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What is your "signature move" that puts a smile on your customers' and employees' faces? Do you have a bowl of candy on your desk for your customers or your team mates? Do you surprise them with random, unexpected, celebrations for their success?

This is the perfect time of year to raise the bar on your customer experience and employee engagement. And, as you make the trek to work out of town or visit family this holiday, be sure to check out the tips to beat the dreaded jet lag!

Happy Holidays!

Kristin

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BE THE ARCHITECT OF CREATING EXCEPTIONAL CUSTOMER EXPERIENCES

For the last decade, improving the customer experience (CX) has been gaining momentum in strategic discussions at all levels of the organization. In those discussions, we typically talk about four levels of expectations:

1. At the very least, there are minimum threshold expectations that every customer expects when receiving a product and/or service. Regardless of whom they buy it from, they, at the very minimum, expect that item to work! They inherently expect a certain degree of quality, reliability, accuracy, on-time delivery, etc.
2. From this baseline, most companies craft a set of brand standards. These are the minimum expectations the customer should experience when interacting with their brand. Typically, these brand standards include the minimum threshold expectations for that category as well as any factors that will differentiate that brand from the competition. Many brands have explicitly codified these standards in some kind of document and also measure performance against these standards. For example, the Doubletree hotel offers a yummy cookie upon check-in at ALL Doubletree hotels. No other Hilton hotel has that brand standard!
3. But it gets even better: When the brand decides to offer a new experience on a constant, routine basis, then that organization is raising the bar. For example, just a few years ago, a luxury car dealership would only provide a loaner car when the highest end models came in for servicing. Now, the expectation is that every customer at a luxury car dealership gets a loaner car!

Threshold expectations, brand standards, and raising the bar are strategies that must be decided at the leadership level. There is usually a cost incurred (money, manpower, materials) that affect the smooth operations of the business. These strategies should be consistent with the brand story and deepen the position the business wants to have in the marketplace. Simply put, they need to make sense. Otherwise, the employees won't buy it and the customers won't either!

Although leadership can dictate the standards, the execution of these strategies occurs with each and every employee. They not only need to know the standards, yet more importantly, WHY these standards are so important to deepening the relationship with the customer. Otherwise, the employee can think, "Hey, you should be grateful that we are able to put you in a loaner car at all! Don't start whining about the fact that I can't put you in the same (or better) model!" And if I don't get that chocolate chip cookie at check-in, I can be one grumpy customer!

So here's where it gets interesting. Real customer delight comes from an employee doing something special for a customer beyond the brand standards. Something random. Not expected. A surprise that puts a smile on their face. Make them feel special. And that, my friends, comes from an employee choosing to make a difference in the life of one customer.

In Chip and Dan Heath's book, [The Power of Moments](#), they suggest you "spot the occasions worthy of your investment." Typically, these are peaks (celebrate the highs!), pits (empathize with the lows), and transition points (new chapters) in your life. If you ask questions to build a relationship and remember their answers, you'll be able to create an exceptional experience.

What kind of experiences?

- **Over the Top.** Take a typical task and boost the sensory appeal. Turn up the volume. Pull out the stops. Make it Instagram-worthy! (Not that they have to pull out their smartphone/camera, but would someone want to when you do something special for a customer?)
 - **Break the Script.** The customer expects a typical business to zig, and you decide you are going to zag. Do it differently. Do it so that it makes it even better for the customer.
 - **Celebrate Success.** Notice what's happening in their lives and spontaneously recognize their achievements. And when you are not face-to-face, subscribe to a social media aggregator that alerts you to your customers' posts or when they are mentioned on the web. (P.S. don't over-use this strategy or you'll look like a stalker!)
 - **Create Deeper Connection.** Sometimes, it's not about the peaks. Sometimes, you're in the pits, or having a problem. Can you help them out? At least make them feel they are not alone?
4. These are **random acts of kindness**. Not expected. Not routine. Done simply because the employee genuinely values and appreciates that customer. The Heath Brothers encourage you to be "occasionally remarkable." Set the goal for doing something special for one customer every day. When you get that down pat, up the ante and make it two a day! Create your own [SOS Locker](#) to make it easier for you to delight the customer!
5. But then again, why settle for "occasionally remarkable"? Think about developing a **signature interaction** – a specific activity that one employee does for each and every customer in order to put a smile on their faces. [Barbara Glanz](#) has a legendary story of "Johnny the Bagger" – a young man with down syndrome who placed a "thought of the day" in each grocery bag. An always-full bowl of M&M's on your desk. Helium balloons with ribbons for every child.
- How can you delight the customer? Are you simply executing to the brand standards, or

raising the bar with a random or a signature interaction?

JET LAG REMEDIES FOR HOLIDAY AND BUSINESS TRAVEL By Joseph Sherren

Now that the weather is turning colder, many of us are planning to travel somewhere warm. Others will be traveling globally for both pleasure and business, but no one wants their visit to be spoiled by jet lag.

