

Notes on the European Customer Experience World (ECEW) 2011 Conference

Now in its third year as the main event for Customer Experience practitioners across Europe, ECEW 2011 provided another opportunity for practitioners to look outside their 'day job' and learn how their peers have faced challenges in a diverse range of businesses. Lessons were learnt from the Telecommunications, Financial Services, Defence Technology and Consumer Packaged Goods sectors (to name just a few) – shared by speakers from locations as diverse as Las Vegas, Russia and South Africa.

Mulberry Consulting came away from the event with these insights that we believe all practitioners should take note of:

1. We heard all too often: 'This is nothing new – you'll have seen this before'. The conceptual frameworks and enabling tools presented by practitioners at the past few ECEW conferences are increasingly consistent and well-established. We are reaching a point in our profession's maturity where neither the 'why' nor the 'what' we do requires much more debate. **It is 'how' we deploy these frameworks and tools in our own, particular businesses that matters. For many, it is only through design differentiation and operational excellence that competitive advantage can now be gained.**
2. But there will always be 'fresh' tactics to be learnt when stepping out of your particular business! Be it Zappos's approach to employee onboarding, Metro Bank's pragmatic, retail-based approach to High Street banking or Disney's meticulous approach to experience design – **one of the biggest risks for a competent, highly experienced practitioner is to think complacently about best practices.**
3. There was some interesting dialogue encouraging practitioners to consider the 'non-touch' points of the customer experience (**these are the 'silent' and 'ambient' factors in a customer journey, that could at times have the most impact on your customers' experience**). We have some recent client experience where this approach is being used to good effect.
4. The community of Customer Experience 'Directors/ Heads/ Managers/ etc.' continues to increase exponentially! It is a growing body of professionals rightly working across old functional siloes, turning the business 'outside-in' with relatively limited resources – **and still doing so with limited professional recognition**
5. There is a converging focus to really understand the drivers of customer and employee advocacy and, critically, how a business ensures alignment between the two. **Practitioners need to consider how best to enter into a daily dialogue with customers (e.g. by considering the power of social media). They should then work with their HR and Operations peers (along with their existing allies in Brand, Sales and Marketing) to map that dialogue against their employee's feedback, and act on the insight.**
6. There was less of the uninformed debate on "I need to get the *one* customer advocacy measure in place" (and interestingly some notable vendors were absent). **Customer effort is also emerging as another more considered and actionable metric.**

7. Many Customer Experience Vendors have not learned the lessons from CRM. **The answer to the business challenge is not to introduce an(other) IT platform and then walk away from those driving the change; and yet, this seems to be the default model for many ... Again!**
8. A final observation - at the end of the day, **it's all about making what customers experience different and more valuable**. As Bruce Temkin said over a beer – “this is all about applied common sense ... it's really not rocket science, right?”.