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# THE EXPERIENCE ECONOMY

Why Putting Customers First Drives Better Business Results



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MAY 2025

# The Experience Economy



In the experience economy, consumers value the experiences surrounding a product or service as much as, if not more than, the actual product itself. For example, rather than just selling coffee, a coffee shop might create an entire atmosphere with comfortable seating, unique décor, and personalized service that customers are willing to pay a premium for.

## Commodity Economy



Selling coffee beans (raw materials)

## Goods Economy



Selling packaged coffee (products)

## Service Economy



Serving coffee in a cafe (services)

## Experience Economy



Creating a memorable coffee experience (experiences)



### Customer Experience

- Significant upfront investment
- Without immediate ROI



### Product Approach

- Focused on metrics and efficiency
- Neglects the customer's needs

# Finding Balance

- Link experiences and design to business outcomes
- Define your audience - segment deeply
- Build for core audience needs
- Measure what matters; instrument everything
- Extend the event





# Link Business to Experience Design

Experience design creates real business success. By shifting focus on making customers feel special rather than just selling things, it removes frustrations and turns regular shoppers into loyal fans who spend more money over time.



## Disney Parks

Disney transformed the visitor experience through immersive storytelling environments and friction-reducing technology like , resulting in premium pricing power, high customer satisfaction, and \$34.1 billion in Parks division revenue for 2024. \* CNBC - Nov 14, 2024



## Apple

Apple's retail strategy prioritizes customer engagement through Genius Bars, trial areas, and workshops, generating industry-leading sales of \$5,500+ per square foot while maintaining 93%+ customer retention. This experiential approach builds lasting brand loyalty that extends across Apple's entire ecosystem, maximizing lifetime customer value far beyond individual transactions. \* Bloomberg - Oct 5, 2023



# Experience Design in Action: INBOUND



## Quality over Quantity

- Reduced daily attendance and increased ticket prices
- Eliminated high “no shows” → resulted in 93% show-rate
- Increased engagement over 3 days
- Invested in quality production, stronger logistics, frictionless event tech, premium talent and more delight moments that justified premium pricing



## Centered-Design

- “Festivalized” the experience creating (4) open-air stages
- Constant content flow throughout the space
- Allowed full usage of space; customers never had to leave the building
- Created organic moments of connection, increased sponsor and HubSpot HQ (product) engagement



## Year-Round Engagement

- Single event → continuous engagement cycle using data & content
- INBOUND as a tentpole
- 6-month enablement to prep, followed by 6-month brand campaign using event momentum
- Treats experiential marketing as a complete channel strategy rather than a one-time event

# Define Your Audience

## 1. Audience = Business Goal

Start with the single outcome the event must drive (e.g., qualified pipeline, product adoption, brand reach). The audience is the group whose behavior most directly affects that outcome. For larger events you can expand this out to a max of 3-4.

## 2. Stakeholder Feedback

Talk to sales, customer success, product, and exec sponsors. Capture the segments they need most: market tier, account size, fit/intent, usage score, role, industry, lifecycle stage.

## 3. Primary Segment

Choose the attribute that sorts people by the value they (and you) will gain—often role or lifecycle stage. Add secondary filters (industry, region, tech stack) only after the primary cut is clear.

## 4. Hard Data, Not Hunches

Pull CRM and product-usage reports, past attendee ROI scores, and web analytics. Compare event goals against segments that actually convert, renew, or expand.

## 5. Draft Personas

For each key segment, write a one-page “who, why, pain, desired win” summary. Skip fluff—focus on the trigger that would make them register and the metric that proves success. When speaking with Sales & CS reps create one-pagers for why they should enable also.

## 6. Ruthlessly Prioritize

Score segments by strategic value  $\times$  likelihood to attend  $\times$  cost to acquire  $\times$  influence on business (pipeline & GRR). Invite only the top-scoring tiers; design content and promotion for them first. If capacity remains, widen the net after.

# Framework in Action

## 1. Audience = Business Goal

Increase usage and product adoption, specifically new features.  
Event should be able to influence and increase customer usage score and ultimately, GRR.

## 2. Stakeholder Feedback

Customer Success sees the new features being released best fit customers from upmarket segments. They also see an opportunity to go after Brand Marketers specifically based off current usage of product and new feature beta testing.

## 3. Primary Segment

Based on Goal + Feedback, we aim to target Decision Makers + their primary End Users of the product (ICs or admins) in Enterprise Marketing teams, focusing on the Brand side. Example: Director+ of Brand Marketing team + their channel managers.

