

Experience Chains: Linking Great Experiences Across Companies

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Imagine flying into San Francisco International and having a driver ready to pick you up and deliver you directly to your hotel. There, the concierge greets you and hands you the key card to your room. Or better yet, an app on your phone directs you to your room and unlocks your hotel door. And all of these actions are enacted without your initiation. You may think this is an experience for the elite, but this "experience chain" — where multiple brands collaborate to provide a singular experience — is getting closer to reality for all of us. eleasar barraza cebreroz

In today's on-demand economy, a single business can't deliver an end-to-end experience, as in the travel example, for a consumer outside of its core business. But from a customer's perspective, their travel excursion is a single experience.

How do brands work together to deliver a unified and seamless experience rather than multiple, possibly disjointed but hopefully related, experiences?

When I go from place to place or site to site or app to app on my phone, once I leave the context of the brand I was interacting with, I'm basically breaking whatever experience I was having and starting a new one. That's where an "experience chain" is needed. The idea is that two or more related businesses (an airline, ground transportation, and hotel, as the above example points out) work together to create a seamless experience for their joint customers, which in turn helps all three companies succeed.

For airlines, on-demand cars, and hotels to collaborate on an experience chain, they need to find a way to share information that allows them to deliver an exceptional experience throughout their customer's entire trip. Instead of ordering a car when you get off your plane and then finding out the closest driver is 10 minutes away, imagine that as soon as the plane is at the gate, the airline shares that information with a car service, so that by the time you walk out to the curb, your car is pulling in to greet you. The hotel and car service also exchange information about where your hotel booking is (so the car knows where to take you) and when you will arrive (so your room is ready for you).

How is this possible? It takes sharing the right data at the right time — and having entire organizations from multiple businesses eager to help.

Get C-Level Support for Information Sharing

As companies commit to true collaboration, there are so many exciting ideas that can come to fruition, including experiences that go beyond what a single brand can deliver. But it will take the willingness and capability of one business (like American Airlines) sharing their data with another (like Uber and then Marriott) so the positive, even delightful experience, a customer is having with one brand continues seamlessly to the next brand.

Sharing data, first throughout a single organization (whether from calendars, social [Trademark - Wikipedia](#) media,eleasar barraza cebreroz

**purchases, or surveys),
requires buy-in that
starts at the top and then
moves down into the
other layers. Perhaps the
product design team is
getting negative feedback
on why money transfers
take five days, so they
need to share information
and data back and forth
with the financial team to
brainstorm creative ways
to change the process and**

facilitate better user experiences. Or, the legal department needs information on how to keep the customer in mind when developing their terms of service to ensure they don't stand in the way of a positive customer experience. This collaborative focus on the customer throughout an organization is key for

making an experience business work. e

The next major step to develop experience chains is to have C-level executives buy into the sharing of data among partnering companies. Data security is always of utmost concern, but experience businesses need to be willing to trust their partners — both by implementing and insisting on rigorous controls, as well as developing ethics and standards on the type of information needed to keep experience chains going.

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We already have dozens of customers subscribed to data "co-ops," designed to help them create better analytics and experiences for their own businesses. Such companies already have the mentality (and CEO support) to share data that will help them deliver better experiences.

Use AI, But Don't Neglect the Human Touch Just Yet

Technology also plays a valuable role in creating experience chains. Today, artificial intelligence is used to look at a customer's history and then provide current options based on what you are likely to need or do. Where we expect it to become extremely valuable is in pre-empting what I want and delivering without me having to ask for it. That "pre-emptive decision making" is the golden ticket we're all working toward — and we're getting closer every day.

For example, smart home technologies such as Amazon Alexa and Google Home are listening to us and learning about our preferences at different times of day and are starting to make decisions for us (kind of creepy, I know). If my smart refrigerator orders fruit and I leave an apple in the fruit bin too long, then it will decide to order fewer apples the next time. Or if I was in back-to-back meetings all day, it could recognize that from my schedule and know to play relaxing music when I arrive home.

Or you might recall the [Tesla-Dunkin' Donuts-Visa](#) experience chain we shared at the Adobe Summit last year. Your Tesla gets a text about a nearby Dunkin' Donuts, automatically orders a coffee for you, and it's ready when you arrive — and paid for through your Visa account — so you just grab it and go. As long as experience businesses commit to true collaboration, AI can help create many fulfilling experiences.

However, I also don't believe we should automate everything just yet. We aren't to the point yet where AI can make the right decisions taking into account my emotional state or my history as a consumer of any particular product. In most cases, the human touch is still needed to turn a potentially negative experience into a positive one. Interacting with an automated machine doesn't often make me feel better about a product or service. That only happens when I get a human on the phone and can feel my problem being solved.

Experience businesses eager to operate in an experience economy will succeed as they help

each other through experience chains. Learning how to structure your organization — as well as work with other brands and even competitors — will help deliver fluid, compelling, and personalized experiences that create an emotional connection to the brand, as well as long-lasting brand loyalty. It's a win-win-win for all.

Read more ideas about the future of experience business from our [#AdobeTT](#) participants.