EXPERIENCE LIFECYCLE STRATEGIES

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Intentional Experiences

KEYS TO CREATING AN EXPERIENCE-ORIENTED CULTURE
Understanding the Experience Lifecycle and its Role in the Experience Thinking Process

In developing a new product or service, organizations must consider the internal processes, budgets and product schedules that will support development. Often missing, however, is an in-depth analysis of the range of experiences that a product's users and customers will encounter when interacting with both the product and the organization.

Companies that consistently create successful products understand that just as it is important to map out a product's lifecycle, it is also necessary to map out and examine a product's **experience lifecycle** in order to help ensure its market success.

This paper explores the experience lifecycle and its various components and explains how Akendi helps organizations deliver and improve their experience creation processes to ensure that their products and services are successful and valued by their customer and user base.

Experience-Oriented Culture: an environment in which the inhabitants share goals, values and practices that are conscious of the effect that interaction with the environment has on others.

THE EXPERIENCE LIFECYCLE

While most organizations are familiar with concepts such as "user experience" and "brand experience," few realize that there are in fact six different types of experience to consider. They are: Customer, User, and Client Experience on the one hand and Brand and Product & Service Experience on the other.
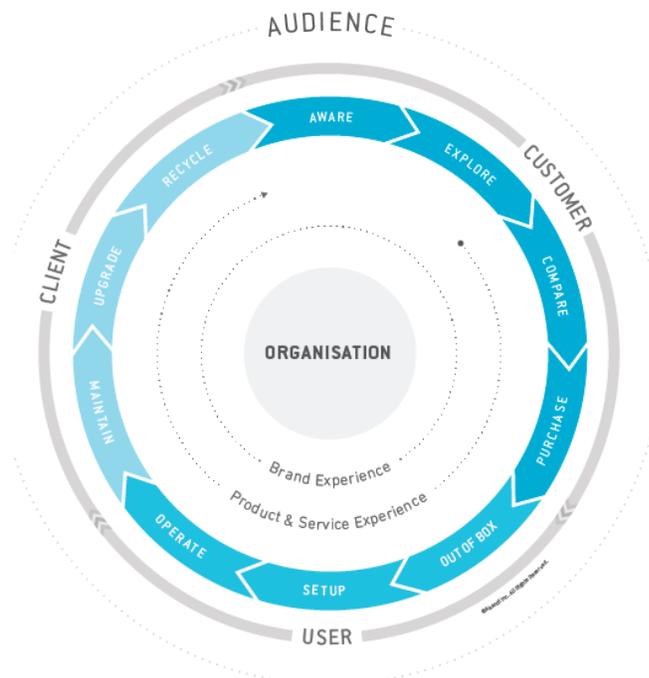

Figure 1: The Akendi Experience Lifecycle

Each type is important because the product or service's target audience will encounter these six experiences at distinct points along the product lifecycle.

As members of a target audience move through the buying, using, upgrading and recycling phases of the product lifecycle, the received value will be shaped not only by the product in question, but also by each experience they encounter during their journey with various aspects of the product organization.

CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

A new prospect moves from becoming **aware** of a product, **exploring** its features, **comparing** this to other products and – if all goes well – ultimately **purchasing** it. Successful organizations deeply understand how the prospect moves through this evaluation process, what his or her expectations, needs and desires are, and how those can be fulfilled. They ensure through customer research, design and testing of all customer experiences that the customer experience is a real contributor to their top line.

USER EXPERIENCE

After **purchasing** a product (or even during a product compare and online purchasing) a customer becomes a user as he or she interacts with the product or service itself.

The audience goals shift from a sales and value mode into a getting-things-done mode. The product needs to perform the expected functions and provide the right information effortlessly and without any stumbling blocks.

User research needs to safeguard that the organization identifies actual user scenarios with the product in their context of use, and then design a positive user experience so that in the end the product fulfills its promise to the user.

CLIENT EXPERIENCE

Over time, a customer may become a client, interacting with the organization to receive service, upgrade products and ongoing support. Their needs shift in that they expect to receive customized attention from the organization they have been loyal to. Organizations must understand the client experiences that occur during this kind of long-standing conversation and recognize that clients have particular expectations different from a first time customer.

Ultimately, research and design for the client conversation is something the organization can leverage to improve its success through ongoing positive client feedback, word of mouth and active advocacy.

All three of the above experiences have a distinct audience drive; it's learning from the world outside the organization and using that information effectively to design better experiences. This is the outside layer of the Experience Lifecycle model as shown here.

The next three types of experience are positioned in the center of the lifecycle model and have either a true organization based origin or are a mix of an audience and organization guided experience.

BRAND EXPERIENCE

The brand experience is usually the first experience a prospect will encounter as he or she learns of product options. To deliver on its brand promise, an organization must define and hone its image and position in the marketplace.

The goal for the organization is to research, test and design brand experiences that will entice customers to join the brand and stay long term. It is a play at an emotional and attitude level that is heavily influenced by human perceptions of the audience with the brand.

PRODUCT EXPERIENCE

During the research and design of the experience, successful companies are concerned with both tangible interactions and visceral responses that will make up the product experience. This experience encompasses the emotional, visceral attachment that a user can form with a product (such as pride of ownership, comfort, belonging, familiarity, and so on).

The goal is to create users and clients that connect, trust and are proud of their product and in turn become passionate advocates for the organization.