## 4. Hard Data, Not Hunches

Previous data says teams who attended (BDM + end users) accelerated faster on resigning their contract than single Decision Makers. However, we see individual channel managers who attend without a team used the product more, probably through testing, immediately post event.

## 5. Draft Personas

Previous steps tell us we need to draft (3) personas:

- BDMs of Upmarket Brand Marketing teams
- BDM + team of channel managers, upmarket
- Individual channel managers, upmarket

## 6. Ruthlessly Prioritize

Relook at all companies in your CRM that have Brand Marketing department and evaluate their current usage, fit and intent, current and potential MRR and cost per acquisition through Paid OR through time of outreach (engagement). Prioritize those who are most likely to convert. Everyone else is on the waitlist.

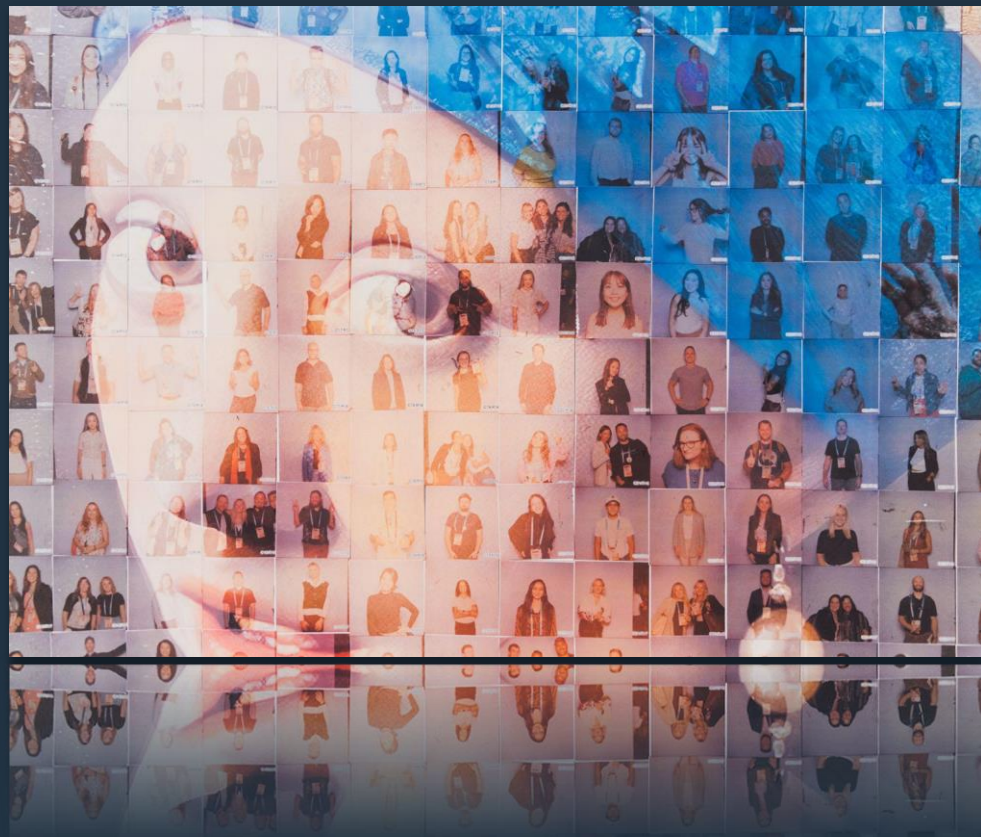


# Build for Customer Needs

It's not enough to just design the experience for your audience-  
the content that goes into the experience is just as important.

Design without context is just art or scenic.

It's building the house, but without the needs of the family  
moving into it.



WHAT THEY WANT

**WISH  
FULFILLMENT**



**WORK  
FULFILLMENT**

HOW WE SHOW UP

**EXCLUSIVITY &  
DELIGHT**



**EDUCATION &  
NETWORKING**

# Framework in Action

- Remember customers aren't monoliths; to command their time you must appeal to various needs and wants
- Survey your current audience
- Research your desired audience or audience gaps
- Determine your four "core" pillars for programming & content - what we call Narrative Pillars
- Narrative Pillars = Unified Approach to Content
- Develop your goals around what you want your customer to experience when they interact with that content

**CONNECTION  
& COMMUNITY**

**PURPOSE &  
VALUES**

**EDUCATION**

**CUSTOMERS  
& PRODUCT**

# Framework in Action

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A place to foster real, meaningful connections through networking, meetings and learning about others experiences. Expand your network and your world-view.

