

Experience This! Show Podcast
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Episode 96

Discover How Intertwining the Old with the New Can Lead to Great CX

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. Always upbeat and definitely entertaining. Customer attention, expert Joey Coleman and social media expert Dan Gingiss serve as your hosts for a weekly dose of positive customer experience. So hold onto your headphones. It's time to Experience This!

Get ready for another episode of the experience, this show. Join us as we discuss the connected community of the future, a response to the robot invasion and paying for anything with one hand behind your back. City planning, flame fanning and Palm scanning. Oh my.

[CX Press] Woven City

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.

Joey: I've had the chance to watch a few episodes of the show Westworld, which is an interesting blend of fascinating and creepy, which is why I'm not surprised to see it referenced in the title of this episode, CXPRESS story. Our article was written by Lily Smith on fastcompany.com and is titled Toyota's Creepy New Prototype Town is a Real Life Westworld. The article describes plans for a prototype town which allows scientists and researchers to test an array of new technologies. From artificial intelligence to human mobility to robotics, material science, sustainable energy and autonomy. Everything can be experimented with in one controlled environment. Now folks, this isn't the stuff of science fiction. This is an actual town called Woven City and it's being built by Toyota

Motor Corporation and starchitect Bjarke Ingels and his team at BIG or Bjarke Ingels Group that our loyal listeners may recall. We talked about back on episode 47. They planned to break ground near Mount Fuji in 2021.

Dan: As if building this type of town wasn't interesting enough. Toyota has invited its employees and other tech curious individuals to move into this living laboratory as full time test subjects with an end goal of determining the future of the auto industry, urban planning and connected communities. Toyota gets to study and test autonomous technology and smart city infrastructure with their own people using their own technology as they try to corner the market on types of innovations.

Joey: It's a pretty ambitious plan, Dan and plans call for a 175 acre development on the site of a recently closed Toyota factory. So talk about using stuff that you already have and repurposing it into new experiences. They're going to have hydrogen power storage and water filtration systems underground that are paired with the system that autonomously delivers goods to the buildings above. So the goal is to focus on a connected digital sustainable ecosystem with power coming from photovoltaic panels on every roof and a hydrogen fuel cell generation system.

Dan: I'm sorry, did you say photovoltaic?

Joey: Photovoltaic panels, otherwise known in common parlance as solar panels.

Dan: Why can't we just say solar panels?

Joey: Because it's Toyota's PR release that says photovoltaic panels and they're also going to have in-home robotics. They're going to have sensor based AI that will automatically restock the fridge, take out your trash, check the health of the homeowner, like that amazing sushi restaurant. Maybe there'll be able to pair up with that we talked about at the beginning of this season. At the end of the day, Woven City is going to offer a high level of personalization, customization and convenience for the people that decide to make it their home.

Dan: I'm wondering if they can also get up and go to work in the morning and earn a paycheck and I can just lay on the couch all day. That sounds great.

Joey: I think it's going to be a really interesting place.

Dan: Well, Woven City also plans to have three types of roadways. One for fast moving autonomous vehicles. One for mixed use by pedestrian and personal vehicles like bikes and skateboards and one for pedestrians only. Toyota released a video showing an artistic rendering of Woven City that you can view on our show notes page for this episode at experiencethisshow.com. So Joey, you ready to move into Woven City?

Joey: I have to admit if I lived in Japan I would seriously consider it. It sounds like a fascinating place and as we've talked about in previous conversations, this whole idea of immersive experiences, I think not only changes how you interact with products and offerings that you might purchase or be a part of, but I think it actually expands your mind. I think living in Woven City would make you think bigger.

Joey: It would make you think in a more connected way and that sounds really appealing to me. What about you?

