

“Succession” lesson: Using your own product

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By Denise Lee Yohn Published: April 11, 2023



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Succession, the popular show on HBO, conveys helpful business insights including the importance of you using your own product. As a business leader, you must personally and regularly undergo the entire customer experience of your company as an actual customer would. This will help focus your attention on the most important aspects of your business, including understanding your customers and engaging your employees.

Leadership keynote speaker Denise Lee Yohn provides recommendations for using your own product or service and explains what you will learn from doing so.

Video transcript:



Cast of HBO's "Succession" (Photo: Arturo Holmes/Getty Images)

The HBO series *Succession* is back and chockful of lessons for real business leaders. In the first episode of the season, we learn how important it is for business leaders to use your own product.

For those who don't know, *Succession* revolves around a Rupert Murdoch-like media titan named Logan Roy and his children who want to take over the family business. The contrast between the business approaches of Logan and his kids has always been an undercurrent to the more sensational narratives of the show, but the final scene of this new episode reveals a very important difference: Logan actually uses his company's products — he watches the news shows on his network — while his kids don't. And in fact, they seem to care more about seizing power and running the company than about its products.

Now, I'm guessing you care about your company's products and services, but when was the last time you actually used one? And used it as a real customer would? Even if you're using your product, you need to undergo the entire customer experience as an actual customer would.

For example, if you're a retailer or restaurateur, you might often try your newest product or buy the most popular products. But what if you ordered one of your products that has a low turnover rate or one that requires a lot more support from your staff? What if you went to one of your locations *Undercover Boss*-style and experienced what customers do when they need help, or try the product, go through the payment transaction, or make a return? Not to mention parking, navigating your store, using the restroom.

If your company does business online, what if you actually used your company's website and digital tools to shop for and order one of your products or services online and get it delivered to your home? You might be surprised to see what your product and packaging looks like after taking a cross-country ride through your distribution channel.

Or, if you run a services company, what if you called up your customer service 800 number or opened up the chat and tried to make a complaint? You might learn a lot sitting through the wait time, trying to communicate with live representatives and/or automated services and going through the multiple steps involved in getting your issue resolved.

You see, I've found that many business leaders get so distracted with all the responsibilities of running their companies that they don't personally engage in their customer experience. Or they might be so focused on what's next for the company that they don't manage the current reality of it. This can lead you to prioritize the wrong things, lose touch with your customers and alienate your employees. In the case of the *Succession* show, because Logan's kids don't use their products, they have no idea what is required to execute the turnaround the business needs.

Sometimes people use the phrase "eat your own dog food" to refer to the practice of using your own product or service. That makes it sound like an unpleasant and degrading experience. But when I've helped business leaders deliberately, personally and regularly engage in their customer experience, they say it's one of the most enlightening, helpful actions they've taken.

To book brand leadership expert Denise Lee Yohn to inspire and teach your people to become great leaders, see her [website](#) and [YouTube channel](#).

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