Leave inspired by the stories of our customer, employees and brand.

Learn from other humans successes (and failures) and go through a journey of self-discovery, building your knowledge-base and confidence to help you Grow Better.

Increase your expertise, gain insights about your industry and deepen your craft through tools, trends and knowledge-sharing.

A place to celebrate and learn from our customers and new additions to our products and platform.

Explore opportunities and intersections between your business and your customers' ever-changing needs.

# Framework in Action

When you've defined your Narrative Pillars, determine from those same results the types of emotions or feelings you want your audience to feel or convey at the event.

We call these Experience Pillars.





# Framework in Action

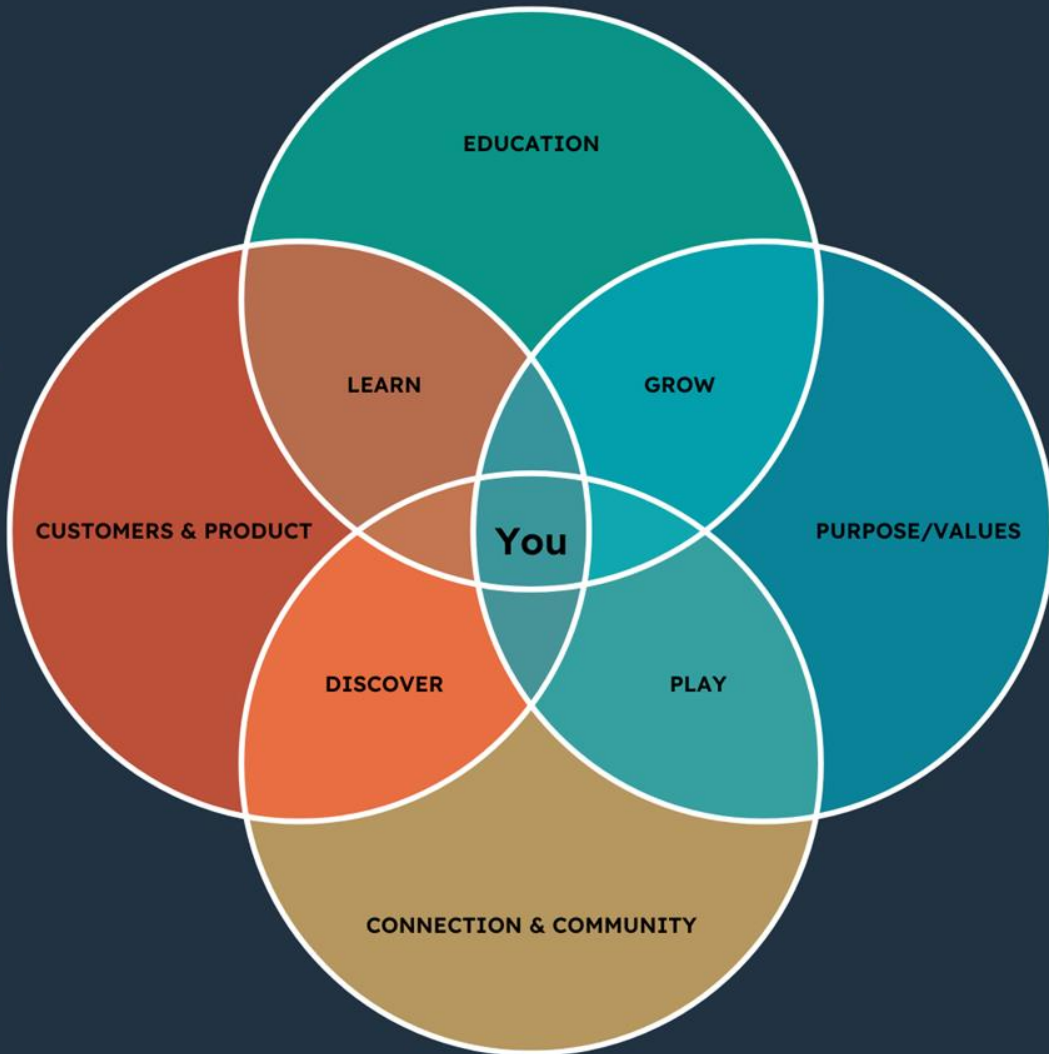
Now put it together to create a unified framework not only for your programming and content approach, but for your design approach that compliments.

The Narrative should be tightly intertwined with Experience - with participants at the center. Every program, activation or breakout should be rooted in an experience, that is anchored against two narratives.

