

Ep #86: Extraordinary Experiences with Denise Lee Yohn

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Today, I am very excited to bring you the first repeat guest of *The Brainfluence Podcast*. I invited Denise Lee Yohn back to the show to share her exciting new insights. Over the course of her career, Denise has been the Vice President, General Manager, and the Brand Leader for Sony Electronics. She has also led strategy for clients like Burger King, Land Rover and Unilever.

Denise's writings can be found in journals like Harvard Business Review, Forbes, and Advertising Age, along with several articles at Neuromarketing. She is the author of *What Great Brands Do*; and her latest book is titled *Extraordinary Experiences: What Great Retail and Restaurant Brands Do*.



Denise joins me today to share her research and the backstory of her latest book and how it applies to folks like you. If you would like to discover the strategies that companies like HEB, Costco, and PIRCH are using to grow their brands, click "play" below and listen in.

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On Today's Episode We'll Learn:

- The one factor that all successful brands have in common.
- How a new CEO and her team changed the fate of the Popeyes Chicken brand.
- What brands can learn from HEB, Costco, and Sam's.
- How PIRCH uses "SCARF" to improve their customer experience.
- Why successful brands never skimp on training their staff.

Key Resources:

- Connect with Denise: [Website](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Facebook](#) | [Google+](#) | [YouTube](#) | [Instagram](#)
- [Book Website](#)

- Kindle: [Extraordinary Experiences: What Great Retail and Restaurant Brands Do](#) by Denise Lee Yohn
- Amazon: [What Great Brands Do: The Seven Brand-Building Principles that Separate the Best from the Rest](#) by Denise Lee Yohn
- Kindle: [What Great Brands Do: The Seven Brand-Building Principles that Separate the Best from the Rest](#) by Denise Lee Yohn
- Amazon: [In Search of Excellence: Lessons from America's Best-Run Companies](#) by Thomas Peters and Robert Waterman
- Amazon: [Brainfluence: 100 Ways to Persuade and Convince Consumers with Neuromarketing](#) by Roger Dooley
- Kindle: [Brainfluence: 100 Ways to Persuade and Convince Consumers with Neuromarketing](#) by Roger Dooley
- Brainfluence Ep #46: [What Great Brands Do with Denise Lee Yohn](#)
- [HEB](#)
- [Popeyes Chicken](#)
- [Wegmans](#)
- [Perch](#)
- [Jason's Deli](#)
- [BJ's Restaurant Brewhouse](#)

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Full Episode Transcript:

Welcome to the Brainfluence Podcast with Roger Dooley, author, speaker and educator on neuromarketing and the psychology of persuasion. Every week, we talk with thought leaders that will help you improve your influence with factual evidence and concrete research. Introducing your host, Roger Dooley.

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Roger Dooley: Welcome to *The Brainfluence Podcast*. I'm Roger Dooley. Today's episode is a first because it marks the first time we've had a repeat guest on the show. We've invited our guest back not because we're running out of new ones but because since we chatted last, she's got some great new insights to share.

She was Sony Electronics' first brand leader as Vice President/General Manager, Brand and Strategy. And she led strategy at ad agencies for accounts like Burger King, Land Rover, and Unilever. You can find our guest's writings at places like *Harvard Business Review*, *Forbes*, and *Advertising Age*, she's a contributor at Neuromarketing too. With a recent post about a retailer that is thriving by providing a unique customer experience.

She is a fellow Wiley author with her previous book, *What Great Brands Do*. And her newest book is *Extraordinary Experiences: What Great Retail and Restaurant Brands Do*, that's now available in Kindle format. Welcome to the

show, Denise Lee Yohn.

Denise Lee Yohn: Hi Roger, thank you so much for having me on your show.

Roger Dooley: Well, it's great to have you back. I really enjoyed *Extraordinary Experiences*. It's a fun, quick read because really it's a series of profiles of companies that are succeeding, sometimes in the face of adversity, by strategies that build their brand.

You talk about retailers like Costco and HEB, restaurants as diverse as Popeyes and Buffalo Wild Wings. Is there sort of a single thing or a theme that ties these different brands together? Because they're pretty diverse.

