

Transfer of expectations; Learning and leading change

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Consider this, how many times have you had a 'wow experience' in one situation and wished you had the same experience in another situation or context?

Article Summary

This question is at the heart of strategy. It won't just be about new ideas but it will be about how rapidly can Leaders and their Organizations learn from environment around to apply them into their business to offer value to their customers.

The principle is age old and simple. If you as a consumer experience a wow idea in one sphere of your life, it is but natural that you expect it in other spheres of life as well.

The ability of leaders to understand and lead 'transfer of expectations' is the key to anticipating & leading change. It is a key indicator of the learning agility of top leaders. In my own experience, my learning from one industry has helped shape up strategies, models applied in different industries.

I picked up in-depth understanding of CRM and technology in my stint with a cards business line in a financial services company. The ability to know, predict and cross sell to customers based on consumption patterns caught my imagination. The ability to stay in touch with your consumers and serving them continuously in a cost effective manner was learning relevant to all businesses.

As I moved to a healthcare assignment, my learning's from the cards business was instrumental in shaping and setting up of a patient care model in a chronic disease situation. The ability to create a service brand for chronic care patients and then build the platform to even analyze prescription patterns was one the first in the Country. This also aided efficiencies in the field sales and clinical staff.

Then in my retail start-up assignment, where achieving consistency of employee service over thousands of employees dispersed over a large geography was critical, my learning's from cards and healthcare led to setting up of an employee services model based on voice calling and CRM. If one business unit or location has peak calls on a particular topic, it was a good indicator on what was important to employees. The ability to be specific and localize issues to address them in a proactive manner was a strategic capability to have on large workforces. This created one common experience of service, a key contributor to engagement. Importantly it empowered employees to seek service on a range of issues, needs etc. The model enabled the Company to keep track of all employee lifecycle issues and reach out proactively on careers and development. Fundamental to this was my own transfer of expectations. I could feel my own expectations on the current situation were a result of my prior experiences.

Learning Agility

Learning agility is based on understanding the transfer of expectations from customers. These are customers of the experience, product and service an organization or individual provides. A typical customer is always learning rapidly on how he or she can better their lives. In countries where the number of hand phones is more than the number of landlines, one would be able to ask, how did they live before the advent of mobile technology. Would the mobile converts ever go back? Never. But the larger picture is that the mobility provided by new technologies becomes a minimum expectation and not a 'wow factor' any more.

I would ask every leader, what is it that you have picked up from your life experiences that you would like to transfer into delivering superior value to your customers?

Employee Engagement

This applies to not just consumers of your products but a critical consumer of your brand – employees. Employees behave in do different manner. When they come from varied experiences of past employment or read or listen to experiences of people they know, they transfer those as expectations from their current employer. In my view, engaging employees is based on how well Organization manages transfer of expectations. The ability to stay ahead of the expectation curve being created by multiple forces on employees is the key. If organizations gain insights into experiences that their employees are going through in their lives beyond their jobs, they would be able to design practices, deploy technologies that continuously keep their workforces engaged with the business direction and deliver sustainable results.

Leadership and Change

We all know the world is a more uncertain now than before. But it would be safe to assume that this statement was true of every period in the history of the world as change is constant. So even when we had stable economies or mature markets, building for the future always involved leading change. The critical skills for top leaders would be to understand and proactively manage the expectations of their stakeholders. The key belief is that they can learn from everything around them in real life. The best of the leaders at the top are ones who have consciously understand and learn how expectations from other experiences are impacting the expectations of their customers from their brand.