Experience design thinking: Using tourists, fish and maps

By Simon de Haast

I previously wrote about how metaphors and framing can give us creative super-powers by borrowing from one domain and applying the different meaning to another. Here's another super-power for strategy teams: the ability to see sooner.

Image source: You X Ventures via Unsplash.com.

Jumping into the world of modern marketing, brand experiences are often designed and structured by internal teams. Just look at how brands websites' information architectures are geared around products or services yet remain disconnected from how brand 'promises' are actually delivered. This is in spite of brands calling themselves customer-centric.

Outside-in design

Experience design is a process that helps organisations craft customer experiences which turn consumers into lifelong fans and advocates. The key shift is in inverting the organisation's inside-out view of the world from products, processes, and internal efficiencies, to solving real customer problems and meeting their functional and emotional job-to-be-done needs. And it's really not rocket science.

The phrase "outside-in design" assists in grounding this concept. How could we re-imagine the setup and execution of an organisation if it was designed from the perspective of customers? Beyond simply removing points of friction in customer care (seriously, can we start using live-chat already), if employee tools, systems, and processes were designed around the delivery and articulation of what a customer-focused business looks like, we'd have more inspired staff, less churn, more referrals, and much higher customer lifetime value.

However, herein lies the problem. Organisations are structured to service today's revenue, with budgets, targets, and KPIs reinforcing the legacy status quo:

> *First, we shape our metrics, and thereafter our metrics shape us.*

- To paraphrase Winston Churchill. Recalling part-one's fish quote, these are the invisible environments that brands operate in, and from the inside-out.

Experience design thinking: A fish called wonder [Part 1]
Simon de Haast 6 Feb 2020

There's no better statistic to support this than Bain's study where 80% of the firms said that they delivered a "superior experience". Only 8% of the customers ¬– the recipients of this supposed superior service – agreed. This survey was done in 2005, so let's be very generous and say that gap has shrunk to 60/16; it is still a large gap in perception and delivery between the internal beliefs and outside reality. For more on how metrics shape experiences I highly recommend watching this segment from Luke Wroblewski's recent talk at Conversions@Google:

Marketing automation maps

"But we draw up customer journey maps" I hear you say. Empathic design tools like these are great if the purpose is to gain a radical understanding of the customer's life to find untapped adjacencies to serve and solve. More often than not though, I see these maps constructed as internally focused tools to spot marketing opportunities for each touchpoint to drive acquisition. In fact, these should really be called marketing automation maps.

While delivering relevant content is important and better targeting improves yield, what really influences customer lifetime value is understanding the moments throughout a customer's interaction with your brand, from their point of view.

In all probability, these customer processes have been designed in isolation from each other and delivered by different departments. As a result, customer satisfaction scores will likely be all over the place across the various touchpoints, leading to a poor overall experience and ultimately customer churn. (How we measure experience is a whole other topic I'll

discuss another time – plot spoiler: you're probably using NPS wrong.)

Making the invisible visible

Gaining a radical understanding of the customer's life through journey maps is one of many tools and models within the experience design field. The purpose of them? To surface the invisible customer environments that are right in front of us, but because of an inside-out view, we aren't readily able to see them.

Getting close to the action can generate very useful insights at a fraction of the cost of traditional research methods. Making the invisible visible allows brands to see stuff before it blindsides them – to see sooner; things like preference shifts, technology habits, and how customers 'hack' products to make them work better for their needs.

After all, "*innovation begins with an eye*".

ABOUT SIMON DE HAAST

Simon is Head of Experience and Service Design at Digitas Liquorice and has been helping teams and clients for nearly two decades to think more systemically about customer experience and how outside-in thinking can open up customer-led innovation opportunities.
- Experience design thinking: A desk is a dangerous place from which to watch the world [Part 3] - 29 Apr 2020
- Experience design thinking: Using tourists, fish and maps [Part 2] - 16 Mar 2020
- Experience design thinking: A fish called wonder [Part 1] - 6 Feb 2020

View my profile and articles...

For more, visit: https://www.bizcommunity.com