Dan: Yeah, I think it's interesting and one of the things I would look at is, I know it's described as an ecosystem, but I think that it doesn't necessarily mean that an AI robot that restocks your fridge is the technology we're going to end up with. It may inform something else or give an idea for some improvement that is the real end goal. And I think, this description sounds to me a little robotic and less sort of human than I want in my life. But yet, I think the outcome of it may be that there's a lot of things that could be taken care of in our lives that give us more time to read good books or be with friends or talk to customers or whatever it is that we don't have time to do.

Dan: So I'm very interested. Well, I don't think I'll be a participant. I'm very interested to see the outcome. It's like me watching survivor, one of my favorite shows. I don't think I'd ever want to be a participant, but I'm sure happy to view it and watch other people do it.

Joey: Sure. No, and I appreciate what you say about that human element and I realize the description that we shared from the article that the bill at the beginning definitely sounded like the emphasis was more on the

technology, but there's actually an underlying story here and that's that this city, Woven City is being built in Japan. Now what people that are listening to the show may or may not know about Japan is that it has the world's oldest population and it's aging very quickly. One third of the population is above the age of 60. One quarter is above the age of 65. One eighth is above the age of 75 and so when we think about the different needs of an aging population, most people default to a smaller solution like a nursing home or assisted living or a senior community. Woven City could offer all the benefits of community and convenience with less of the stigmatism associated with getting older.

Joey: And I think in some of the illustrations that they share in the video, they actually show multiple generations living in one home. And because of the technology and the connectivity and because of the safe streets with the autonomous cars, there's a lot more opportunity for people who may have some diminishing capabilities to still live a very rich and experience filled life.

Dan: Yeah, I think that's really interesting. And I'm reminded of an episode last season, episode 82 where we talked about the healthcare system in the United States and how it's failing seniors and the senior population also is exploding here in the US and I think that there's no question that going forward, especially with another giant population in the millennials coming behind us, Joey. That solving the senior lifestyle and making sure that we can take care of our seniors and in a dignified way is one of the key world problems right now. And so that'll be fascinating to see how they can accomplish that with technologies.

Joey: Yeah. So I think it's really interesting that there are layers upon layers of this conversation. And to add another one, I think it's also interesting to note that the buildings in Woven City are going to be made mostly of wood, so as to minimize the carbon footprint. They plan to use traditional Japanese wood joinery combined with robotic production methods. So in a way, this entire project attempts to marry the traditional old ways with modern innovative execution to create this fully sustainable environment.

Joey: And while it's certainly too early to tell, these types of projects will likely become more and more common around the world as companies and governments and communities try to figure out how to navigate a rapidly innovative world that still needs to accommodate a variety of

different demographics of humans. Would your company be a good fit to have an office in Woven City? Would your employees like to live in Woven City? The more we can plan and envision the future, the easier it will be to make that transition in the years and decades to come.

[This Just Happened] Humans Vs AI

We love telling stories and sharing key insights you can implement or avoid based on our experiences. Can you believe that this just happened?

Joey: I was walking through the airport the other day and-

Dan: Shocker Joey it must have been a day that ended in y.

Joey: Yes, exactly. Fair enough. And I came across an advertisement that was about six feet tall and 10 feet wide. Basically it was one of those light up billboards in the airport. And I must confess that usually I don't pay that much attention to airport ads, but this one caught my eye and the reason it caught my eye is because in some ways it's the first evidence, at least that I've seen in the marketplace as opposed to hearing about from consumers, that going the opposite direction can be a clear differentiator when it comes to the discussion of humans versus robots.

Joey: Now I feel like most internal business conversations, at least that I've been in in the last year, have found me talking to companies that want to increase automation. They want to incorporate more chatbots, they want to stand up AI capabilities and in no uncertain terms, figure out ways to get more robots working for them. But this ad for FirstBank was different. It showed a collection of over a hundred robots with a caption that said, find the real human. The subheading went on to say or just call FirstBank to get local 24/7 customer support with a real human.

Dan: I love it. That's a shot across the bow from FirstBank.

Joey: It is.