I know many people think traveling is a pleasure. However, after a few trips and experiencing the reality of canceled flights, uncomfortable plane seats, missed connections, being stranded in airports, they come to realize that it is not all that glamorous. Then, after you land, you're hit with one of the worst parts of traveling - jet lag that leaves people disoriented and drained.

Each year I fly all over the world to speak and lead seminars. Destinations include: Europe, Middle East, Australia, Asia, and Africa, often crossing seven, eight, and even fifteen time zones. However, very seldom do I experience significant jet lag.

Medical researchers have studied the effects of jet lag for years. They concluded that traveling long distances in pressurized aircrafts, combined with the complete time change the body goes through, results in the human system becoming disoriented. It can require as much as a day to recover from each time zone change. For instance, if you flew from Toronto to Singapore, you might require 15 days before your mind and body are functioning effectively.

The good news is, jet lag can be minimized by using the following system I adapted from a formula initially created by my friend, [Brian Tracy](#). Start by taking melatonin, or a jet lag formula, at your normal bedtime a few days before your flight and continue until your trip is finished.

Your body loses about one pint of water per hour when flying. To stay hydrated, drink one pint for every hour you are in the air. Take a large bottle of water on the plane, or ask the flight attendant to keep your water glass filled.

Live into your destination time zone prior to departure. To achieve this, resist the natural tendency to sleep as soon as your plane departs. After arriving at your hotel, take off your shoes. This will ground and connect you with the natural rhythm of the earth's rotation at the point on the globe you are at.

If you arrive during the night, go outside and watch the sun come up. If you arrive during the day go outside and watch the sun go down. This serves to speed up the harmonization of your circadian rhythm.

One of the most important things to do after arriving is to fill a bath with water as hot as you can tolerate. Then, sit in the hot water five minutes for every hour of time change.

If you arrive in the morning, schedule your hot bath for later in the afternoon or evening. After the bath, it will take about the same length of time to completely cool down. If you take a bath during the day, afterward take a one-hour nap. Because the hot water will have relaxed your muscles, you will sleep deeply for this hour and wake up refreshed.

Even if you are not a coffee drinker, have one or two cups after waking up — especially the first couple of days after you arrive. This will also help stimulate the adjustment of your circadian rhythm.

Athletes arrive at their destination weeks prior to competing so they can be at peak performance. You should also be at maximum performance for your client. I try to arrive at least three days prior to my engagement. I find that if necessary, I can work the day I arrive. But, the second day can be a total fog if I don't follow this formula.

My question for travelers this week is:

Do you have a procedure to ensure a productive trip and arriving home refreshed?

4 ROLES TO CAST WHEN SELECTING PANELISTS

Some words of wisdom from fellow professional panel moderator, [Brian Walter](#): If you are in charge of the panel you want to "cast for contrast." And I am very deliberate about these words. You are "casting" a panel. You are creating a scene, a 'panelesque,' a movie. So you want different characters instead of everybody being the same.

Here are four roles you want to cast for:

1. **The Sage.** The sage is a combination of Dr. Phil, Judge Judy and Yoda all mixed together. It also helps if they're also incredibly attractive because we are judgmental society!
2. **The Relator.** The relator is someone just like you, only more successful or at least slightly more successful than you are. The audience is going to relate to them because they are thinking, "Oh my gosh, he or she is just like me!"
3. **The Exotic.** You want someone who is different, who will bring a unique perspective. The audience will be thinking, "I never thought of it like that before. That's interesting..."
4. **The Wild Man/Woman.** You want to have someone up there that people have no idea what's going to come out of their mouth next. It could be exciting. It could be insightful. It could be irreverent. It could be naughty. You don't actually know, so every time they speak, it's like "What's going to happen?"

When you cast for these four roles, making sure you have [D.E.E.P.](#) panelists, you're sure to have a winning panel discussion!

FROM THE BOOKSHELF: DESIGN THE BEST YEAR OF YOUR LIFE

I was recently facilitating a mastermind group of entrepreneurs and one of the topics for discussion was about "designing the best year of your life." This noble aspiration captured my attention since Joe and I have been "homeless" waiting for our new house in Scottsdale for the last three months. (See our new mailing address in the footer of this newsletter!)

In the meantime, I typically share the book I am reading in my monthly newsletter...when I smashed up the two ideas into one. This month's "From the Bookshelf" is a book written BY YOU and FOR YOU. It's a stream of consciousness prose piece about 2018 as the best year of your life.

Find a book with blank pages (I have a bazillion from conferences, but you can also find them at your local stationary store or big box office supply store), and find some quiet time to simply write down what would make 2018 your best year ever. Put it away for a day or so. Pull it out again. Read what you wrote and add to it. Put it away again and then pull it out again. Rinse and repeat until you are fairly sure you have written everything there is to say about the best year EVER.

Then, look at the themes. What you are already doing. What you want to do but are not. Put a plan together to create your best year EVER using your book on the bookshelf!

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