SERVICE EXPERIENCE

A service experience can combine several products and other interactions with the organization that together make up a service. A service experience is truly remarkable when all components of the customer and user journey are well researched and designed to meet customers' actual needs. Organization departments must be empowered to create a consistent service experience that serves clients well, generates loyalty and leads to recommendations.

Successful companies are strategically set up to monitor if the customer is being served well enough that they feel loyal, will continue to use and will encourage others to buy and use.

ADOPTING AN EXPERIENCE LIFECYCLE STRATEGY

Both the organization and audience experience types are equivalent; they do not form a hierarchy. Each experience is as important as the next at the time it occurs. For this reason, it is critical to have a cohesive plan that addresses all types of experiences throughout the experience lifecycle.

The experience lifecycle is flexible to accommodate unique aspects of specific applications. For example, a company designing a product user interface for internal use would likely place more emphasis on its user experience than the branding experience. While there is nothing wrong with placing an emphasis on one experience over another, it should not be done at the expense of another. All experiences need to be considered and addressed to truly begin creating an experience oriented culture.

As part of its role in guiding companies through the experience-creation process, a useful tool is to apply an **Experience Lifecycle Scorecard** to help prioritize the various experiences. This ensures a balanced view and that each type of experience is managed appropriately, with the right amount of effort and investment given to each.

Silos

If a product strategy is to properly address all six experience types of the Experience Lifecycle, it will need to bring experts, subject matter experts from each area of the organization to the table.

All relevant stakeholders need to be involved and, more importantly, they must communicate effectively with each other and be aware of how the work in their particular areas of expertise impacts experience types at other points in the lifecycle.

In many companies, operational units work too much as separate silos and are unaware of the activities of other groups within the organization relating to the same project. It is not uncommon, for example, for developers to work from a product specification that has no detailed information in it related to the desired brand or service experience.

Departments in charge of a website can receive graphics from a brand manager and are asked to add them to the website without a full understanding of the desired user experience that site is to provide and support.

STRATEGY & GOVERNANCE

To create a truly experience-oriented design culture, all internal stakeholders must be brought together to converse, learn, and discuss the experience lifecycle strategy of the product or service in its entirety.

Gathering representatives responsible for each experience around the same table helps to both clarify the role each plays in the experience lifecycle and ensure all stakeholders understand the lifecycle as a whole.

Many organizations will find that this is a daunting task, and third-party companies could be considered as a means of facilitating and guiding the process. The process is neither lengthy nor costly – it is a matter of planning for it in the right ways.

CREATING AN EXPERIENCE-ORIENTED CULTURE

Understanding what needs to be done is half the challenge in creating an experience-oriented culture. The implementation, management and governance structure of an experience creation strategy requires planning and coordination. To help organizations along their experience-creation journeys, a best practice is to focus specific processes, activities, timelines and budgets for all stakeholders around achievable tasks that can be used to test the new process and to familiarize the organization to using it.

Together, these activities form the **Experience Thinking**™ process. Based on proven User Centered Design (UCD) principles, this process provides appropriate techniques and tools to manage the product or service development process. It also introduces internal staff, customers and users as stakeholders in the product or service design process – ensuring that audience insights are captured, analyzed and learned from.
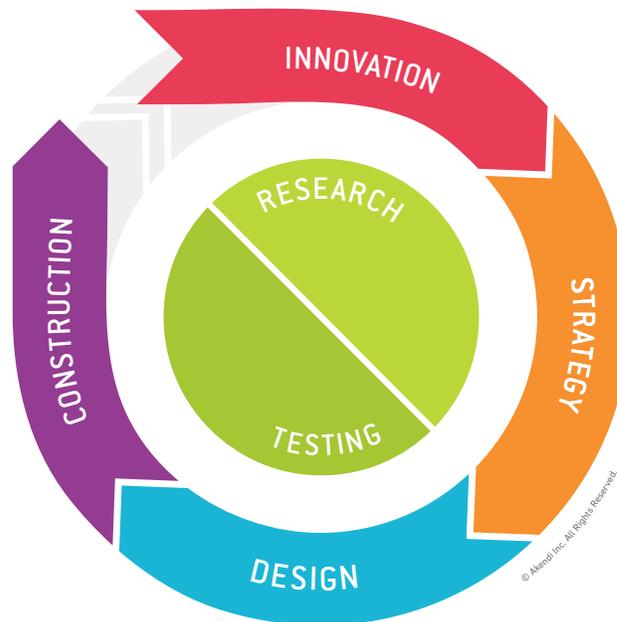
THE EXPERIENCE-ORIENTED CULTURE

Organizations that create experience-oriented cultures ensure that their business and development processes focus on creating desired experiences among target user groups, whether they be customers, subscribers, citizens, or other stakeholders.

Those organizations that understand the experience lifecycle, assemble internal experience expertise and ensure that all experience activities and outputs are evaluated have a much better chance of repeatedly creating remarkable products and services that are commercially successful and enjoyed by their user base.

Using manageable and repeatable Human Experience Creation Strategies, any organization can develop an experience oriented culture.

ABOUT AKENDI

Akendi is a human experience design firm, leveraging equal parts user experience research and creative design excellence. We are passionate about the creation of intentional experiences, whether those involve digital products, physical products, mobile, web or bricks-and-mortar interactions.

We provide strategic insights and analysis about customer and user behaviour, combine this knowledge with inspired design, and architect the user experience to meet organization goals. The result is intentional products and services that enable organizations to improve effectiveness, engage users and provide remarkable customer experiences.

Contact us today to learn more!

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