

Cruise Your Own Adventure

CE Design & Execution | CE in the Wild

For collaborators, co-creators, and transformational leaders who need an elevated customer experience Carrie Zuchorski is the Strategic Designer and Organizational Optimizer who delivers deliberate direction, operational excellence, and insightful analysis that connects the dots between the customer journey and day-to-day operations and gets people, process, and technology in alignment with company culture and core values to transform ordinary organizations into exceptional brands because you don't know what you don't know...but Carrie does.

- Improve culture, boost loyalty, and enchant customers
- Collaborate, leverage experience, think holistically
- Be open to change/transformation
- Analysis and action plans, at your service
- **Initiatives, ideas, and innovations need to be put to the test and then put to work**
- **The great ombudsman between the customer journey and the day-to-day operations**
- Design it to do what you want it to do: get yourself a Systems Strategist
- Strategic direction and change management consulting with assessment, recommendations, and execution
- Get talent strategy, systems development, and workflow in elegant alignment with the customer experience and company culture

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CE in the Wild: Cruise Your Own Adventure

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Pilot the customer journey through savvy segmentation.

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CE in the Wild looks at business through the lens of operational excellence and exceptional service delivery. This series explores lessons learned from unexpected places—in industries vastly different in scale, business, and brand—to illuminate the powerful ways we can connect the dots on people, process, and tech to architect for unrivaled customer experiences. Soak up the storytelling here to inspire any organization in the many ways companies can improve culture, boost loyalty, and enchant consumers.

Did you ever go someplace or do something and just marvel at the customer experience of it all...and forget to enjoy the thing itself? Yep, that's me.

I've been taking field notes when on vacation, planning a personal event, and/or living my life as a parent and a person since as long as I can remember. I am endlessly fascinated by how organizations do their thing. I love deconstructing the secret sauce, working backwards through my own personal experiences on the consumer side and connecting the dots on how the customer journey has been orchestrated, ~~intentionally, or unintentionally.~~

I take what I've learned "in the wild" back to my own work as a strategic designer and organizational optimizer for organizations large and small. More often than not, insights gleaned

from this fresh perspective have helped me to leverage these experiences and think holistically, to encourage change/transformation.

Recently, I took a family cruise. It was just me, my husband, and our three kids. We'd planned it for months; this was supposed to be the experience of a lifetime....and it was...just not for the reasons you might be thinking. While I did enjoy the picturesque ports of call and joining in on the numerous onboard activities, the thing I enjoyed more than anything was to bask in the beauty of a well-oiled operation at scale.

TL;DR

Cruises have been around for over a century and if there's anything they've learned, it is that change is as constant as the tides—roll with it. Today's passenger ships who are absolutely delivering on 'best in brand' service delivery are being very intentional about segmenting, customizing, and iterating.

Finding balance in structure and spontaneity.

There is something magical and truly harmonious about building an experience that provides just enough structure that a customer doesn't get lost and enough freedom to create their own journey—**finding your balance is the trick.**

These days too many customer experiences have been over architected; you have to follow a pre designed flow for the masses and you can't experience life on your own. Many digital startups fall prey to this when they are building a highly optimized product with the intention of scaling. Or worse, when your senses are assaulted from the very first touchpoint, and everything is on overload. I don't know about you, but my first thought is "run!" when the dial on the experience is 'set to Overload.' (I'm looking at you, Vegas.)

On a cruise you choose a route and you know the general game plan—when it docks, when it leaves, mealtimes and kitchen closings—but the beauty of this model is the value (and joy!) of being able to create your own adventure.

Sitting in the sun your thing? Go hit the pool and listen to a band while sipping on a pina colada. (Ummm, yes, please.) Sightseeing more your jam? Head to port and take a pre-arranged tour of the local historical locations. Or, if you prefer to play games, learn a new skill, or shop...or or or...the options are endless.

Create your own adventure, day-by-day, to optimize your fulfillment.

I contend that there are lessons to be learned here, for businesses of every size and shape. It doesn't matter if you are a product manager or a web designer or a customer service manager, a well-oiled operation that strikes the balance of structure and freedom will always win the game.

From a retail setting to navigating a mobile app, architect the customer experience for a "Choose Your Own Adventure"-style journey. Make sure signs are posted and clearly articulate the most likely path a customer might want to take, be it digital or physical, and allow for choice and deviation. Keep these choices relevant, but allow your customer to go their own way. Take the time to measure/track those who use the deviations, and you can keep iterating and improving, to infinity and beyond.

What's next? Why, segmentation and a segmented service strategy, of course.

