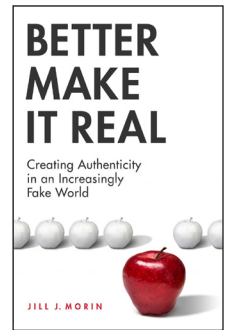


Better Make It Real

The 4Ps and Total Experience Design™—Nine truths of authentic, total experiences: what every leader must know



Authenticity stems from knowing who you are, what you believe in, and what you want to be to your marketplace.



Total Experience Design is a unique process for defining and expressing organizational authenticity through the design of wholly integrated stakeholder experiences, says Jill Morin, CEO of Kahler Slater, a global interdisciplinary design enterprise, and author of *Better Make It Real: Creating Authenticity in an Increasingly Fake World* (Praeger, 2010, \$32.95).

The 4P Model™ guides the design process, Morin explains, and the 4Ps—*Perception, People, Products and Services, and Place*—help drive a multitude of critical choices and decisions on key business issues: image, brand, quality, innovation, talent, environment, and more. In addition, says Morin, the process is reinforced by a set of universal truths—nine hard-and-fast fundamentals by which businesses can leverage “experience” as a differentiating factor. Highlights:

1. Every organization is experiential

Experience isn't just for high-concept companies—it's for every company. Walk into any commonplace business—a local convenience store, for instance—and you are entering a world of experiences, from the smell of the coffee (good or bad) to a search for the restroom. Every encounter, whether intentionally designed or left to chance, holds a multitude of sensory and behavioral cues that tell a significant story about the business.

2. An experience can be designed—and authentic

You might think that truly authentic experiences just happen, occurring organically or by a stroke of luck. But an intentionally designed experience, built from beginning to end, can also be authentic. Authenticity stems from knowing who you are, what you believe in, and what you want to be to your marketplace. If that requires designing your deliverables down to minute details, so much the better. Your offerings will be clear, and you will attract your ideal customers.

3. Total experiences are not “theater”

In their book *The Experience Economy: Work Is Theatre & Every Business a Stage*, authors Joseph Pine and James Gilmore assert, “Business performances must rival those featured on Broadway and in ballparks.” But if the very nature of theater is to deliver an illusion of reality, where does authenticity come in? Fact is, it doesn't. Your organization is wiser to provide truly authentic experiences. That way, no one will need a script to live out the brand promise.

4. Everyone has a role in designing and delivering the experience

Most companies are tempted to toss the “experiences thing” over to marketing, advertising, or PR. Those groups are essential to the process, absolutely. They can't, however, carry the torch alone. Everyone inside your organization must be involved. Countless, critical touchpoints—

between your enterprise and its many stakeholders—need to be addressed, and that requires every team to be an active participant.

5. Employees deserve the same experience as customers

The behind-the-scenes feel of an authentic organization isn't that different from the customers' experience. Translation: Your employees deserve the same kinds of considerations that your customers do. The break room, for example, should provide a natural transition from "on the floor" to "off the floor"—clean, comfortable, and organized, and designed with similar themes, furnishings, and finishes. Luxury isn't the key here; just avoid harsh or drastic changes between the customer and employee experience.

6. A commitment to experience makes it easier to satisfy stakeholders

When your organization commits to providing authentic, total experiences to stakeholders, the vision for your business will become readily apparent, and you will appeal to customers, employees, and others who want what you have to offer them. Stakeholders will know exactly what to expect from you—down to the last detail—and you will know how to give it to them so that they are genuinely satisfied. In this way, they will also become steadfast partners in your success.

7. Experience gaps are glaring—and damaging

Marketing consultants call them *brand gaps*—those instances when the message and the experience don't add up. As a customer, you've surely experienced them yourself—a surly salesperson at a "service-driven" department store or a posh hotel without hot running water. Truth is, just because an organization says something is so, doesn't make it so. In fact, the more you say something is so, the more glaring the gaps are to stakeholders. They recognize the disconnect and can feel confused, disappointed, or even ripped off.

8. A bad experience can be fixed

No organization is perfect, and no business can deliver a perfect total experience, at least not to all the people, all the time. That doesn't mean, however, that you can't strive for perfection, or more importantly, that when an experience does go badly, that you can't strive to do everything possible to recover quickly and completely. You can—and must.

9. There is no such thing as an indifferent experience

Customers who engage with a business once and never return can become invisible to an organization. But, unless they were making a once-in-a-lifetime transaction, such as buying their dream home, odds are, something went wrong. At your company, you may find that some one-time customers aren't the right fit for you. Others, however, were attracted to you for a reason, and it's important to figure out why they didn't return. Their indifference should matter to you.

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