Denise Lee Yohn: They are and they're purposely diverse. I really wanted to show the range. The thing that unites all of them is their approach to brand building, which is this approach that I introduced in my first book, *What Great Brands Do*. I call it "brand as business." Basically it's using your brand as the thing to drive, align, and guide everything you do. So all of these companies, from what I could tell, put their brand at the center of the organization and that's what they all have in common.

Roger Dooley: Well Popeyes Chicken is the first example in the book and that to me it seems like a really unlikely candidate for brand building. It's kind of an old brand and their product, deep-fried chicken, who eats that these days? But nevertheless, they've turned things around there. How did they succeed?

Denise Lee Yohn: Yeah. Well first of all, Roger, I would encourage you to go there because they've definitely updated their menu. Although I still would say their fried chicken and biscuits are the best thing on their menu, they have a whole range of New Orleans-style inspired food. That really was part of their turnaround.

Back in, I think it was 2007 or 2008, the company was really struggling in part because of what you were just implying. You know, people weren't eating a lot of fried chicken. People were moving more towards healthy options and the economic problems, etc.

But the woman who took the reins as CEO, Cheryl Bachelder, and her leadership team did something that I think was quite extraordinary. Rather than just focusing on, we need to fix our food, or we need to run a brand campaign, or all the kind of traditional, typical things that I think people would do in that kind of dire situation, they actually chose to start inside. Which is one of my brand building principles: great brands start inside. Meaning, they cultivate a strong brand-led culture inside their organizations.

That's exactly what they did by engaging their franchise operators and by developing these strong, vital, vibrant partnerships with their franchise operators, they were able to turn around the business to become this great success story. That's really what caught my eye and why I originally wanted to have them in the book because they have just produced such phenomenal results.

Roger Dooley: Well that's usually a relationship with a lot of tension, isn't it? Where you've got the franchisees at odds with the franchise owner?

Denise Lee Yohn: Absolutely. Cheryl tells this funny anecdote that not only did they decide that they were going to focus on their franchise relationships, which in itself is unusual. Like you said, most of the time, I think every franchise organization will say, "We like to partner with the franchisees." It does tend to be one that's a little bit more adversarial or there's just more tension I think.

But she says that not only did they decide they were really going to focus on improving that relationship, but they were actually going to choose to love their franchisees. Which she said, "Sometimes we weren't even sure we liked our franchisees but we chose to love them in the sense that we chose to really serve them. Put their needs in front of ours. Figure out what was important to them and make sure that we delivered on those things."

So it was a very unusual decision but I think the results are clear. They've, not only from a sales and margin

standpoint, have been able to turnaround their business. But they have been able to execute a lot of turnaround in their menu and their restaurant design all because they have this really solid culture that they've cultivated.

Roger Dooley: Yeah, that's great. Another company you talk about is HEB, which as you know is one of my favorites. Actually quoted some of my *Forbes* stuff in your book.

Denise Lee Yohn: Yes, I was so inspired by your post about them, yeah.

Roger Dooley: Well, thanks. For those of our listeners who don't happen to be from Texas, which is probably most of them, HEB is a supermarket chain that in the U.S. only has outlets in the state of Texas. That seems kind of an odd strategy but they're extremely successful. They have large, successful stores. They do a lot of volume. They do a lot of really smart things.

So I actually wrote a *Forbes* post about some of the neuromarketing-oriented things that they do involving just the way they appeal to various customer biases. For instance, a bias towards Texas, which is something that many Texans have. They do a whole host of things like that.

I'm curious, Denise, when you dug into this, what kind of feedback did you get from inside the organization and what other things did you observe that they were doing right?

Denise Lee Yohn: Well, I have to say they were very tight-lipped. I don't know if you were able to talk to anyone at the organization when you wrote your post. I was not able to penetrate the organization to do a one-on-one interview like I did with most of the other companies in my book. I really had to do a lot of research on what had already been published and what are the quotes and stories that had already been told by the people in the organization.

In that research, what I discovered is what you talked about, was in their store experience. They are I think most well-known for all these sampling stations they have around the store, particularly wine sampling. It seems like such a common sense thing to do but you know it really is a hallmark and distinguishing characteristic of HEB in that they make it so fun and they make it so engaging.

I think it's a great way to get people to want to go to their store and want to spend time there. In fact, I think that you alluded to the fact that they serve wine samples is almost like an excuse for, "Oh, I think I might need to go to HEB again today." [Laughs]

Roger Dooley: Right, exactly.