Dan: And I think it's pointing out, it's playing to people's fears, frankly, a little bit that the robots are not just coming, but that they're going to take over and take everybody's jobs away.

Joey: Right. And I think there's also another layer of it that not only is it going to take your job away, but you're not going to like interacting with the robot as much as you like interacting with a human. So it's almost two fears. It's the fear of what if I lose my job and the fear of what if I don't lose my job, but all the other people I deal with lose their jobs and now all I have to interact with is robots.

Dan: Yeah, I agree. And I think this is a conundrum that many companies are facing. In particular, some of the early movers felt that chatbots and robots were going to take over and that this was a cost saving exercise. Hey, we can fire our entire customer service team if we just have the robots take over. I think they quickly figured out that that was not a real good idea because first of all, consumers are not ready for that yet. They want a human interaction. People I think are more than willing to use an automated chatbot when it's a question that can be answered by an automated chatbot and lots of questions can. But as consumer issues become more complex or emotional, we often need a human on the other end to help us and so that handoff between robot and human becomes absolutely critical and teaching the robots to know when their time is up and when it's time to pass it along is I think one of the key techniques that some of the early movers forgot to pay attention to.

Joey: Well it's funny that you say that, Dan, because at an airport later that week I saw another FirstBank ad that speaks to this point. It was about the same size as the first one and it showed a large complicated maze with an icon representing a human in the middle. And the sign read, it shouldn't be this hard to get a real human for help. It continued with that same call FirstBank to get local 24/7 customer support with a real human. Now for what it's worth, you can see pictures of these two ads that I've been describing over at our show notes page for this episode on experiencethisshow.com and the two ads while I should have expected would be coming, to be honest, really surprised me. I think so many businesses are focused on increasing their technology solution that it's really fascinating to see a business doubling down in a large and prominent way on their human solution.

Dan: And I think the thing that is so important here is we talk all the time about customer experience being the last true differentiator. One of the reasons it's the last true differentiator is because it's delivered by your company's humans. And your company's humans are unique. Nobody else has your company's humans. So that's why experience can be the thing that you stand on to be different from everybody else.

Dan: And I think FirstBank is noticing that and is saying, look when you call one of our branches, or when you call our 800 number, you're going to talk to one of our humans. First of all, you're going to talk to a human. And that's a differentiator. But then also you're going to talk to one of our humans. And presumably it's not just about getting a human agent. It's about getting a human agent who's empathetic and who can resolve your problems and who's going to be friendly and all that sort of stuff. So I think it's a fascinating way to stand out from the crowd from a marketing perspective by really going against the grain and calling out some of these companies that again immediately saw robots and artificial intelligence as a cost saving measure, which is usually a big red flag when it comes to customer experience.

Joey: I agree, Dan. It's interesting that you mentioned empathetic humans. I have the pleasure of being friends with some of the top researchers and entrepreneurs that are developing AI solutions. And one of the questions I always ask them when we hang out is, well what's the thing we're not going to be able to teach AI? And across the board the consensus answer. And it's not that we'll never be able to do it, but that it's going to be the hardest thing to do is to teach AI empathy.

Dan: And that's also the across the board answer on what is the most important factor in hiring a customer service agent.

Joey: Exactly, exactly. And so I think there's this really interesting mix of experience being the differentiator now. I think there's the possibility that within the next 10 years, the definition of what's the best way to differentiate your company will not be answered with the word experience as much as it will be answered with the word empathy, which will be tied into experience and it'll be part of the experience. But that kind of ever evolving and fine tuning of the messaging around the concept of empathy, I think is really coming.

Joey: So in the final analysis, should you seek out the chatbots and AI or stick with the humans? Well, I really don't think, and I think Dan, you're on the same page, that this is an either or scenario. I think the best companies will end up incorporating both solutions when it comes to delivering customer support, but I do think there's an opportunity to make a bold move and decide if you want to stand out from the crowd by doing something that everyone else might see as bucking the trend. Often the best way to get attention for yourself is to do something very different than everyone else and draw attention in the process.

