

Does your customer's experience match your marketing?



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Imagine this scenario: you see Apple's commercials. They're full of young people having fun, living their best lives (we've all seen them). You see Apple's advertising — slick, smooth, promising technology that changes your life and leads you into the future. You hear about Apple's products and how innovative and game-changing they are for the tech industry.

"Wow," you think, "Apple seems pretty cool."

You decide to visit your local Apple store. But — here comes the imagination part — when you get there, there are few windows in the building and the outside is covered in cheesy banners that say "20 percent off Apple phones and computers."

You walk in and the store is dark and gloomy, the computers are all dirty and don't work well, and the employees are standoffish and unhelpful.

Major disconnect, right?

Let's turn that around.

Imagine you wander into an Apple store, and it's your first encounter ever with the brand. The store is well-lit, employees are effusive in their helpfulness and unfailingly friendly, and the computers look sleek and are ready to be played with. The building itself is the epitome of cool design, with large windows letting in a lot of natural light.

Later that day, you flip through a magazine and see an ad for Apple. Imagine the ad is busy with way too much text, too many images, seven fonts competing for supremacy, no design hierarchy — it's just a mess. Then you happen to see an Apple commercial on TV, and it's boring and soulless.

"Wait," you think, "is this the same Apple as the store I went into today?"

Cognitive dissonance in the extreme.

Here's the point of these two thought experiments: your marketing should match

your customer experience.

Customer experience is a hot term these days — it refers to everything that makes up your customer's interactions with your company, from the moment they walk into your store to their conversations with your customer service representatives and other staff members, from the appearance of your offices to the communications you send them. Any time your customers or potential customers have an interaction with your company, it's part of the customer experience.



Does your marketing match your customers' experience with you? Here are three vital questions to ask yourself:

- 1. Do my marketing materials match the amazing products and services I provide?** Is the way I'm representing my company and the story I'm telling about my company doing justice to the work I do? As a marketing professional, I regularly meet companies who are doing great work, but don't have the marketing to match. Their customer experience is far better than their marketing suggests, but potential customers don't realize that when they see the marketing materials.
- 2. When people walk into my place of business, does the impres-**

sion they receive match the marketing materials I create? If the tone of your marketing is positive and playful, your retail space or offices should be, too. If your marketing is serious and professional, your spaces should reflect that. If your marketing says you have the biggest selection anywhere, the messaging inside your business should reflect that, too (and you'd better have a big space).

3. Do my employees match the tone of my marketing? Your employees play a bigger part than anyone in creating the customer experience. If your marketing tells a specific story about your company's personality, your employees — particularly those on the front lines, such as customer service representatives or retail personnel — should express that personality.

If you are relying on particular messaging in your marketing, those messages should be on the lips of your employees.

If your customers experience a disconnect between your marketing and the overall customer experience you provide, your business will suffer. To return to my example, the hyper-positivity and energy of Apple stores and their employees may not be your cup of tea, but one thing is certain: it matches their brand and their marketing perfectly.

You don't have to be Apple to match your marketing to your customer experience — you just have to make sure you can answer the questions above with a confident "Yes!" ☺