

When Culture Elevates Customer Experience: The Power Of Fusion

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What happens when a positive internal culture meets customer experience? You have a “fusion” that explodes with opportunity and translates into increased customer ratings, lower costs and accelerated growth. That’s according to [Denise Lee Yohn](#), who recently keynoted at the Medallia Experience 2025 event in Las Vegas.

I’ve been a fan of Lee Yohn’s work for years. Her latest book, *[Fusion: How Integrating Brand and Culture Powers the World’s Greatest Companies](#)*, was central to the theme of her speech. According to [Merriam-Webster](#), several definitions of the word *fusion* apply to Lee Yohn’s concept:

- A union by or as if melting, such as a merging of diverse, distinct or separate elements into a unified whole.

- The union of atomic nuclei to form heavier nuclei resulting in the release of enormous quantities of energy when certain light elements unite (as in nuclear fusion).

When customer experience (CX) and employee experience (EX) are combined, the sum is greater than the parts. In Lee Yohn's words, that's fusion. This concept aligns with what I've observed in my work with customer-focused companies. There is a correlation between companies that are great places to work and companies that are great to do business with. It's not a coincidence that brands known for providing exceptional customer experiences, such as Ritz-Carlton, Disney, Costco and Zappos, are also recognized for their outstanding company cultures.

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While it may be a stretch to compare CX and EX to atomic nuclei, the results of combining them can be explosive. And that's the point Lee Yohn was making. If you're only working on CX and not paying enough attention to EX, you're only working on half of the equation. She says, "If you want to be perceived differently on the outside, you have to think and act differently on the inside."

Lee Yohn suggests three strategies, which I've expanded with some of my commentary:

1. **Promote *customer empathy* throughout the organization.** She cited a survey that found only 14% of employees understood what their company's customer initiative was about. In other words, even if the company was investing in a CX initiative, a small percentage of employees actually knew about it. How can you create a culture focused on CX, expecting every employee to embrace their role in how they impact the experience, if they don't know about it? Communication must be consistent and clear across all departments—not just the front line.
2. **Create *culture-changing employee experiences*.** Lee Yohn's comments around this topic made me think of my *Employee Golden Rule* concept: "Do unto employees as you want done unto your customers." However, this is more than how employees are treated. Design experiences for employees that are aligned with your brand and CX. Lee Yohn explains, "Employees can and will only deliver experiences to customers they experience themselves." This is more than the way they are treated. The right tools must be provided for them to deliver the best experience possible. When investing in new technology to enhance the CX, companies often forget or neglect to upgrade employee-facing systems, which can send a negative message to the workplace. In short, don't forget to include employees when you're upgrading CX.

3. **Integrate EX with CX.** That's what the concept of fusion is about. Lee Yohn says, "Make them mutually reinforcing. Many customer issues are actually employee issues in disguise." Make it easy for employees to take care of customers, share ideas with managers and leaders, and make suggestions based on the feedback they hear when they interact with customers and other employees. Then be sure to share how these ideas and suggestions are implemented and making a difference for both CX and EX.

The fusion of CX and EX comes down to this. When you focus on both, it creates a brand that employees are proud to represent and that customers are happy to do business with. As Lee Yohn emphasized throughout her presentation, the most powerful brands are built from the inside out.

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