Denise Lee Yohn: So the principle that I talk about, the brand building principle I talk about for HEB, is that they avoid selling products. In the sense that they're not pushing their products on you. They're just making their experience so engaging, so fun, so entertaining, that you end up buying a ton of their products. That's what really I think what great brands do.

Roger Dooley: Yeah and the experience in the store is really unlike anything else that I've seen at a supermarket, except maybe for Wegmans. Like Wegmans, when you look at the supermarket rankings by consumers, Wegmans is out there as about the best-loved store and HEB is somewhere around number two despite the fact that their profile nationally is pretty low. They've got a great reputation but it is all about the experience, the sampling.

There's actually research, I related this in my book, *Brainfluence*, that people who are given a food sample exiting a store had a better opinion of their TV at home than people who didn't have a food sample. Obviously the food sample had absolutely nothing to do with their TV at home but it altered their mood and their perception of their world.

To me, it's like if I had a supermarket, by golly, I would be giving people samples on every corner because people respond well to that. HEB pretty much has that down, although I've noticed it varies by store a little bit. Nevertheless, they do that and they do it well.

Denise Lee Yohn: Yeah, that's what I find so fascinating about this whole area of neuromarketing and all the work that you do, Roger. Is that there's so much going on in our brains and the way that we process information that little things, like you said, that may seem totally unrelated actually are very connected. I think if marketers, if business leaders, can better understand that, they would be able to have a lot more influence on their consumers than they realize.

Roger Dooley: I think that HEB must do a good job with their employees. I just saw that they're initiating a company stock program, which is a first. I think that for supermarket employees, they're often viewed as kind of transient and not necessarily folks that you focus on retaining rather than just getting bodies in place and having them adequately trained to get the job done.

Denise Lee Yohn: Right.

Roger Dooley: So they must be doing something right there. I've noticed too the attitude. By and large, their employees are a lot better than competing stores. You know what I mean? If you need help, they help you. If you have a problem, they don't look at you with suspicion as if, "Okay, is this customer trying to put one over on me? Are they returning this for some unauthorized reason?" Instead it's, "No problem, we'll get it taken care of."

Denise Lee Yohn: Right. I think that's another example of starting inside, cultivating that great culture where your employees love working there and they love serving their customers.

Roger Dooley: Well that's something that Costco is known for, isn't it?

Denise Lee Yohn: Yes. So I talk about Costco in the fourth chapter of my book, around great brands don't chase customers. One of the things that I think is really interesting about Costco is that they are very strategic about who they appeal to and who they don't.

It's not just because they're a membership company. Sam's Club could do the same thing. But I think Sam's Club operates much more on this low price, mass market basis. Where Costco I think wants the savvy, middle- to upper-income customer, who is going to be looking not only for basic products, what Costco calls triggers, like the toilet paper and the toothpaste that you need.

But then also, they're willing to spend on treasures. The \$1,000 foosball table that you happen to be strolling by in the store and then, "Oh my gosh, I have to have that." Or you know, when I was in the store recently they had these huge eight-foot tall teddy bears and it was kind of one of those things, it was like, there's only a certain person that would be shopping in Costco and stick one of those things in their cart.

Roger Dooley: But I guess if you target the right demographics, there's a greater chance that one person in a thousand will say, "Okay, I actually have a rec room where I can put that foosball table," or whatever.

Denise Lee Yohn: Absolutely, that's what Costco does. I think that they are very smart about making their membership costs fairly high, so I mean they're not appealing to everyone. Then they do all sorts of things like they limit customer's product choices. Speaking about that toilet paper, I think that they probably only have a few different varieties of toilet paper and you have to buy one of those as opposed to if you go to a regular Walmart or Target, you have your full selection.

They also limit payment options for their customers and they're doing it to make sure that their costs can remain low. In doing so, they attract a certain kind of customer that has that sensibility. Who says, "I'm a smart shopper. I know that I can get great deals at Costco. But they're not just low prices. They're really good, quality products, interesting products, desirable brands, things that I didn't know that I needed that all of a sudden I must have." They've just done a really great job of tapping into that mindset.

Roger Dooley: Yeah, but limiting payment options always kind of surprised me. They used to only take

American Express and then they have just changed that fairly recently. Actually, with a noticeable impact on American Express' bottom line.

