



Show Your Personality

A Differentiated Customer Experience

In this dog-eat-dog environment we call the marketplace, it becomes ever more critical to set yourself apart from your competition. Products can easily be copied – or even leap frogged with better ones. But a superior customer experience is much more difficult for competitors to replicate, and much harder for clients to give up, because the customer experience is a combination of product, behavior, and reliability. The customer experience, in total, is emotional – it's not just the customer's bottom-line that benefits; rather every user benefits from a great customer experience. And if that experience is great enough, users will want to come back again, and again, and again.

So you're sold on the idea of a superior customer experience. How do you understand what your customer experience is now – and what it needs to be to set it apart from others? "Customer experience" sounds good, but what does it really look like? And how do you understand what your customer experience looks like?

Ironically, it's as easy as asking your customers. Interview them, talk to them, let them tell you what their experience has been and how to make it better. Using that as your foundation, dream even bigger to a point of arrival. Then ask your customers again. Would this experience that you've mapped out be a "superior" experience? If not, why not? If so, is there anything else missing that would make it even better? Sometimes you need to spur ideas, probe more intensely, to get beyond the five-second, top-of-mind answer. So stick with it. Continue to ask questions, get clarification, and discover as much as you can from your clients. You may be surprised what they tell you.

Why should you deeply care about your customer experience? There are significant benefits to your company resulting from delivery of a superior customer experience:

- * Bottom-line – customers will pay for more a consistently great customer experience, especially important in today's environment when slashing prices and fees seems to be the norm.
- * Advocacy – customers will go beyond loyalty to proactive advocacy, where they voluntarily create a buzz about you and your offering.
- * Brand equity – a great customer experience will significantly build the recognition and respect of your brand promise.

Ultimately, investing in the customer experience will deliver not only immediate, short-term results, which you may need right now, but also long-term results that will become the foundation of your reputation, your customer relationships, and your brand.