By having a multi-prong approach of delivering experiences with multiple layers of narrative and feeling, it appeals to the multi-faced human with a broad range of interests and needs. We are creating for the PERSON, not the professional.

Example: If we create an experience around the “GROW” experience pillar, it should be anchored by Purpose and Education in design and content.

If we want to showcase a narrative that highlights our Customers and Product, we want to make sure it evokes feelings around Learning and Discovery.



# Framework in Action: Giving Agency

Creating a unified approach through aligning Narrative and Experience Pillars is a key to a successful event foundation.

But don't forget to give agency to your audience as well. Having an audience-centered approach goes both ways - you create programming that is influenced by the audience, but you also want the audience to influence their own experience by providing them choices to create-their-own journey (with some guardrails of course....)



## Call for Speakers / Unconference

Give your attendees the ability to host and curate sessions and meetups based off of their learnings, interests or areas of expertise. Create an internal board or allow external voting to decide who is chosen.



## Smart Agenda Engine

Give attendees access to an AI powered agenda that helps them build their dream schedule by using inputs related to interests, product usage and even past attendance history as your engine grows and learns.



## Gamification

Use the venue as one large game. Host interactive installations that encourage learning and discovery or create QR coded missions where attendees earn badges or prizes on the other side.



## Beyond the Breakout

Program in moments of surprise and delight and exclusivity, just cause. Think of it as your mid-day Starbucks run and how it makes you feel. Give them moments of pause, reflection, excitement and joy for no other reason than we need it. Think surprise ice cream truck at 3PM, a brass band that walks through the hall or a surprise swag drop at a secret location in the app.

# Measure what Matters

Too often experiential marketers fail at showing the success of their event due to not measuring what really matters to the business.

Often we rely on NPS scores or vanity numbers like “total number of attendees” or “potential reach” to showcase our campaigns and events. These numbers tell a very small story and don’t explain how not only the event, but the entire campaign, helped to support metrics that the business cares about - increasing awareness, retaining customers and being profitable.

Measuring data that tells the story of why creating an experience around your product is just as important as the quality of your product. Showing the balance to your leadership.



| Metric                         | What to Track  | Why It Matters  | How to Capture   |
|--------------------------------|--|---|--|
| Pipeline Influenced            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Time to Close (event vs. avg)</li> <li>Open deals touched</li> <li>ARR influenced within 90 days</li> </ul>   | Shows how well the event accelerates or creates revenue opportunities.  | Sync badge scans, meeting notes, and session check-ins to CRM; run pre/post pipeline reports related to attendee lists; create dashboards that compare attendee list performance vs. company average |
| Customer Expansion & Retention | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Renewal rate of attending accounts</li> <li>Expansion ARR closed</li> <li>Product adoption &amp; usage uptick</li> </ul>                                | Proves the event helps CS retain and grow existing business.            | Tag attending accounts; compare renewal/upsell and product usage vs. non-attending cohorts.  |
| Audience Fit Score             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>% of registrants in ICP (role, company size, product interest)</li> <li>Gap-fill efficiency (marketing leads sourced to hit segment targets)</li> </ul> | Confirms we attracted the right people, not just how many people.       | Map registration and pre-event survey data to ICP criteria; track paid/organic fills (external marketing efforts vs. internal marketing)   |
| Content Engagement Depth       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Session dwell time &amp; attendance</li> <li>Top-rated sessions by role</li> <li>Repeat views of on-demand content (if applicable)</li> </ul>           | Tells which topics move prospects forward and guide future programming. | Use RFID/NFC or scanner data, streaming analytics, and in-app ratings. Post-event surveys can also be used if app and scanning is not available for event size.                                      |
| Partner & Ecosystem Impact     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sponsor sales pipeline</li> <li>Partner NPS vs. previous events</li> <li>Co-marketing reach (joint social &amp; email engagements)</li> </ul>           | Demonstrates value for sponsors and strengthens the platform ecosystem. | Combine sponsor lead lists with CRM, collect sponsor feedback survey, measure campaign reach in marketing automation.  |

# The Results

The results demonstrate how investing in experience rather than just content or attendance numbers can drive stronger business outcomes and create lasting value for both the company and its customers.

**60%**

of attendees were NEW in 2023 and 2024

**+30 pt**

NPS increase

**2x MRR**

MRR attributed to the event doubled from 2022 to 2024

**+10pt**

Increase in retention amongst event attendee customers vs. non-attendee customers

**78%**

Average ICP match (improvement of 62% over 3 years)



Did attendees like  
it?



Did it move the  
needle?