

# WHO IN YOUR ORGANIZATION DRIVES THE GUEST/CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE?



Many companies and Retail segments are moving toward an “Experience” titled Executive. The evolution started with our time-tested Marketing and Customer Service titles, moved into Brand and is now further defined as Customer Brand Insight, Strategy and Business Development, Business Excellence, Customer Fulfillment and, for some, the Chief Experience Officer.

What all these companies have in common, though, is recognizing that the Customer is King, and, if there is an unacceptable experience in one of their businesses (hotels, restaurants, stores - any Retail enterprise), they will suffer a loss of revenue, market share and reputation. That is a fact, Jack - good times or bad times!

The journey begins with corporate philosophy and culture which supports an overall Guest Experience Strategy, a drive to integrate innovation and best practices and a willingness to be continually directed and informed through the Consumer voice. This is a holistic, Customer-Centric commitment, and not every company has either the culture or the leadership to embrace this model. There is a great deal of hubris out there still.

Your Customers are focused upon value, as it relates to your product, service and facility. Any weak spot in these three will topple the Experience - an opportunity lost, yet memorable for all the wrong reasons.

How can one person be responsible for the Guest/Customer Experience? Well, of course, s/he cannot. It is a collaborative, integrated effort and commitment with all departments, functions and employees. However, this individual becomes the Guiding Light, Messenger, the Experience Czar, first among equals.

All elements of the Organization have a role to play. Human Resources surfaces and retains talent. Training and Development “enculturates” the organization and elevates the performance skill levels. Marketing designs effective campaigns. Operations drive the results. The position must report to the CEO.

This is not merely a “feel good” exercise either, as efforts are accountable and tracked. You start with the Customer based “feedback” metrics, continuous assessment of that information, and objectives fully integrated into your Strategic Plan and Budgets. Results are quantifiable.

The right “Experience” Executive can provide the following:

- Designing the right offers and experiences for the right customers.
- Delivering these propositions by focusing the entire company on these proposals with an emphasis on cross-functional collaboration.
- Developing the Company’s capabilities to please customers again and again - by such means as revamping the planning process, training people in how to create new customer propositions, and establishing direct accountability for the customer experience.

It is time to refocus, and our target must be our Consumer. In this economy and for the foreseeable future our Customer, and our relationship with that Customer, spells our success. We must become knowledgeable and proactive with what we learn about them. We need someone in the Company who takes this information, shares it with energized cohorts, strategizes our response to that marketplace, brings everyone together to meet those plans, executes, constantly assesses, continually enhances our market posture, embraces change and challenge, and, ultimately, makes us a better company. You may wish to revisit your Organizational Chart and slot/refashion a key Direct Report - "Customer Experience".

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