiss: Today's CX Press is from Katie Canales at Business Insider. It's called, Some of San Francisco's Robot Run Restaurants are Failing. It could simply be that we still want to be served by humans, not machines. Now, if you'll remember back in season three, episode 64, we talked about a San Francisco outlet called Cafe X. I talk about this in my keynotes because it's a great example of a truly immersive experience. For those who don't remember, you walk into this coffee shop and there's actually no human beings. There are just kiosks where you can order your coffee and then a robot, that could only be described as a headless barista, makes your coffee and delivers it to you. It's really quite remarkable. Alas, in January, Cafe X closed its San Francisco locations, though its stations at San Francisco International Airport and San Jose Airport are still open. It's not the only robot casualty.

Dan Gingiss: Zume, known for its pizza making robots, shuttered its pizza business and pivoted into food truck technology and services in November 2019. And Eatsa Automat, where you could quickly order and then pick up your \$7 quinoa bowls, prepared behind the scenes by unseen employees, through futuristic pickup windows lined against the wall of the restaurant, closed as well in July 2019. As the article states, "There could be multiple reasons why some of them have flopped, but perhaps a straightforward explanation is that we're simply not ready to be served by robots in lieu of humans." Joey, what are your thoughts on this?

Joey Coleman: Oh, I've got a lot of thoughts on this. First of all, fascinated by this article because it tied directly back to something that we had talked about. Love that we're coming back to talk about Cafe X. In the world of how we think about things, we often talk about the difference between causation and correlation, I think it may be the case that all of these examples are restaurants, and restaurants close all the time. It's one of the hardest businesses, one of the most difficult industries to be involved in. While I appreciate that all of these

had robots, I am sure that we could find a dozen other restaurants, within 20 square miles of each of these locations, that also closed in the last few years.

Joey Coleman: Now that being said, I do think it brings us to a bigger discussion of, sometimes being the first mover means you're the first one to die as well. As we think about innovation and we think about adopting new technologies to enhance our customer experiences, sometimes it's actually better to wait a little bit and see how it works before you make large investments. Now that being said, I also think when you do that, you run the risk of creating a stagnant organization that is not innovative. I think there's some give and take balance here. How about you, Dan?

Dan Gingiss: Well, I, after visiting Cafe X, obviously thought it was really an interesting experience, which is why I wanted to talk about it on the show. But it also occurs to me, that we talk so much about customers today wanting to have a human interaction with the brands that they do business with, but I'm not sure that's true of every customer. I'm not sure it's true, for example, of introverts who may not want to have a human to human interaction with their barista. They may just want to walk in, like you can at Starbucks, pre-order, walk in, grab your coffee, leave and never have to talk to anyone. For them, a robot experience might be absolutely perfect because they don't have to say anything. I'm wondering if that's at play here as well.

Dan Gingiss: But I also go back to my theory on chatbots, which is, that chatbots should not replace the human customer service agent, they actually should be used to help the human agent do a better job servicing the customer. If you imagine a human agent sitting next to a supercomputer that's got every piece of data that they could ever want, instantly, it means that the agent can spend more time being human instead of clack, clack, clacking on their computer keyboard to find information. They can actually pay more attention to the conversation with the customer and be a better agent. I think that might be what's happening here, is that the answer may

be that these restaurants would not have failed if there was some human interaction to go along with the robot interaction.

Joey Coleman: I agree. I mean, I think two things about what you brought up there. Number one, the article does note that Cafe X kept its airport locations. What I think is interesting is in an airport scenario, it's probably more of that quick, give me my coffee, I don't need to have a big conversation with somebody because I'm running to the plane. Whereas, at a coffee shop, if I go to the shop to get my coffee, there's a higher likelihood that I want to sit down there and enjoy it and be part of the third place ambiance and that experience. When we think about the yes, and of robots and humans, combining both as opposed to canceling one out with the other, I'm also reminded of what happened when banks introduced ATMs.

Joey Coleman: When ATMs were first rolled out, a lot of people worried, this is the death of the teller. They aren't going to have staff anymore. The reality is, if you look at the number, banks, three years later after ATMs were rolled out, had more employees than they had before ATMs being introduced. The ATM became the thing that was for the simple transaction, hey, I just need some money for the weekend, I don't need to talk to a teller about that. But it freed up the tellers to have the more complex conversations about loans and opening new accounts and things like that. I think there's a piece here too, that it doesn't have to be, can we involve robots in our organization or AI or chatbots or technology solutions? Rather say, how can we augment our experience by adding those things?

Dan Gingiss: I mean, sometimes technology for technology's sake doesn't really get us anywhere. I mean, I've never been to the Eatsa Automat, but I can tell you from the picture in the article, it basically looks like a vending machine. There's a wall of little mailboxes-

Joey Coleman: What you might be familiar with as the very old technology of a vending machine, repackaged as robots making ... Well, I

don't remember many vending machines that had quinoa or however we want to say it.