What the cruise does even better—I get downright giddy just thinking about it—is address segmentation and a segmented service strategy. From the specific deck your cabin is located on to what restaurant you eat in, from access to special areas and clubs to your ability to board and debark early, every element is tied to service status and what you want to pay. Each item had dynamic levels baked right in.

What's more, there isn't just one loyalty system here. 🤪 In a traditional model, you might find a multi-tiered system—think Bronze, Silver, Gold—and each is associated with a menu of services. You have to buy the entire package to get the one thing you want. But here, on this ship, if you want to sleep on a lower floor in an inside cabin because you couldn't care less about the view, but you are a foodie and you want only the best of the best in restaurants... do it, they aren't tied

together. Or you want to be the first on and off the boat so you don't have to wait in line, but you have no intention of opting in to anything other than the buffet or free activities, so be it...buy priority access and call it a day. (You can make it an early one since you will be the first one off the boat, anyhow!).

Will this work in the 'real' world?

A cruise is a unique, self-contained ecosystem. It is nowhere near the 'real' world.... or is it? After all, you don't need to be a floating hotel in the middle of the ocean to capture the value of knowing your customer segmentation and creating a segmented service strategy. What do your customers like the most in your product line up? What are they willing to pay more for? Is it tied to exclusivity? Or frequency? Or special access?

Use data to get to know all this about your customers. Whether you sell a physical product or a digital one, retail or online, know your customer very, very well and then add the ability for them to trade their experience up or down, at their preference.

And the revenue? <slow whistle>. Creating a dynamic rewards system that is constantly responding to customer taste on demand and architecting the customer experience through the lens of segmentation and customization is a true 'choose your own adventure' service delivery model. This is akin to putting multiple hotels on Park Place in the Monopoly game of business building. Only this time, we all win.

Embracing evolution everywhere, all the time.

The last time I went on a cruise was 16 years ago and the model is just the same now as it was then, but the mode of what is offered in the journey has evolved over time. Then, it was formal, white tablecloth dinners and an older, wealthy crowd. Now, it's casual fine dining and a kid's paradise.

Clearly, modern cruise ships have done their homework. The ones who are 'doing it right' are champions for change and customization. This ever-evolving approach to the service delivery

model is well-communicated—and therefore no one loses interest. Successful brands kept the tried-n-true business model intact; instead they evolved the customer journey.

By architecting and segmenting the customer journey—but not too much or too little—and leveraging change, customization, and novelty, the creme de la creme of cruise ships have designed a service delivery model that can reinvent itself over and over without losing sight of the shoreline.

We all have our own version of heaven on earth.

For some it's the beach, for others, it's tent camping in the woods, Disneyland, or wandering the streets of Morocco. For me, it's being someplace completely new, immersed in hospitality, and loving the experience because people cared enough about my own, individual, unique customer journey to make it amazing (by making it mine).

I am so inspired by the way that different industries orchestrate and automate operations without losing the personal touch, the key to influencing buying decisions and customer loyalty.

Watching it all come together is like watching a beautifully choreographed dance or appreciating the world's most clever Rube Goldberg machine—it's witnessing a dynamic set of elements converge with purpose and pazazz. When it happens, it's the most beautiful thing.



Create unshakable brand loyalty and pure P&L power.

Focus on Service Delivery Model (and win at business)

By thinking about how you deliver service as a business framework, an interconnected 'ecosystem' of processes and people and the interactions between 'The Company' and 'The

Customer' throughout the entirety of the relationship.

Leading edge organizations cater to unique segments of their base to create memorable experiences. For these champions for change and customization know that no matter however you architect your customer journey and embrace technology, it's only half the picture without good business practices and good people at the heart of a well-oiled operation that can thrive at any scale.

SUCCESS FORMULA: People, Process, and Technology.

Customer experience customization, grounded in freedom and feedback:

People - The perfect ratio of people to tasks and the type of people in each job.

Process - Everything that could have a process, did. Kid tested, Carrie-approved.

Technology - Highlighting the next step on the customer journey in a way that felt familiar.

The excitement of well-articulated and beautifully-branded customer journey; the power of knowing exactly who your customers are, what they want, why it matters, and how you'll deliver; the potential to operate as a brand-loyalty magnet, attracting the perfect people and partners, authentically in alignment with mission and values—these are the rewards of Strategic Design for Organizational Optimization. I just love it when I see it in the wild.

CE Design



Transforming ordinary organizations into exceptional brands.

Need help with that? Customer Experience (CE) Design and Execution helps organizations design your operations and service delivery models to do just what you want them to do. Analysis and action plans, at your service.

CE Design & execution applies deliberate direction, operational excellence, and insightful analysis to connect the dots between the customer journey and day-to-day operations and gets people, process, and technology in alignment with company culture and core values. Help global organizations think strategically to act tactically since 2022.