Denise Lee Yohn: Right.

Roger Dooley: You wouldn't really think about one retailer as having that kind of impact but when you're Costco and your only payment method is American Express, other than cash or debit, that is a big deal.

Denise Lee Yohn: Yeah, I wish I could call up the statistic but I remember reading about when Costco made the decision to sever the partnership with American Express. The amount of business that American Express got through Costco was huge and that's because Costco is huge. Millions of people shop there every week and I think that that just shows the attraction that Costco has been able to develop with their brand.

Roger Dooley: Yeah, I think that limiting their customer base is interesting because obviously, you think about that if you're selling a purely luxury product, if you're selling Ferraris, clearly you're addressing only a small segment of the market. But if you're selling health and beauty products and food products and whatnot, I mean everybody uses those.

In general, the brands that they sell there are mass-market brands that are not super elite brands of toilet paper or something. But despite that, they still aim at a higher-end segment of the market.

Denise Lee Yohn: Yeah, there's a great quote from Sol Price, the founder of the company that became Costco. He has this great quote that just says a retailer can't be all things to all people. He specifically designed his store to appeal to these small business people and savvy shoppers who would be willing to pay a little bit more to get the membership but then also would come back for all the value that they were getting.

Roger Dooley: I guess having transitioned from our chat about HEB, Costco also does a pretty good job of sampling, both in food and wine.

Denise Lee Yohn: Yes. Then also, they treat their employees very well, paying well above the minimum wage and they have these long-standing employees. Most of their leadership were employees that started off working on the floor. So again, it's one of these things where you start seeing that even though these brands seem very different, they actually have several things in common.

Roger Dooley: Just about a week or so ago, Denise, you wrote a guest post at Neuromarketing. It was focused on Pirch, a company that I haven't heard of but they're a luxury appliance retailer. One of the crazy things, or apparently crazy things they do, is let customers try out showerheads in a real shower and they even give them bathrobes.

Denise Lee Yohn: Yes.

Roger Dooley: I guess it's not so crazy if you're Pirch.

Denise Lee Yohn: No. Also, all of their appliances work. So you open a refrigerator and it's actually cold inside. You can even start up their stoves, etc. and this is all part of their brand building principle of sweating the small stuff. Them thinking through the details of the customer experience and making sure that they have really designed that customer experience to appeal to their target customers.

So one of the ways that they figured out how to do this is to use this neuroscience approach that is known by its acronym, SCARF. This is, I don't know if you'd ever heard of this before, I hadn't until the CEO of Pirch, Jeffery Sears, mentioned it to me as part of what inspired his customer experience design.

Roger Dooley: Yeah, it's David Rock.

Denise Lee Yohn: Yes. Okay, all right. So the whole acronym is based on ... well I think the original research was about how people relate to each other, organizationally, and leader to employee. I think is very informative on how people develop trusting relationships and how people relate to each other, how people communicate to each other. But what was interesting about what Pirch had done is they applied it to the customer experience.

The first letter S in SCARF stands for status. So one of the things they want to make sure their customers feel as soon as they walk in the stores is a sense of status. You're important. You're valuable. So what do they do? They have baristas with these \$5,000 espresso machines in this beautiful café environment right at the front of their stores. So you walk in and this barista will offer to handcraft an espresso beverage or give you an infused water or juice, or something if you're not a coffee drinker, complimentary, just so that you feel comfortable. You feel important. You feel valued as a customer there.

Then the rest of the experience is also designed to appeal to those kind of human needs that we have that I think most companies, most retailers, might overlook or take for granted.

Roger Dooley: Yeah, that's interesting. Oddly, yet another one of your brands is giving people stuff to eat or drink for free. So I'm detecting a trend here. But I think the idea that you've got, this very upscale offering where it's not just we've got a coffee pot over here, you can help yourself, but a barista doing custom drinks with a really expensive machine.

I know the first time I was in a Lexus dealership, we had one back in Indiana, the first one in our area opened up. It was really a very different experience than other car dealers I'd been in because at that point, the typical car dealer waiting area, if you were having your car serviced or something, was a room with some plastic chairs and maybe a pot of coffee that had been on for a couple of hours or something. If you were really lucky, one of the people had stopped and bought a box of doughnuts on the way into the shop.