Dan Gingiss: True. But essentially, it's the same concept. You put money in and you open a little slot and you take your food out. That's what it does. I don't know. I mean, I can see that being, especially in San Francisco where rents are really high, I mean, you could go with a much smaller footprint and what have you, I could see it potentially being a profitable business, but it only is a profitable business if you're delivering something that customers actually want. Obviously, the quality of the food still has to be there and what have you.

Dan Gingiss: I agree with you that this does focus on the restaurant industry, which may or may not be relevant, but I do think it's really interesting, and we felt that it was important for us to come back to this story because we did tout Cafe X as being really innovative and new, and again, I enjoyed the experience. So I think it is important for us to come back and say, "Hey, maybe it isn't working out exactly how they thought, but the airport thing may be a good solution." I think that Zume taking its pizza making robots and shifting a little bit into food trucks and other technology may be smart for them as well. This is something that we will keep an eye on.

Joey Coleman: I think, to be very clear, Cafe X did something really impressive. They did something impressive with technology that stood out to you, Dan, so much that you wanted to talk about it on the show. They still are doing something impressive with technology at their airport locations, it's just, they've closed their store location that you went to. I also want to encourage our listeners to realize that, the way you create lasting customer experiences, is to make bets on customer experiences that might not last. You have to be willing to try things. You have to be willing to innovate. You have to be willing to push the envelope a little.

Joey Coleman: Even if it doesn't work out, and that's okay. I think, all too often, most organizations play it safe and we don't want to try a new initiative unless we're 100% sure it will exist. Every organization should have a skunkworks. Every organization

should have a department that is devoted to figuring out creative, new, interesting technological solutions, that may or may not work in the long term, but in the short term will help us keep thinking. For now, the robots aren't totally in charge, but that doesn't mean they're gone.

AVTEX PARTNER SEGMENT

Joey Coleman: Be our guest, be our guest, because Avtex is the best. Folks, on June 21st through 24th, we are going to have a three day customer experience extravaganza in beautiful Orlando, Florida, with our good friends, Avtex, as they host Engage 2020. Can you feel the love tonight?

Dan Gingiss: That's right, folks. There's going to be activities throughout the park, including behind the curtain experiences at the happiest place on earth.

Joey Coleman: Beauty and the Beast. We're going to do a live episode on stage and you get to decide who's the beauty and who's the beast. Dan and I, a live episode of Experience This! from the stage at Avtex Engage 2020.

Joey Coleman: You should go, you should go, because you listen to the Experience This! Show. That's right, go to www.avtexengage.com and use this special, secret code, [Experience This 10 00:18:04], and save 10% off your tickets. We will see you in Orlando, Florida. June 21st to 24th for Avtex Engage 2020.

DISSECTING THE EXPERIENCE - CX in Government

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: We've covered a lot of industries here on the Experience This! Show, but why don't we haven't spent a lot of time on is the good old government. Now, we did have a love it, can't stand it on government agencies in episode 42, and we discussed the U.S. government shutdown in episode 59, but today we're

going to take a deeper dive into customer experience in government agencies, through a new report out from an Australian social media consultancy called Propel. The report is called, How to Enhance Citizen Experience with Social Media. Now, in full disclosure, I found out about this report because I'm actually quoted in it on the first page, where I say, "But for social media, we wouldn't be talking about customer experience."

Joey Coleman: Hang on a second, I can't let that one go. That's a bold statement. Care to expand on that a little more, Dan?

Dan Gingiss: Absolutely. I was, as you know, a marketer for more than 20 years and when I first got into social media, it was on the marketing side and I immediately realized that this was the first marketing channel where people could actually talk back to you. That changed everything. Social media gave customers a voice, a public voice, for the first time, and they use that voice to demand a better customer experience. I believe that, but for them being given the voice in social media, we probably wouldn't be talking about customer experience as much as we are today, because customers never had a way to express themselves in the past, at least not en masse.

Joey Coleman: I think, to me, and at the beginning I was like, Dan, I'm not sure I totally get it, but yes, en masse. I think customers could always complain. Customers could always say, "Hey, I don't like this, we'd like it to be better." They might even hold a little protest at a single location. But I will defer to you, Dan, and agree with you, listeners, I'm about to say something positive about social media hold on to your chairs. I agree with you that it allowed them to have a much bigger megaphone, on a global scale, and to bring people that weren't part of the initial interaction into the conversation.

Dan Gingiss: And to force change, is really what they did.

Joey Coleman: I definitely agree with that. Well, it's interesting, in the report, one of the things that I really thought was fascinating was this quote, "Without social media, government agencies would care far less about citizen experience. Until widespread

citizen adoption of platforms, like Facebook, Twitter, and online communities, agencies could largely control information flows and citizens had very few means to talk back." Now, I'd say that pretty much rings true. It also made the communication that citizens had with their government happen more often than every two or four years when there was an election.

