The Experience Production:

Engage Customers' Senses
for a Positive Experience

WALSH MEDIA, INC.
Shaping the Way the World Hears You

Engaging, interacting, delighting...your customers and business friends...crafting and creating experiences that engage them, interact with them, and please them. The experiences you offer are an extension of your brand and your contact center is a frontline opportunity to capture and delight.

Understanding how the human mind synthesizes experiences is essential when designing and building the construct for the interaction. Experiences are produced by the interaction of our senses with external events and memories. Your five senses (sight, hearing, touch, smell, and taste) work collaboratively with an awareness of your surroundings (kinesthetic sense) to create a perception. Your mental model, your past, and your emotions form how you perceive an experience—good or bad. It is a production, not unlike a theatrical production, that happens within us: the Experience Production.

Imagine...fine dining in a favorite restaurant—a cozy and inviting ambiance with mouth-watering aromas and warm lighting, accommodating wait staff and soft music in the background mingling with the clinking of glasses. Your senses are delighted and your perception builds with anticipation for a memorable meal ... the experience is wonderful.

What would need to happen for this experience to be perceived differently? Your perception will change when even just one of your senses is disappointed—a dirty floor, poorly dressed waiters or un-clean tables—your appetite will dampen and the ambiance will lose its appeal. Your disappointed sense will negatively affect your other senses, your perception of the event and the experience will be less than delightful. The more senses that we engage and stimulate positively, the

more memorable of an experience will be enjoyed and the greater the opportunity to gain loyalty and expand the reach to new clients.

Influencing the senses through technology is an emerging and actively researched application field. Gaming (and interactive combat games specifically) is an example of technology being used to influence your senses—touch, sight, sound and kinesthetics are all engaged in sensory immersion to craft an experience that puts the gamer into the scene. In searching for the enemy, you are exposed to music, ambient sounds of the environment and artillery fire, vivid imagery, tactile force feedback through the controls, and an awareness of where the enemy will appear. How long before the gamer will smell the gunpowder or taste the canteen water that is being drunk in the game?

Although technology offers the ability to create simulated experiences, the general population may not necessarily be ready for such interactions—especially customers faced with problem-solving objectives. There is a learning and acceptance curve on the part of most people that is unlike a gaming experience where the player is a willing and eager participant. The design of simulated experiences and the comfort of the customer with the technology are important factors in the customer achieving his objective and having a positive experience. Customers are evolving with regard to what they accept… both technologically and from an experience perspective.

The re-branding of "call centers" to "customer relations and solutions centers" (CRSC) is a small step in re-framing how you think about the interaction between you and your customer. The ultimate goal of the CRSC is to establish a close relationship, present clear solutions and leave a positive impression in the customer's mind—through the phone

or a web interface. Features that allow customers to connect to a live agent, click-to-chat, or click-to be-called-back are part of that experience, but let's examine some specific points about the CRSC's self-service environment.

The CRSC can only address the sense of sound through telephony. The interaction is based entirely on audio (disregarding the possible need for keypad navigation). Callers define the experience based on their current emotional state, the solutions they seek, the perception of what they hear and their previous experiences.

Which audio elements will ultimately create the experience? The following audio deconstruction assumes that a customer purchased one of your products and requires assistance.

The customer is having difficulties with your product. Frustrated, the customer dials the toll-free 800-help-me line to speak to a customer service agent and enters the automated self-service application. The next steps are crucial in engaging the customer and creating a positive experience. So what should happen?

Greeting: a friendly and supportive voice greets the customer and assures help is forthcoming

Choices: the customer is presented with options using concise and unambiguous language so the navigation is clear and intuitive

Connection: the voice is articulate and friendly, and personifies the system with characteristics of understanding and empathy

Resolution: the system has answers but offers the customer the option of a live customer support agent

How is such a scenario developed?

Language: careful and thoughtful crafting of the phrases and word selection to be helpful and instructional.

Persona and perception: coaching voice talent to create the desired persona by eliciting a perception of trust and knowledge.

Information: a well designed CTI to deliver available knowledge in the form of answers.

Approach: a logical and common sense approach from the customer's point of view. Opportunities to experience success build the customer's confidence and increase the likelihood that they will work through the process and avoid error recovery.

Feedback: Measure the containment and customer satisfaction levels, tuning as needed.

Many customers are choosing to self-serve through web support rather than picking up the phone. Historically the web depended solely on the visual sense through imagery but it's now enjoying both audio and visual senses for successful and robust customer interactions. Adding audio to the web interaction allows for more effective and efficient message delivery. Targeted use of audio in your web applications brings a more intense customer experience through the use of two senses.

How does the web interaction differ from the traditional phone support experience for the customer? And how should such an interaction unfold?

Greeting: Friendly and confident "Frank the Fix It Man" avatar greets the customer and assures the customer that he can solve the problem.

He comes across as friendly and confident.

Choices: Frank guides the customer through the site to get the information they need.

Connection: By asking a few questions as the customer navigates the site, he's able to direct to the customer to relevant information. His personality is that of a subject matter expert.

Resolution: Frank uses audio to explain how to solve the problem. Simultaneously the site displays images of the item and how to fix the problem.

The customer gets the product to work and they're off and running—it was a good experience!

How is such a scenario developed? Evaluate your current web support site against the following checklist.

Language: careful and thoughtful crafting of the phrases and word selection to be helpful and conversational.

Persona and perception: develop a persona (in the form of an avatar) in both the visual and voice that will embody the system as a clear, articulate and friendly subject matter expert with compassion. Connect with a knowledgeable company to develop the persona, design the avatar engagement with the customer and integrate the avatar into your site.

Information: a well-designed CTI to deliver available knowledge in the form of answers.

Approach: a logical and common sense approach from the customer's point of view. Be creative without overextending so as not to lose the

fundamental objectives: customer issue resolution and a high quality experience. If you're "too cute" your message is likely to be lost.

Feedback: Measure the containment and customer satisfaction levels, tuning as needed. Have a plan in place for continued, scheduled review for improvements and enhancements.

The evolution of the customer's comfort level with new technology is a process of adoption and acceptance. The development of a CSRC that engages the customer and creates high-end experiences has tremendous potential: elevated brand image; customer loyalty; repeat business; viral/word-of-mouth advertising.

The development of the Customer Relations & Solutions Center is a collaborative team effort. It requires varying skills, strategic planning and strong communication amongst the players. The system developers, the equipment of residence providers, the designers, the artists (both graphic and audio), project managers and stakeholders have to work in tandem with a common focus and objective to pull this off successfully!

In the end, it's not just support. To effectively integrate an enterprise-wide, superior level of customer experience you must engage professional talent, experience and expertise to get the job done.

It's a production—an Experience Production—to engage the customer's senses and develop a positive perception to produce the exceptional experience.