[CX Press] Amazon Pay by Hand

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: when it comes time to pay for something with a credit card, you can use a regular plastic card or some of the new metal credit cards. A virtual credit card, a phone that acts like a credit card. A watch that acts like a credit card, but what if you could just use your hand?

Joey: That sounds a little bit crazy, Dan but Amazon thinks it could work. Today's CX PRESS comes from a wall street journal article by Anna Maria Andreatta. It's titled Cash, Plastic Or Hand? Amazon Envisions Paying with a Wave. The article outlines Amazon's efforts to develop checkout terminals that would be placed in bricks and mortar stores. Shoppers would link their credit card information to their hands and then pay for purchases with the palm of their hand. Without having to pull out a physical card or their phone, they would put their hand on a scanner and their purchase would be paid for.

Dan: So I love this in concept, but I'm one of these guys that uses the self checkouts in the grocery store even though pretty much every time I have to call somebody because it doesn't read the barcode, it doesn't like that I didn't place the item in the right place. So now they're expecting this to be able to read my hand.

Joey: Right. I agreed that the technological challenges are definitely there, but I also think this makes sense for two key reasons. One, there are many coffee shops and fast food restaurants and other merchants that do a lot of repeat business with customers that are the same customer and they would certainly like to make it more convenient for everyone involved. In addition, it seems like all of the big four Apple, Google, Facebook and Amazon are constantly looking for ways to integrate themselves into their customer's financial lives. I mean Apple rolled out their own credit card last year. Google is offering checking accounts. Now Facebook's working on its own cryptocurrency and now Amazon, which already has a branded credit card is trying to integrate with you physically.

Dan: Well and I think if you look a little bit farther here, you see companies like Starbucks for example, have been working on technology for years that would allow a barista to know your order, your regular order as soon as you walk in the door. So if you think about this hand print or palm print, if that's able to store credit card information, it's able to store a whole lot of other information as well, such as Dan's coffee orders so that by the time he reaches the counter they're already making or maybe have already finished making his drink.

Joey: Exactly. And I think the possibilities for applying this type of technology are pretty endless in that regard.

Dan: Yeah, and obviously this is not shocking that Amazon is working on innovation because it seems to happen all the time. Back in episode 69 I shared my experience with the Amazon Go store where I was able to take items off the shelf and leave just by walking through a gate, never scanning anything, never paying anything and then getting charged via the app. And it worked amazingly well.

Joey: Yeah, and I mean I think what's fascinating about this, Dan, is it's all happening so quickly on such a large scale that many of the credit card companies, some financial institutions are trying to figure out whether these tech giants that are leading this innovation intend to be collaborators or competitors. And to be honest, I'm not 100% sure that the tech companies have decided yet which role they're going to play. As the article notes, most parties involved in these conversations think that it is quote, safer to participate in big Tex payment ambitions than

risk being left out. Either way, it's not surprising that it's happening and as Wall Street Journal finance reporter Liz Hoffman notes.

Liz Hoffman: It's really about data. When a company like Apple or Google processes a payment for you, they find out a lot about you. They know what you bought, where you bought it, what time of the day or what day of the month you're likely to spend money and that's really valuable information for advertisers.

Joey: Now imagine a scenario where Amazon would integrate an individual consumer's credit card purchase data with the consumer's amazon.com spending habits. This could give Amazon more leverage to charge higher prices to advertisers based on the idea that they can predict better than anyone else what individual customers are likely to buy.

Dan: The amount of data that's already collected coupled with almost daily increases is absolutely staggering. Juniper Research estimates by the end of 2020 over 100 million people worldwide will use Google Pay and over 227 million people worldwide will be using Apple Pay. This represents almost a doubling in users for each of these tech giants since 2018.