Dan Gingiss: I reached out to Roger Christie, who is the managing director at Propel, a social media consultancy based in Australia that helps teams through strategy and training. They've done a lot of work with public and private sector clients in the Asia Pacific region, but what's different about them is that they focus on the people behind the platforms. Which is where their most recent report comes in. Here's Roger talking about the new report.

Roger Christie: We pulled the enhancing citizen experience via social media report together because we wanted to showcase the progressive, but often really, just the simple, valuable work being done across government agencies, both here in Australia and around the world of course. I think there's a general market perception that government is way behind the corporate sector in social media. But our experience, and certainly the examples in this report, show that that's definitely not the case. There's valuable lessons in here for both the public and private sectors.

Roger Christie: A lot of government agencies here are asking, how can we restore trust among citizens? Improving citizen experience actually has a lot to do with that, but I just don't think that we've really seen or heard the role that social media can play in improving citizen experience or building trust. But if you look back at the examples we've included in this report, the likes of NASA, the TSA, and even a gov client that we've worked with here in Australia, that they show how listening to citizens online, or even just providing basic responsive service via social media, can have an enormous impact on trust and deliver tangible value to the agencies themselves.

Roger Christie: Some of the key trends we've observed are, those who enjoyed greater success with social media don't actually hero social media. It's actually all about empowering citizens. Getting them involved or providing faster service for them. Social media is just simply a means to do that. Listening was also a common theme, those who embed social listening as BAU, have a stronger awareness of citizen needs and the knowledge to know where to help them most. Industry leaders also recognize the need to commit properly to social media. Not in a way that suits internal structures, existing structures or processes, but in a way that suits citizens.

Roger Christie: I think the TSA is a great example of that where, most sensitive or security conscious agencies would run a mile from social media, or at least limit their activities to broadcast communications. The TSA debunks that. It actually invites questions from the public and builds trust and rapport in doing so.

Dan Gingiss: The report looks at four case studies that demonstrate social media's potential to deepen citizen insights, deliver personalized, efficient service, and drive enhanced citizen satisfaction.

Joey Coleman: These are all definitely good things and the report offers four case study examples to illustrate how this works. The first case study is about NASA and how they empower citizens to solve problems in partnership. NASA uses social media to make space simple, relatable, and relevant to citizens, so it can crowdsource solutions to its biggest challenges.

Dan Gingiss: The second case study, which admittedly is not government, is KLM Airlines. Where, they resolve critical service blockages for customers. It explores how KLM uses social media to build trust and loyalty, an extensive business value, by being there for customers in the moments that matter most.

Joey Coleman: The third case study is our good friends at TSA, making citizens safety and security fast, fun and easy. TSA uses social media to humanize a traditionally serious topic and build, reach, trust and rapport with citizens.

Dan Gingiss: The fourth example is an Australian government agency that is driving industry investment via human connections. The report talks about how it uses social media to connect its people with industry prospects, and drive leads when institutional trust is low.

Joey Coleman: We could talk about all these case studies individually, and they're all very interesting, but what we'd love to do instead is cover the three key learnings and then tell you how you can get the full report. The first one is NASA. The three key learnings that came from this case study include, building social media communities with purpose and how NASA shows social media is not a vanity or numbers game. Each community is there to actually contribute. To give citizens a chance to participate and seek out those that are passionate about your space and find ways to empower them. Last but not least, to trust people online. NASA also equips their astronauts and staff to share authentic stories that will instill trust and credibility into NASA's mission.

Dan Gingiss: From the KLM case study, the three key learnings are, one, explore where social media can add value beyond its origins. It's easy to assume you've got social. Like KLM, keep looking for new opportunities. Two, continue listening to citizens. Their feedback is continuous and accessible via social media. Three, invest in technology when scale demands. Technology plays a key role for KLM social media operation, but it has the wins on the board to justify the investment.

Joey Coleman: When it comes to the TSA case study, there were three key learnings as well. Number one, humanize your agency. In a highly secure risk adverse environment, social media presents the TSA's human side. Number two, scale your service capabilities. The steady flow of questions and content, combined with social medias reach, drive service performance improvement. Last but not least number three, empower your people and citizens to contribute. Rather than avoiding engagement, stakeholders are thanked for sharing helpful questions and content with TSA.

Dan Gingiss: Finally, for the Australian government agency, the three key learnings. One, start with audience behaviors and insights. By analyzing business investor behaviors, the agency knew both brand and individual staff had key roles on social media. Two, ensure training and governance rigor. While industry subject matter experts, staff needed guidance to apply their skills and expertise online. Three, trust evidence over convention. In bucking the trend, the agency delivered a citizen aligned, award-winning result.

Dan Gingiss: To download your copy of the full report from Propel, How to Enhance Citizen Experience with Social Media, go to our website at www.experiencethisshow.com and we'll include a helpful link.

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!.