Where the lounge area at the Lexus dealer was like a very nice living room or something. It was elegant, it was well furnished. They had a really nice television. The snacks were upscale and so on. It was just a very different kind of environment but it goes to that same thing of conveying status. As a customer going in there, I felt very pampered compared to the typical experience where, "Oh man, going to have to sit here for an hour. Hope I can get some work done."

Denise Lee Yohn: Right, exactly. Yeah, so status is one of the things that they do. Another letter in the SCARF model is autonomy, A, autonomy. That has to do with allowing people, or enabling people, to feel a sense of control over what's going on. So I think that's part of the reason why they have all of their fixtures that work and then if you do want to go take a shower ... They even have very upscale, they'll sell like a massage table. So you can actually book an appointment to test out the massage table if you want.

But I think that the reason why they do this is so that people feel like, "If I'm going to spend this kind of money, I want to make sure that I love this product." So to give people that sense of control, that sense of autonomy, I think is really important. It definitely works on multiple levels, I think, with the customer. Not only, "Hey, that's cool that I can take a shower here." But, "This actually makes me feel more confident in my purchase."

Roger Dooley: Well, yeah. I think that you wouldn't get a showerhead then into your house and say, "Well, gee, this showerhead doesn't really work the way I expected it to." You've already tried it out and I think there's probably a dual factor. Where first of all, it should do what you expect. Probably even if it wasn't exactly what you were expecting, you say, "Gee, I tried it out. So, I can't tell them now that it's wrong."

I think there's a sensory component to all this because like I was thinking about the refrigerator. It's like, do you really need to have a working refrigerator in the store? Probably not. You can evaluate, you can open up the door, you can see how big it is inside. Where the shelves are and where the drawers are. It's really kind of superfluous to have it running in cold.

But, if the lights come on, if it is cold inside and that sort of thing, there's a sensory component to that. Also when you talk about physically trying out a shower or a massage table, there's a really strong sensory component to that. I'm sure it makes the products more memorable.

Denise Lee Yohn: Yeah. One of the things that Jeffery, the CEO of Pirch, talked to me about was that they want people to imagine ... they talk to their customers about what kind of life do they want to live. How do they want to use their kitchen? How do they want to use their bathroom?

So I think that sometimes when you have that sensory of opening a refrigerator door, it takes you to this place where you can imagine, is this the refrigerator that I really want? How cool would I feel opening this refrigerator? It's like, "Wow, this thing is beautiful and oh my gosh, I want it." So there's kind of this imagination that I think is triggered. Either imagination or maybe memory even in some cases that are triggered by these strong sensory experiences that actually enhance the customer experience and lead people to purchase.

Roger Dooley: Yeah, I think that's very powerful. Something else that Pirch does I think that's very smart is the way they use language. They call their baristas the "Barista of Joy." Then the customer service department is the "Department of Yes." I think that that is so smart because with those very simple, little changes, they're telling both the individual in that position and the customer what that function really is there for.

I think that I've certainly been in customer service situations with retailers where there's an employee who's trying to do a good job for their employer. They're not necessarily a mean-spirited person, but they're trying to protect their employer, so they're giving you the third degree about why you're returning something. Or the receipt is out of date. "Our policy is 30 days and this is 35," whatever. They're not necessarily bad people but I think that when you're the Department of Yes, you just have a different attitude toward that job.

Denise Lee Yohn: I can't remember what is the company that does this, but there's a company that had been written up for having their receptionists at their corporate office, his or her official title is the Director of First Impressions.

I think that to your point, to the person who's in that role, it makes them really think about, "Am I making a positive first impression?" It also makes a statement, this company takes a first impression that seriously that they put somebody in charge of it. So these small details, these little triggers, stimulate different responses. I think that makes all the difference in the world.

Roger Dooley: Great thing about that is it's free. Some of the things that we're talking about here, where you're providing sensory experiences for your customers or you are paying your employees a lot more than competitors pay their employees, as Costco does. Clearly, those things cost money. They may have benefits but it's going to cost some to get you there.

But it costs you absolutely nothing to frame a person's job using language that exemplifies what you're really hoping they're doing.

Denise Lee Yohn: Yes, absolutely. Now importantly, you can't just give someone that title and then not give them the training or the encouragement or affirmation to do the job the way that you expect them to, right?

