

# THE COMBUSTION CHRONICLES

**EPISODE SEVENTY  
EXPERIENCE ECOSYSTEMS**

**HOST: MICHAEL HARPER**

**GUESTS: SHAWN NASON & ZACK HAMILTON**

**JULY 13, 2022**

**Shawn:**

Hello, everyone. I'm Shawn Nason, CEO, and founder of MOFI, and I want to welcome you to The Combustion Chronicles podcast, where bold leaders combined with big ideas to make life better for all of us. We're excited to depart from our usual programming for a few weeks, so I can step away from my hosting duties to dig into the world of Experience Ecosystems™ with my good friend and fellow maverick, Zack Hamilton. Zack currently serves as the Chief Experience and Strategy Officer at Chatter by Stingray. As you'll hear in our conversations, his people-first leadership mindset and his 20-plus years of working in the Experience Management industry come together to challenge tired, outdated systems that are holding organizations, maybe like yours, back to what they need to do. And leading the conversation in this mini-series is Michael Harper, the Chief of Radical Experiences at MOFI. When the three of us get together, we cut through the bullshit to think bigger and bolder about designing a human-obsessed world. Ready to blow up the status quo and ignite a people-first experience revolution? Yeah? Me too! So, let's do this.

**Michael:**

On this episode, we're kicking off our conversation about all things, experience and ecosystems with just laying the foundation about what the heck is an experienced ecosystem? If it's not a term that you understand, this is your lucky day. So I'm here with Shawn and with Zack, and Shawn in your best few words, what the heck is an Experience Ecosystem? When you start talking about it?

**Shawn:**

Well, I'm going to talk about it from just a quick story and a brand, and I'm going to say Disney. People know I love Disney, but Disney to me exudes this whole ecosystem approach that they look at customer experience, they look at digital experience, employee experience, how they do their supply chain, how they manage vendors, brand, all as one piece. And it's all based around the guests, which is at the center of that ecosystem.

**Michael:**

And what happens when the guest is at the center of that ecosystem?

**Shawn:**

They spend more money and you know, and it's a prime example just this year. Again, Disney raised prices on tickets, and they're not seeing any decline in loyalty or any declining guest retention. And that's what we see here. It, it's, they're a competitive advantage and it's not just Disney. There's many other brands around that.

**Michael:**

So Zack, when you start thinking in ecosystem terms, what do you think about?

**Zack:**

Yeah, I think about it as it really is your culture within your organization, right? So an ecosystem is really aligned around how are we elevating the customer and employee experience and the experience of our vendors and everyone. So it's the culture in which how we do things. Traditionally, brands do things in silos and Experience Ecosystem is really around the experience of everyone within our organization and culturally, how do we get things done within our brand?

**Michael:**

I'll read the, kind of official definition of this ecosystem from the MOFI website, our company MOFI, and it says, businesses are more than org charts, strategy documents, and mission statements. They're living, breathing ecosystems filled with people and people-driven processes that make an impact on the world. And people-driven processes often end up creating these experienced silos that you're sitting here talking about, Zack. Right? So let's talk about those silos. Why do these silos happen so frequently in companies?

**Shawn:**

Now I'll share from a big, I guess, corporate standpoint, right? So corporations, top 100 corporations, Michael, we've worked with a couple of them. Zack, I know you work with a lot of them at Chatter. They create, you know, you have a Marketing Department, you have an IT department, and you have HR and they all own those separate experiences for whatever that is. Oh, and then guess what? You have a Supply Chain Department or, you know, Logistics Department and they own this, and they all work. And this happened to me in my, in my career in corporate, you like wake up one morning in a meeting and someone says, oh, I'm working on that. Well, I'm working on that. Oh, well, I'm working on that. And you realize the company has spent millions of dollars working on the same thing and they still don't have an answer.

**Michael:**

And you just gotta ask yourself either, why am I willing to keep working in this craziness? Or I'm great working with this. And I'm just going to keep on doing the status quo and things will be fine.

**Shawn:**

Oh yeah. Many times what I do is WTS, so right.

