

## Creating dramatically different customer experiences in a digital world

*“From the store windows, the store touch-points, the website, social media or a magazine: it has to be one pure customer experience, not just to gain market share but to gain mind share”  
Angela Ahrendts, CEO Burberry.*

Never have consumers had so much choice. You can buy whatever you want, whenever you want from hundreds of suppliers. Because of the fierce competition and the efforts of organizations to improve their performance over the past few years, service is generally good too. But good is not good enough. To get the ‘share of mind’ that Angela Ahrendts talks about, you have to be different to your competitors-in fact, you have to be dramatically different and it has to be evident to your customers no matter which channel they choose to buy from whether it be from the catwalk or their iPad.



The challenge for organizations is how to design and deliver this kind of experience so that it works every day across every touch-point and every channel. The bigger the organization the harder it is. So how do the brands we researched for our new book ‘Bold-how to be brave in business and win’ do it?

1. Firstly be very clear what your brand stands for and make that as distinctive as possible. As Robert Stephens, the founder of the ‘Geek Squad’ advises; “This is where companies go wrong; they don’t take a bold enough point of view. That’s what brands are for, to make you distinct from other entities”. The Geek Squad does this through their employees whom they call ‘Agents’ These employees are dressed in a distinctive uniform and carry police style badges bearing the company promise ‘We’ll save your ass’. This tone of voice and the distinctive metaphor is carried through every touch-point; from the agents to the call centre (called ‘Mission Control’ of course) to the web.

2. Secondly, deliver the promise through a customer experience that creates iconic moments for your brand. Blandness is the enemy of creating a memorable experience so it is important to choose to invest in creating touch-points that become hallmarks for your brand. A brand hallmark for 'Six Senses' is when guests arrive at the resort, their designated host will invite them to take their shoes off and drop them into a bag labelled 'No News. No Shoes'. For the duration of their stay guests get to enjoy walking barefoot on the powdery sand even in the restaurant and bars.
3. Thirdly, empower your people to deliver a consistent 'experience' not a formulaic response. Many organizations have tried to control the experience by standardizing it. In many cases these service standards have been set at the level of the lowest common denominator and thereby created robotic service encounters. 'Have a nice day' has become a symbol of this 'design by numbers' approach to customer experience. The correct answer is to keep a tight control over what your brand promises and the design of the experience but to give freedom to your people to behave in a way that will meet individual customer needs. Zappos has created a culture that empowers its employees to 'deliver happiness'.
4. Fourthly, make the marketing of your brand a dramatic experience. JCB, the manufacturer of industrial vehicles was so excited about the powerful diesel engines they had developed for their military range of diggers that they wanted to create a customer experience that would dramatize the benefits. How? By building a vehicle that would use their diesel engines to break the land speed record. Dieselmax reached 670km an hour on the salt flats of Utah. Sir Anthony Bamford, JCB's Chairman, calls it 'selling the sizzle' and it has helped them achieve sizzling results.
5. Finally, align marketing, operations and HR around the customer experience in order that it is sustained over time. One organization that understands the need to do this is the mobile phone operator O2. The brand realized that in order to deliver its promise of 'Helping customers connect' it has first to ensure that it was aligned internally. As Ronan Dunne, O2's CEO says:

*"When you embark on the journey you can't stop halfway and say, 'You know what, I believe in customer experience, but I'm not going to do that' or 'we can't afford to do that', because it only works when it all works."* Ronan Dunne, O2

So it is only through taking a holistic view of the customer experience, one that aligns all functions and transcends all channels that you can achieve the kind of mind-share that Angela Ahrends talks about. But when you do that the results are remarkable.

*For readers wishing to gain a in-depth understanding of these issues, the authors of Bold, Shaun Smith and Andy Milligan will be running a one day Brand Experience Master-class on October 19<sup>th</sup> in London. This is intended to provide an immersive experience for executives wishing to take their customer experience to the next level. For details see <http://www.boldthebook.com/workshops.html> or email Janine Dyer at [jd@smithcoconsultancy.com](mailto:jd@smithcoconsultancy.com)*

*If you wish to find out how your organization compares with the Bold brands you can download our free 'Bold-how to be brave in business and win' iPad app from iTunes or the Apple Store. To see a video of the app being used go to [www.boldthebook.com](http://www.boldthebook.com).*

*Shaun Smith is founder and partner at smith+co the customer experience specialists and has been rated one of the top business speakers in the UK and internationally.  
Andy Milligan is an international consultant on brand and business culture.*

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