Roger Dooley: Right. Or the tools for that matter.

Denise Lee Yohn: Yes, exactly. So there is an investment but it's not a costly one in the terms of the way that we would think about costs. It's more, are you being intentional? Are you allowing your brand values and attributes to show through in this touch point, or in this person, or in this experience? And really being very thoughtful about it?

Roger Dooley: Right. Well, yeah, I think you couldn't have a person who's in the Department of Yes and then give that person 43 ways to say no to a customer.

Denise Lee Yohn: [Laughs] Exactly.

Roger Dooley: Well, Denise, you work with a lot of big brands and the companies that you describe are all relatively large. How can a small business create customer experiences that are at least somewhat extraordinary?

Denise Lee Yohn: Well I would suggest that they shouldn't just aim for somewhat extraordinary. I think that they can be extraordinarily extraordinary.

I think it first comes down to being very clear about what you stand for as a brand. I think that most people when they ask me that question, they want me to say, "Oh, you need to be on Facebook more." Or, "You need to give your salespeople a raise." They want this one thing that they can do. All the little things you do are going to add up but I think the most important thing is that you start in the right place and that is defining what your brand stands for.

What is its purpose or essence? What are its defining values and attributes? Then you use that as a filter for all of your decisions. So everything you do, you ask yourself, am I doing this because it helps my brand essence come to life? So then you start designing your customer experience with your brand values and attributes in mind.

You look for ways that maybe your competitors haven't paid attention ... like a touch point, or maybe a way of serving your customer that your competitors haven't really thought of. Or, everyone does it the exact same way. Or you look for maybe a white space, a place where, gosh this really doesn't seem like a big deal but we're going to make it a big deal. It's design your customer experience in those kinds of details that I think can really make your customer experience extraordinary.

Roger Dooley: I think maybe one advantage that a small business has is that often the owner and key managers or the owners can be directly involved with a lot of this. Once you start scaling to dozens of locations, maybe in different cities, I think that probably presents its own challenge. I mean, clearly at that point, you have a formula that's working and you've got perhaps some financial resources to do cool things but extending that whole operation, the ethos of what you're doing to remote locations, has got to be challenging.

Denise Lee Yohn: Yeah, so that's why actually I chose Jason's Deli as a brand to talk about in my book. They're kind of a mid-sized restaurant chain and I would say that I really did try to include a range of sizes of companies. So one of the companies I profile I think is a restaurant chain that has like ten or fifteen locations. Pirch, as you said, is a small retailer. So I really did try to show a range.

I think that to your point, as companies grow, they need to be very intentional about sharing their values, aligning people with the brand, and not just taking it for granted. Jason's Deli was founded with some very strong core values. While none of the values are particularly earth shattering, they cover the main things that any other restaurant chain would, like great quality product at a fair price. I'm not doing justice to their values but they're not ... my point is that they're not these extraordinary values that, "Oh my gosh, I have to be really clever about them."

But what they have done is been very disciplined about ensuring that all of their franchisees, all of their store managers, all of their leaders, go through core values training. Basically, a deep-dive, in-person, multi-day experience where they are going through these values and figuring out: what do these values mean in the day-to-day decisions that I make in my role? How can I make sure that I'm making these decisions on brand?

The leadership of the organization, the corporate leadership, is constantly talking with their people about these things. So over time, even though they've grown, I think now Jason's Deli has over 200 locations, and I could be wrong, it maybe several hundred locations. They still have a very strong core center because they've been very intentional about making sure that everyone who works on their brand understands what their brand really means.

Roger Dooley: Yeah, I think you really can't emphasize training enough. I know that we've got some favorite restaurants here. One of them is a chain restaurant called BJs. They're, I don't know, probably a medium-sized chain. They're not everywhere. But always have a really nice food experience, very consistent food, always very good.

The thing that surprises me is that the wait staff is always quite knowledgeable even though sometimes you will catch somebody on their first day or their first week, compared to so many other restaurants that I've been to where you go and ask a question about something and, "Gee, I'll check on that. I'll ask. It's my first day." Or, "Just started."

From what I can tell, they have turnover, probably much like other restaurants. I see a lot of new people every time I go in there. So perhaps the retention rate is a little bit better but clearly their training is much better than most of the competition because it's very rare that you will stump somebody with a question or they won't be able to give you a response. I mean, if you ask something really unusual, they'll find out for you. But to me, that has to be part of the reason why their quality and service are so consistent from visit to visit.