**Michael:**

Which is so helpful most of the time.

**Shawn:**

Yes.

**Zack:**

I think it goes back to the traditional way that businesses are set up, right? Fundamentally businesses are, were set up for basically one channel of interaction. And that being, let's just take retail for example. Foundationally, the business was set up to just interact with that customer when they're visiting our store. And as the customer behavior has continued to change over the last 10 years, now there's many different channels that a customer can engage in. And yet we haven't transformed our culture, we haven't transformed the way that we work. We still only look at it as one specific customer journey, instead of really understanding what's the different ways that our customer cohorts or segments interact with us across multiple different channels and interacting with our brand? And therefore we've really caused this friction organizationally because our customers are interacting with us in multiple different channels, but yet we still act like a single channel organization.

**Michael:**

And it goes back to well-meaning people making good decision based on a value system that makes sense to them. But that ends up with that friction you're talking about and all those things collide. And next thing you know, things get worse and people are again, they're human. So they're either going to get angry or they're going to pull back and retreat and stay out of it. That's where the messiness comes from. Right. So as leaders, what do we do about this human messiness? If we look at ecosystems are just made up of humans and the road to hell is paved with good intentions, right? How, as leaders, do we contend with that? What do we do?

**Zack:**

Yeah, that's a good question. I think part of what we have to do, or, let's just start with the, with the brands, the transformational brands. You think that like an Apple, for example, or Shawn, you've mentioned Disney, where they get the human experience right within your entire Experience Ecosystem is they step back and really look at what are the experiences that we're trying to create? How are we trying to connect with everyone in a humanized way and humanized approach? And so they've taken that step back. And so essentially, they've aligned their entire organizations around what are the experiences that we're trying to create? And you hear me say experience, because again, I'm not going to silo it to a customer experience, employee experience, a vendor experience, a digital experience, but it really is at the end of the day, what is that emotional connection that we want to make with that customer or that employer, whoever we're interacting with. And then we create the systems around that.

**Shawn:**

I'll wrap up that question with this, that as leaders, the way this happens is get out of your ivory offices and glass offices and get on the ground and really learn what your employees are doing, what your customers are going through, what that digital experience is. Don't make decisions sitting in your little wall of your office or in your board rooms, get on the street and get into it.

**Michael:**

I saw a great quote the other day, looking at ecosystem versus an ego system. One that is driven by a group of humans and the other that is driven by the, just the hood of one person, right. And their ego and their head. And maybe even not their heart. As we look at this ecosystem versus an ego system, where do we start? We talk all the time about just map out your ecosystem, draw it out, look at it. What other advice do you have for people? Not just leaders, but anyone to start looking at the systems approach.

**Zack:**

I like to start with just, what's your brand promise? What are you promising overall as a brand on who you are, how you're going to show up, not just to your customers, but what's your, your employee brand, right? Everyone has an employee brand. And then what is the promise that you make to the vendors when you decide to partner with them and everyone else, right? You, you have a brand promise, start there, start there, and then build out the map around. Okay. How are we really delivering on that promise? Because essentially that's what experience is, it is how well are we delivering on the brand promise?

**Shawn:**

Yeah. And what I love about what Zack does and what Chatter does is they help brands do that. Michael, it's no different than what we talked about with our experience promise, right? And get that very interfacing, get that north star and know where you want the company and your employees to go. And all that other stuff just will fall in mind.

**Michael:**

Fantastic. Well, we have enjoyed this conversation and since this is a mini-series, we're going to pay attention to how long we're talking. And we're going to wrap this up and we'll catch you for the next episode.

**Shawn:**

Thanks so much for listening to this episode of The Combustion Chronicles. If you've enjoyed this episode, please take a few minutes to subscribe, rate and review our podcast. Remember that I'm always looking to meet more big-thinking mavericks. So let's keep the conversation going by connecting on LinkedIn. If you want to discover more about human-obsessed, maverick-minded Experience Ecosystems, go to [MOFI.co](http://MOFI.co) where you'll discover ideas and resources to help you ignite your own experience revolution. As always stay safe, be well and keep blowing shit up.