

Selling an Experience

By Andy Holtmann -- 27 December 2016



Years ago, when I was the editor of a national trade publication covering the business of casinos and gambling industry, I had the opportunity to speak with hundreds of marketing professionals about a variety of topics over an eight-year span. During those conversations, a common theme emerged—casinos that enjoyed the most success were the ones that excelled at selling an experience.

You see, the slot machines and table games—they're pretty much the same from one casino to the next. The chairs? The same. The free booze that's handed out on the gaming floor? The same. So, what the casino properties have to do to set themselves apart is sell an experience. Casino A will entice with the promise of a five-star meal at its swank steak house, followed by tickets to a Broadway-style show. Casino B might make the patrons feel like they're at home, or a close relative's house, with first name greetings for everyone, a special (and desirable) gift for everyone who joins its players club. Meanwhile, Casino C might appeal to the hip and ultra-cool jet-setters with high velocity nightclubs, and movie-style table game pits where one can feel "seen."

The point is, it's the experience that brings people back time and time again—with the ultimate goal, of course, of getting them to gamble in the casino. Though the business of a construction company is not at all like the day-to-day operations of a casino, the tactics of selling an experience can still be aptly applied—and with measurable, positive results.

As with the bare offerings of a casino, a construction job is typically characterized by the same things each time—a team of people using the same materials and the same tools and equipment to build a project that looks similar

in scope to the project down the street. So, what separates you from competitors? It's the experience. It's making the client not just satisfied, but thrilled. It's keeping the project fresh, exciting and free from frustration. It's constant communication. And, it's delivering a finished product that exceeds expectations.

So how do you improve the construction experience you offer? Here are three key ways:

Be engaging, responsive—Everyone on your project team—whether in the field or back in the office—needs to treat the client like they would a friend or close family. Cheerful intonation in physical communications, positive messaging in emails, documents and other forms of electronic communication. This may sound like window dressing, but first impressions really do make a difference—and third or fourth impressions can make final determinations of whether clients want to engage with you again. And remember that your clients are not just the folks funding your project work. They encompass everyone outside of your firm working on the project with you.

No one likes to wait for an answer, so don't leave your clients hanging. They won't like it. They will like it even less if they're flat-out ignored. Designate someone to facilitate communication and be the point person to connect with. Ensure that all questions are answered, issues resolved, etc. Consider modern technologies (software, mobile computing and communication devices) to help improve communication and expedite action items.

Be efficient—When questions are asked or issues do arise during your project, having processes in place that make addressing these quickly and painlessly will go a long way toward guaranteeing a good customer experience. Consider construction and [project management software](#) with automated workflows to streamline processes. When deployed properly and everyone is using, these software packages can significantly improve collaboration, while reducing unnecessary or redundant work. This keeps your project teams focused on the end goal rather than jumping through unnecessary hoops.

Keep documentation handy at all times through the use of [document imaging](#) and storage programs. Good [construction ERP software](#) will attach digital records directly to data so you can pull up documentation in seconds rather than searching for it for hours.

Exceed expectations—Your company's positive reputation is not determined overnight, it has to be built over time and through experience. Unfortunately,

the opposite is not as true—a negative reputation can result from even one blown project or bad review. So, make sure that you're not just meeting, but exceeding expectations. Strive to get each job done, sooner than the deadline. Aim for it to come in on or (more preferably) under budget.

Keep the client looped into discussions at all times and explain changes as they happen. Actively show them ways they can save money, while improving the end product. Pay attention to details, don't cut corners, and double and triple check work to ensure that you're providing the best possible product. And if there is any part of the project your client is not thrilled with, do whatever it takes to find a solution that appeals rather than simply appeases.

How is your company going above and beyond to improve its client experiences?