Denise Lee Yohn: Absolutely. I think that what I would suggest to folks is that there's not only skills training but there's kind of more of cultural and brand training. In the sense of not only do you know the answer to how many calories are in this sandwich, but you're going to be answering that question in a way that really engages the customer and delivers the brand.

So in my first book, *What Great Brands Do*, I actually end the chapter about great brands start inside, I introduce several tools and methods that companies have used to do that. Whether it's developing a brand toolbox that has examples and definitions and decision guides for their employees to help them understand what their brand stands for and how to make decisions that support it, to brand engagement sessions where you really are taking the people through in-depth, in-person training to help them understand what their role looks like when they're doing it on brand.

So I think that if this is a particular area of interest to any of your listeners, I would just encourage you to check out that chapter because it does have resources that will help you figure out how you can actually do this kind of training.

Roger Dooley: Denise, we've talked about a number of the companies that are in the book. Is there a company that didn't make it into the book that if you were going to revise it or expand it that would definitely make the list?

Denise Lee Yohn: Oh, gosh, Roger. There are so many. It's funny, when I started off, I probably had like closer to twenty. So there are seven companies in my book and I probably had closer to twenty or twenty-five. But that was primarily because I was first screening them to make sure that they were practicing this unique approach to brand building. And again, using your brand as the thing that drives, aligns, and guides everything that you do.

But then I also wanted to make sure that these brands were held in high regard by customers. So I looked at customer surveys, whether they be ones that were conducted in the industry. So like there's a customer experience study that is done that is very well respected. There's a market force study that also looks at customer experience. So several different customer research, or consumer research, studies I looked at to make sure, to qualify the brands in the book.

I looked at financial performance. As much information as possible, some of these companies that I profiled are not public, so I kind of had to rely on either reading between the lines or maybe what analysts have reported about them. But making sure that they were profitable. Having higher profit margins and continuing to grow profitably is the mark of a strong brand. So I wanted to make sure that the brands I talked about met that criteria.

Then also that they were really growing and that they were evolving. They were improving. Because I think that a great brand doesn't just sit on its laurels but it really is moving forward. So I tried to take a lot subjectivity out of that. Once I did that and screened all the brands, these seven really rose to the top as the ones that I felt would not only stand up to the test of anyone saying, "Is this brand really great?" But then also would provide the insight into how you and I, readers, can actually develop our own great brands and extraordinary experiences.

Roger Dooley: It will be interesting to revisit them in five years or ten years and see how they're doing then. From what I can see, they should still be prospering. There's the *In Search of Excellence* effect where a number of the companies profiled as excellent somehow suffered reversals in the years following the publication of that book.

Although it wasn't necessarily because the book was wrong but there were obviously other circumstances at work there.

Let me remind our listeners that we're talking to my favorite branding expert, Denise Lee Yohn. Her new book, *Extraordinary Experiences: What Great Retail and Restaurant Brands Do*, is available in the Kindle Store now. Denise, how can people find you and your content online?

Denise Lee Yohn: Please go to my website which is DeniseLeeYohn.com. So that's DeniseLeeYohn dot com. Not only can you learn more about me but that's also where you can access free chapters of both of my books. You also have lots of downloadable material. That will also give you access to my blog where I'm posting regularly new insights and new stories. So that's definitely a way to get more information and insights and tools from me.

Then to interact with me directly, I really recommend Twitter. That's probably my most active platform and I know that, Roger, you and I are connected through Twitter. My handle is [@DeniseLeeYohn](https://twitter.com/DeniseLeeYohn) and I just love learning from folks. I love when people post articles and I find out information from them. I love sharing what I've found. It's just a great platform. So, on Twitter.

Roger Dooley: Great. We will have links to your books, Denise, and your Twitter profile and your website on the show notes page at RogerDooley.com/Podcast. We'll also have a text version of our conversation there. So Denise, thanks so much for being on the show.

Denise Lee Yohn: I really enjoyed it. Thank you so much, Roger.

Thank you for joining me for this episode of the Brainfluence Podcast. To continue the discussion and to find your own path to brainy success, please visit us at RogerDooley.com.

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