

CONSIDERING THE ENTIRE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE IN DESIGN:

Contemplating all possible touch points to optimize your audience's interactions

Amy Cueva, Founder, Chief Experience Officer at Mad*Pow

EXPERIENCE DESIGN IS THE DISCIPLINE DEDICATED TO ARCHITECTING MULTI-CHANNEL INTERACTIONS WITH A BRAND THAT SATISFY USER NEEDS AND CREATE BUSINESS RESULTS.

Every day, you keep or lose customers because of what may seem like insignificant experiences they have with your company. Consider the numerous touch points and channels that represent opportunities to interact with your brand. What type of experience will your customers have today? Will their loyalty be cemented because of a helpful customer service call, or will a frustrating online experience drive them into the arms of a competitor?

ENTER EXPERIENCE DESIGN.

Experience design is the discipline dedicated to architecting multi-channel interactions with a brand that satisfy user needs and create business results.

Imagine a company that determines their average cost per online transaction is much less than their average cost per phone transaction. As a result, management decides to launch a channel migration initiative. The first course of action may be to incorporate self-service functionality on the website that enables customers to conduct their own transactions online. While this tactic may help, by itself it is unlikely to maximize the return on investment, as the broader, multi-channel needs of customers may still not be satisfied. To gain the full benefit from channel migration, all customer touch points must be considered, designed, adjusted and evolved. Sources of frustration and inquiry need to be

investigated. The reasons why customers pick up the phone and call customer service must be identified. Only by analyzing the possible interactions and re-architecting experiences in a comprehensive manner will the company maximize the value for both the business and customers.

Multi-channel experience design is accomplished via thoughtfully created flow diagrams, which can resemble a storyboard, comic strip, or even a screenplay. These diagrams demonstrate how technology could weave its way into a person's actual context of use. They are informed by analytically-oriented activities, including audience segmentation, persona development, customer surveys, contextual inquiry, ethnography, market research, heuristic analysis and usability testing, all of which yield insights about customers. The diagrams represent the creative, solution-oriented thinking necessary to balance customer goals with business objectives while taking technical considerations and limitations into account. In our channel migration example above, a diagram might follow a person through the experience of receiving a communication, calling the call center, and then visiting a website to follow up. The goal of each scenario is to identify ways to push a key performance indicator in a desirable direction, while increasing the likelihood of customer satisfaction and retention.

(continued on reverse.)

Does your company need to enhance its focus on cross-channel experience design? The following are some signs of an opportunity for improvement:

- Your marketing, sales, technology and operational divisions all have their own approach to meeting customer goals, with little collaboration on best practices.
- You are unsure how people get to your website or where they drop off, why people call the call center when they could have easily gone online, which emails are going to which prospects/customers, and how particular activities move your key performance indicators.
- Your company's account statements and printed materials have not been redesigned in years.
- Your designers have never stepped foot in your call center, spoken with sales staff, technology experts, product managers or marketing directors.

Experience design may not yet be understood within your organization - its value may not be clear, or customer experience may not be a focus. However, all is not lost. There are ways to integrate cross-channel experience design thinking into your company:

- Organically form a multi-disciplinary "customer experience" team, with volunteers from sales, marketing, technology, finance and operations.

- Make experience design a staff member's responsibility or area of focus.
- Hire an experience design firm to build a governance strategy and process that you can "grow into" as a future approach.
- During your next design initiative for a channel, consider what could happen before or after a customer's experience across other channels. Ask questions which drive thinking in that regard.
- Perhaps most important, talk to your customers.

Traditionally, responsibilities for printed company collateral, advertising, web design and outbound email communications have resided in marketing; account statement creation and call center management in operations; and application interface design and product design in technology. When individual departments are responsible for their own area, the experience that links all customer touch points together is not considered holistically. A focus on experience design can provide your company with the system, practice, and approach to ensure that all customer touch points "hang together" in a meaningful way, maximizing customer retention and satisfaction.

A FOCUS ON EXPERIENCE DESIGN CAN PROVIDE YOUR COMPANY WITH THE SYSTEM, PRACTICE, AND APPROACH TO ENSURE THAT ALL CUSTOMER TOUCH POINTS "HANG TOGETHER" IN A MEANINGFUL WAY, MAXIMIZING CUSTOMER RETENTION AND SATISFACTION.