

## A Great Customer Experience Isn't Enough

Today I'm pleased to share a guest post by [Denise Lee Yohn](#).

To excel in customer experience, you can't just rely on good design and solid execution. Your customer experience shouldn't just be great -- it should also be differentiated.

Customer experience has evolved just as product and service did. Time was, all you needed was a good quality product. But then, as competition and customers' expectations increased, product manufacturers realized that quality was no longer a strong enough appeal. Products needed to be different in order to stand out among all the customers' choices, to give people specific reasons to choose them, and to prompt repeat purchases.

The same thing has happened with customer service. Truly excellent service may still be hard to find, but generally speaking, friendly, knowledgeable employees have become table stakes for most companies. Retailers now look to tactics like equipping employees with digital devices and providing personal consultations as ways to differentiate their service.

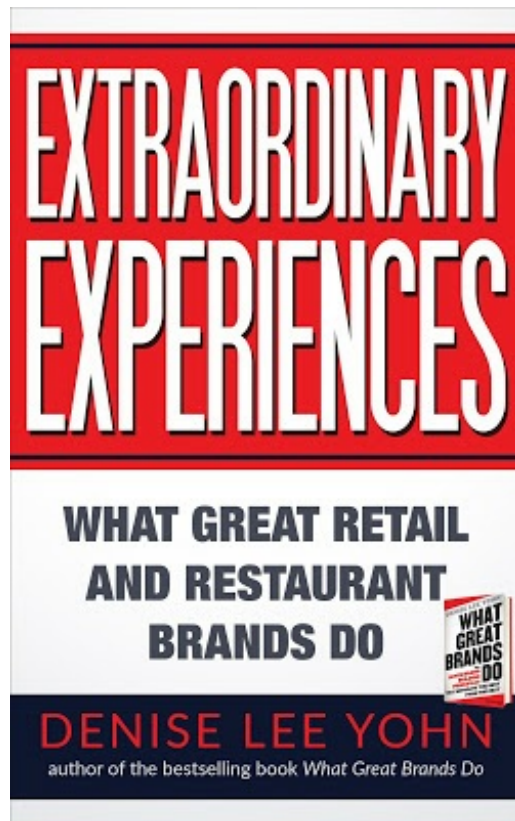
Differentiation is just as important in customer experience. Because customer experience is still an emerging discipline in some industries, you may think that simply undertaking a more rigorous approach to designing and managing your customer experiences may be enough. And to be sure, customer experience fundamentals -- being more attuned to customers' need along their entire journey, integrating different elements into a cohesive and seamless experience, and consistently executing with excellence -- are all important.

But to establish your customer experience as a true competitive advantage, it must be distinctive -- it must be noticeable, valuable, and memorable to customers. Good, generic customer experiences will soon simply define the playing field. Differentiation will be how brands win.

And your customer experience can't just be different for the different's sake. Your customer experience must be developed and delivered based on unique brand attributes and values. In fact, your customer experience is the most powerful way to make your brand uniqueness real and valuable.

Consider how Westin Hotel & Resorts has aligned its customer experience with its brand positioning rooted in wellness. Westin goes beyond providing a seamless reservation and check-in process, clean and comfortable rooms, and good amenities

The Westin wellness brand experience started back in 1999 when the company introduced the luxe Heavenly Bed to help guests sleep better. This extended into relaxation and stress-reducing offerings like the Heavenly Bath and Heavenly Bath. Now there's WestinWORKOUT fitness centers, RunWESTIN group runs and running maps, and a program in which guests can borrow fitness apparel and shoes during their stay. Room service and restaurant menu options feature juices, smoothies, and other healthful offerings. And just last year, Westin introduced a Sleep Sensor Wearable-Lending program, in which guests can use digital devices to improve their sleep through sleep pattern tracking and virtual coaching.



PIRCH, the high-end appliance and plumbing retailer, provides another example of a brand-driven customer experience. PIRCH's unusual brand motto, "Live Joyfully," is baked into every aspect of the store experience. A "Barista of Joy" greets customers at the entrance to the store and offers them a complimentary coffee or infused water. In the "Sanctuary" section of the store, customers will find working shower heads, saunas, and tubs, along with an invitation to schedule a time to test the showers -- PIRCH will even provide bathrobes. Samples of food prepared using PIRCH products flow freely throughout the kitchen area and a "Department of Yes" sign designates the customer service area. New employees are trained to empathize with customers and to tap their own personal experiences of joy to shape their customer interactions. All this adds up to customers feeling joyful because of the genuine, thoughtful experience PIRCH deliberately designs and manages around joy.

These are just two examples of extraordinary experiences; many other companies are following suit. Customer experience has become a critical business discipline. Now it's time for you to make it a powerful brand differentiator.

*Learn more about creating distinctive customer experiences in [Denise Lee Yohn's](#) the new book, [Extraordinary Experiences: What Great Retail and Restaurant Brands Do](#) – available now. Blending a fresh perspective, twenty-five years of experience working with world-class brands including Sony and Frito-Lay, and a talent for inspiring audiences, Denise is a leading authority on building and positioning exceptional brands. Denise is also the author of the bestselling book *What Great Brands Do: The Seven Brand-Building Principles That Separate the Best from the Rest* (Jossey-Bass).*