

THE COMBUSTION CHRONICLES

**EPISODE SEVENTY-TWO
EXPERIENCE STRATEGY GAP**

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GUESTS: SHAWN NASON & ZACK HAMILTON

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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mindset and his 20-plus years of working in the Experience Management industry come together to challenge tired, outdated systems that are holding organizations, maybe like yours, back to what they need to do.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, I'm here with Zack and with Shawn to continue this conversation about all things ecosystems and experience and rethinking the way we make business happen and organizations. And on this episode, we get to focus on what it's like to implement some kind of experience management system. And Zack, take us through the difference between a traditional experience management and what we want to look at in terms of experience systems.

Zack:

Yeah. Good, that's a good question. So if you really think about traditional experience management, the way that's really defined is, traditional experience management is more focused on insights, you know, very, you know, customer data, employee data rich. Traditional experience management's also very benchmark obsessed. So you'll hear brands say that my north star is my NPS versus my north star is creating aspirational brand experiences. Traditional experience management, there's also very minimal action taken, if any action at all. Again, outdated frameworks, we talked about it in a previous episode around like a waterfall project management type framework. And then last but not least, it's still this heavy reliance on an email survey in order to get feedback, you know, from a customer or from an employee, as an example. Now, when we think about Experience Ecosystem and the framework of experience systems that really elevate that ecosystem and experience system is very much, hey, we're going to engage in that particular person's channel choice. So if it's a customer and

employee, we'll let them engage in their channel choice, whether that's email, SMS, social, online review, whatever it may be. The second one is really around deeper customer connections. So what I mean by that is a traditional survey is how likely to recommend us. Why would you, and then tell us about the bathrooms? So it's all about the brand, less about the customer. When I say deeper customer connections in this example, it is really connecting with the customer to understand the experience from their point of view, less about the brand. Organization wide actions is a foundational principle ecosystem. So everyone within the organization has the right information that they need in order to take action. You can clearly quantify business impact. So you know how to connect the dots between, hey, what our customers and employees or vendors are telling us. And how's it impacting the business? Is it driving same store sales, or are we driving customer churn? Last but not least it's really experience led innovation. So we think as, as experience, as a strategy and it's culturally embedded within our organization. So experience systems, it is our culture and everyone is empowered and has autonomy to make decisions.

Michael:

So that sounds great, right? We all, we all have an aspiration perhaps to think that this would be a great idea to kick off, but Shawn, what, what is in this for me, if I'm the leader of this company, this organization, why do I need to even think about shifting gears and making something like this happen?

Shawn:

Well, it'd be great if we could get the former CEO of Blockbuster here with us or, you know, or the former CEO of Fears, and we all know JCPenney is struggling. That's the why to me is, organizations. We have a very good friend, Michael, Robin, you know, that talks about old organizations plus expensive technology just really means expensive old organizations, right? And that's the same with systems. If we don't go to an experienced system approach in your organization as a leader and you stay in this traditional management, check the box mentality, consumers don't want that anymore. The way that consumers shop, the way that I shop, the way Zack, I know you shop, you're very loyal, Michael, right? We want that loyalty. And there's this strategy gap that starts to begin to happen in those organizations that are really overwhelming. What's hard for me, and again, I'm on the really far side of this. I don't understand as a C-suite executive, how you do not think this way, because if you don't, you're just going to be another one of those organizations that fall off to the wayside.

Michael:

Isn't it the case that there are plenty of organizations who are not crazy into an experienced system mindset that, I mean, they're doing fine, right?

Zack:

I think that's, the challenge is we're doing fine, right? I mean, if, if you think about, I truly firmly believe traditional customer loyalty is dead, right? We're in this era of what I call great brand exploration, where, because there are so many new channels that we can interact with your brand, given any type of social media online, in store, whatever it may be. And then if you think about the impact of the pandemic, we all had to shift online or in social for a period of time, more than what we were. And so that caused this brand exploration where I can look at five different brands in one minute, versus if I go to a traditional shopping mall for talking about retail, it's going to take me 25, 30 minutes, maybe longer to explore the number of brands. And so to me, the foundational gap in going from this traditional experience management approach, which has been a playbook for the last 25 years. And I think what I like to say is the 90s are calling, they want their playbook back, is, it's also not, if you think about a traditional executive, experience is not embedded in the MBA program right now. And if you look at every organization, we try to become this classic MBA textbook. And that's how we manage an organization versus lead to create aspirational brands.

Shawn:

So that's an interesting perspective that you just brought out there, Zack, that, yeah, right. We want to be these MBA. We want to have the Deloitte's, the Accentures, all those big in here. What's interesting to me and watching this gap that's starting to happen is Tom DeWitt out of, I believe it's Central Michigan, just started an Experienced Customer Experience Master's Program, which is first one approved in our country. And I'm going to be watching that, like the Hawk to see if we're still teaching the traditional experience management, or if we're looking at, if they're really teaching experience systems, because it's great to have that. But if we're still doing the old thing, you know, right? And we're still staying with the status quo. And I think that's going back to your question, Michael, is we're doing fine. Well, I'm not a person that wants fine, right? And I don't think most CEOs want fine.

Zack:

Well, and this goes back to Shawn, your original point too, of management, right? So we're managing fine, which is, if you would've talked to Blockbuster CEO, everything was fine. And so the question is, how do you bridge the gap between traditional

experience management to this experience systems? And I think the first question that I always ask an executive leader is, what is your north star? If they tell me their north star is some type of benchmark, then that's where a serious discussion has to happen, right? Your north star is really around, what is your brand promise? What are we promising as a brand that we're going to deliver? Some of the other questions are culturally, how do your teams take action? Is there any action being taken at all on the feedback that you are collecting? And then last but not least it's really around, is your culture enable to take action? So if they're not taking any action at all, why are they not taking action? Do they not have the autonomy to make a decision? Do they have to go through the hierarchal bullshit of, I have to go talk to my Director, and then my Senior Director, and then my Vice President, and then the Senior Vice President, and then the COO in order to make a change or can we just drive what that operational improvement should be? So these are all just questions around, how are we working today? And then it is, okay, now we understand, here's our current state, the negative consequences that we are, we're building because of the way that we're working. And then it is, okay, remove all that. If you could have something, what would that future state be?

Shawn:

Well, and I love that you're going that point. I just want to dig into that around. Can they take action? And so we've talked about Apple, we've talked about Disney, recently had an experience with Marriott where I sent my wife on a trip for her birthday and not everything happened the way that it should have happened. And what was interesting to me is I had a whole conversation with someone in that hotel, over chat. And by the time it was done, they were empowered and enabled to give me back all the points and all the Suite Nights rewards we had used for that trip. And that was once again, my brand loyalty, right? Was even more true then. Cause I didn't have to talk to someone. They understood the situation and they took care of it. And I think that's what we're really talking about. And I love, I know you call it the brand promise, Zack, we call it the experience promise, Michael, that north star. What do you give your associates at north star to point at?

Michael:

And is all of this tied to C-suite leadership or me as a regular old employee of this company that I want to make a difference? Is there a place for me in this conversation?

Shawn:

Yes I am.

Zack:

I would say very shortly, like you can lead at any level of the organization, but the same time we all know what the C-suite is focused on, that's where our organization's going to be enabled.

Shawn:

Well, and I think it goes back to that culture, right? Like if the culture fits that, then everybody's enabled.

Michael:

Well, Shawn, Zack, thanks again for another fantastic conversation as we continue just digging into how to rethink all of this business organization, understanding of experience and ecosystems and making the world a better place.

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 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.