Joey: Yeah, it's growing so fast, but it's not just all about the Benjamins, it's about the privacy as well. Each of these tech companies is playing in the financial space and they need to win over customers who are wary of providing even more personal information while also navigating a climate where regulators are increasingly skeptical of big tech at least as it relates to customer privacy and data.

Dan: I wonder why?

Joey: I wonder why, it's so weird. I mean for years we've trusted credit card companies and banks with our financial data and tech companies now have started to come in and collect that personal data. Frankly, before most of us even realized what was happening and then they use that data in ways that were, well, let's at the very least say unsavory and at times, frankly, abysmal. And as this behavior spills into financial data. It's not hard to imagine that these tech companies may be less than trustworthy when we examine their intentions for using our information.

Dan: Yeah, well and having worked in financial services for almost 15 years of my career. I can say that it is one of the most highly regulated

industries and this becomes one of the challenges that the tech companies have. A lot of them are trying not to be listed as banks so that they're not under some of these regulations, I remember even when we were bringing on new vendors at a financial services company. The hoops that they had to jump through to pass all the security tests and the risk tests and all this, literally people from our company going out to physically inspect warehouses or office spaces, making sure that there're cameras and locks on the door and all that.

Dan: There were vendors that said, "We can't do this. We're going to go focus on another industry" because the requirements were so much higher than any other industry. So it'll be interesting to see, granted the tech companies have plenty of money. But it'll be interesting to see how they handle not just the privacy laws but all of the regulations around handling money and being financial instruments.

Joey: Yeah, and if past behavior is an indicator of future performance, the tech companies aren't going to be excited about this. They push back strongly at the thought of any regulation and the very nature of entrepreneurial innovative endeavors, they're rule breakers. They want to change, they want to do things differently, they want to go fast, they don't want to slow down. And we see this even in the patent filings that large companies are doing. Amazon recently filed a patent application for a non contact biometric identification system that includes a hand scanner that generates images of a users and as companies invest to build out tech for these type of initiatives. Sometimes you can get an idea of where they're headed before the official announcements are made, which is where this story comes from.

Dan: I think one of the other challenges that these tech companies is going to face is the retail establishment's reluctance to adopt new technology. This even happened as the credit card industry as a whole moved to chip cards from swipe cards. It took so long in the United States to make that move, whereas-

Joey: It's still not done. The number of times I walk into a place and I've got a chip in my card-

Dan: no chip.

Joey: And they've got a post it note that is taped onto the terminal that says no chips, swipe. It's like seriously what, it's 2020 what are we doing here?

Dan: Yeah. So I think it's going to take a long time to get them to adopt this technology as well. And also, I mean my son, since he doesn't have a credit card yet, when he's out with friends, likes places that take Apple pay but he's very frustrated at how few places do. So even some of this technology that's been around for a while, like paying with your phone, you can't just assume that you can walk out of your house without a wallet.

Joey: Well, and when we think as you pointed out, when we think about the retail establishments. How excited are they going to be to have Amazon in their store as a payment method? I don't know if a store owner is going to be thrilled that somebody who walked in and purchased there is going to be reminded when they pay by scanning their palm, that they could have purchased the same item on Amazon and when Amazon now knows what they purchased and sends me an email that says, "Hey, you paid \$10 for this today, but if you were to purchased it on Amazon, we could deliver it to you in two hours. You'd never leave your house and you'd only pay \$7", guess what? I'm going to shop on Amazon going forward.

Joey: So I think we're left with a couple of questions. How are you using technology to learn more about your customers? How are you gathering data to make better predictions about what your customers want and don't want to purchase? How are you going to adapt to the changing expectations of your customers, not only in terms of what they want for their products and services, but in terms of how they want to pay for your offerings? Raise your hand if you're feeling overwhelmed. Raise your hand if you're excited. Now, raise your hand if you just want to pay for your item and leave the store.

Wow. Thanks for joining us for another episode of Experience This!, 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. 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
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