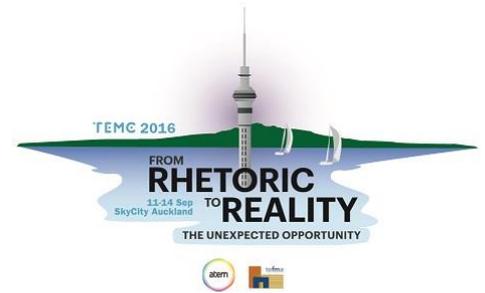


Concurrent Session C
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Session 4
The “X Factor” in “CX”: Transforming Customer Experience

Debbie Preston

Wintec

Debbie Preston is the Project Lead - Customer Experience at Wintec, a large Institute of Technology in Hamilton, New Zealand, which offers vocational and professional education from trade through to postgraduate level. As the Project Lead - Customer Experience, Debbie is responsible for the insights and activities required to make customer experience a point of difference for Wintec customers. Previously Debbie has worked as Brand Manager at Wintec and in Tourism Marketing in Tasmania and Victoria, Australia. Debbie is passionate about customer experience and believes that co-creating is an exciting way to design a desirable study experience.

Students who enjoy their time in an institution happily recommend it to other students. Their word of mouth endorsement is the most effective way of attracting new students to an organisation. How does an organisation ensure it is delivering the kind of experience that creates that loyalty and advocacy? Customer experience is a complex network of organisational units, business processes and staff that is intended to work together seamlessly. The organisation’s quality systems and feedback mechanisms, however, may point to a reality more random than seamless, with black holes lying in wait for the unwary. Some of the challenges in ensuring an excellent customer experience have been around for a long time, defying attempts to resolve them. Organisations with inner city campuses will recognise parking, for example, as a perennial issue. Facilities and support services, faculty, administration and quality units have all attempted the improvement of the customer experience. However, unleashing the power that comes from holding full and frank discussions about poor customer experience requires a significant organisational commitment.

The organisation decided to address its territorial customer services, where unit systems and processes determined the customer experience, by partnering with a consulting firm to flip things around in a “CX” customer experience project. The consultants undertook to develop a way to understand the current and desired experience and then consider the systems and processes required to build that experience. The “X-Factor” in the “CX project” is the human centred approach.

The project started with a “Discovery Phase”, mapping what was already known and moving on from there. This involved reviewing existing “first impressions” surveys of students at ten to twelve weeks into their programme, also reviewing the annual programme survey, managed by the Quality and Academic Unit; requests to facilities and support services and surveys, and student feedback forums run by Faculty. Workshops were held with customer-facing support and academic staff to extract assumptions and build assumptive personas and assumptive journey maps. Recruitment criteria for in depth interviews with customers included motivated and unmotivated students, also students who were still studying after 12 weeks and some who had left the programme early. Students were also randomly selected for a mix of age, campus, country, disabilities, users and non-users of support services, with or without children, work experience, or high expectations.

The staff on the project learned how to conduct in depth interviews and analyse findings. All interviews were captured on post it notes, mostly as direct quotes, and all the comments, positive and negative, were displayed on the walls of a situation room for everyone to see. The post-it note

stories were a very powerful presentation of an authentic student experience. The stories were frank and quite confronting. The project team “walked” staff through the wall twice a day, a guided tour which all staff were invited to. Principles were agreed to by all on a tour, to ensure that judgement was deferred, uncertainty was embraced and the insights were delivered in truth and love.

During the analysis common themes appeared, and the journey that customers experienced in their first 10 - 12 weeks became clearer. The analysis resulted in a customer journey map, with pain points and delights points mapped out. Also, the common themes were highlighted and the context of the themes were put into a matrix which enabled the identification of key customer experiences. The project team made recommendations for each interaction and each key experience. For example, one insight was that facilities were designed with a specific student experience in mind, but this was not the same as the actual experience. Reflecting on this, the organisation decided to redesign one of its student hubs with students and staff co-creating the facilities. Ideas were created together and voted on. The culture through the process shifted to one of collaboration and co-respect. The architect has taken the most popular ideas through to prototyping and testing with students and staff as part of the design process.

The “CX” factor process has been a powerful tool for the organisation. The involvement of users throughout the process, understanding their needs and wants better, designing solutions together and involving them in the testing and iterations, has enabled the organisation to design a desirable customer experience. Even more powerful was posting quotes of actual customer experiences on a wall for everyone to see. Walking staff through the insights has built momentum for change within the organisation.