liquid

A whitepaper about how a company chooses to interact with their customers from a brand experience perspective.

EXPERIENCE DESIGN WHITEPAPER

Use experience design to ignite passionate fans.

Uber and Airbnb—what do they have in common?
Uber and Airbnb didn't make it big because they ran a lot of ads—they made it big because they delivered exceptional experiences that ignited passionate fans, who in turn promoted the company. Uber made it big by delivering a private driver at the touch of a button. Airbnb makes it possible to live like a local in a city you've never visited before. Both companies deliver remarkable value at every step of their experience with a focus on helping a customer achieve a specific goal. They connect with groups of people that don't necessarily fit a demographic, but rather common mindsets and goals.

Experience design doesn't just apply to startups seeking to disrupt existing market economies. It's a practice that enables companies to intentionally design when, where and how they interact with their customers. How a company chooses to interact with their customers is defined by the nature of the customer tribe they wish to connect with.

Tribes are groups of people connected by a common interest, leader or goal. Tribes aren't defined by traditional marketing segmentation, but instead by a common mindset that transcends age, gender and geography. A brand that connects with a tribe can scale without appealing to the lowest common denominator, but instead by making its differentiation more remarkable and unique.

Experience journey mapping gives companies the insights to design customer-centric solutions that cut across corporate silos. When a company systematically segments a customer journey from first contact to their first purchase, and then from their second purchase to advocacy—through the lens of their customer's experience—it gives rise to insights that can unlock value for both sides of the exchange. Brands that promote generous behaviors and invest in their brand's experience will gain market share over the competition that underinvests in experience.

Design thinking is a critical contributor to the success of your customer's experience. An effective design partner will design solutions that build on insights derived from customer empathy and situational awareness. Design thinking can increase customer satisfaction, reduce operational costs and foster an emotional connection with even the smallest experience. Design shouldn't be applied as a finishing touch to beautify a product or service, but rather an integral part of every stage of an experience journey.

At its highest level, experience design gives businesses the tools to evaluate the strength of their brand's ability to connect with their tribe—while increasing a brand's value. As a company continues to refine a desired experience journey, it can progressively improve every touch point down to the most granular detail. This ensures its corresponding impact continues to fuel a passionate fan base that drives a brand's growth.

Build bridges to create experiences that matter.

Conventional brand and business practices are optimized for consistency and efficiency across business functions. This approach has evolved from an assembly line mindset designed to maximize business resources, rather than deliver digital-age customer experiences that are connected across touch points and designed for today's rapidly changing customer needs. These conventional practices are so deeply ingrained in organizational structures and behaviors that it takes a deliberate effort to break these habits and take a fresh look through your customer's eyes—uncovering opportunities hidden by the relative comfort and safety found in conventional thinking.

Liquid aligns your business silos by harnessing cross-functional expertise to solve complex challenges and create seamless brand experiences.

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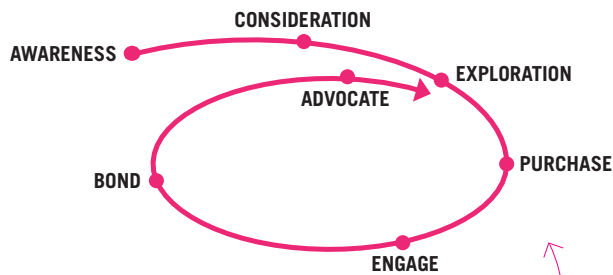
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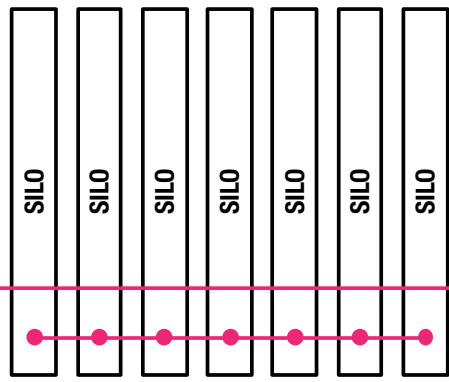
CASE STUDY:

Motorola

"Buy it in-store. Build it online."

Our Moto client invested in a cornerstone strategic platform called Moto Maker that gave customers the ability to customize their devices, making it a truly personalized experience. It was built to support their omnichannel strategy, but wasn't gaining the traction they expected in-store. They asked Liquid to help understand why.

To solve the challenge, Liquid pursued a series of retail ride-alongs, secret-shopper visits, and stakeholder interviews. We synthesized our findings to kick off a cross-functional Swarm with Moto, including team members from marketing, retail, product development, market research and fixture fabrication.

In short order, Liquid prototyped a range of solutions that had been inspired by output from the Swarm. We tested these solutions with customers to inform the design and content of new carrier store displays.

CONSIDERATION

AWARENESS

EXPLORATION

ADVOCATE

PURCHASE

BOND

ENGAGE

Closing a sale is only the beginning. How your customer experiences your brand, from their first encounter to every memory they share, should be designed to deepen your relationship with both the individual and their tribe.

Drop the funnel. Grow your tribe.

Core to developing any new experience is the context in which a customer exists and interacts with their world. This context may precede their interaction with your brand, but could prove to be influential in determining their state of mind. With this consideration, we will identify an occasion that marks the start of a customer's journey with your brand.

While most sales-driven organizations may end their customer journey with a sale, from a customer's point-of-view this is only one of several steps in their journey with your brand. In a linear approach to an experience journey, it's critical to end when a customer's need is fulfilled. Even better is to consider what experiences will create a virtuous circle for your brand.

As you create an increasingly detailed picture of your customer's experience journey, you will form a deeper understanding of your customer's needs and greater empathy for your customer's mindset at every stage. This will enable you to deliver a more meaningful brand experience shaped not by organizational silos, but instead by an honest commitment to your customers' interests.

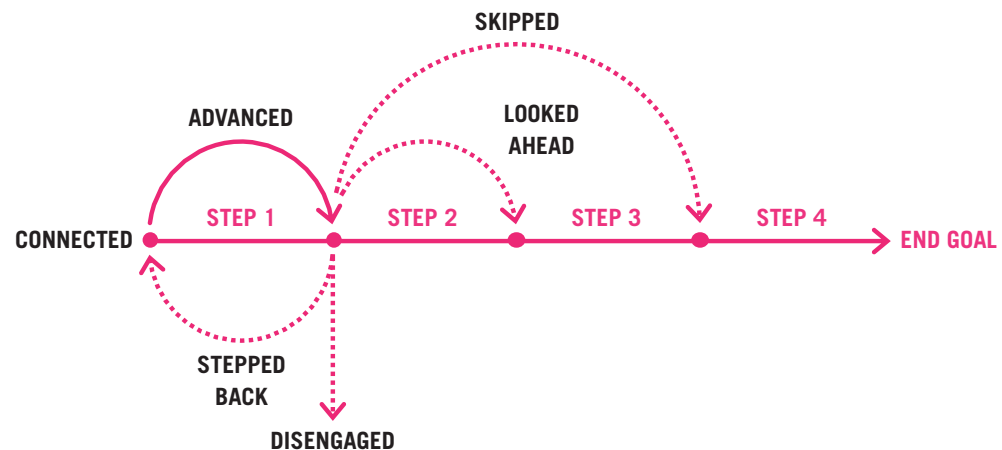## Design for real-world engagement.

Good experience design balances rational decision making against real-world behaviors.

At every stage of an experience journey, your customer is making choices and crossing thresholds. While many choices have been made before they began their journey, others will be influenced by your ability to reduce frictions in their decision making. Whether a factor of design,

incentives, or service experience, it's critical to measure your brand's ability to deliver the best experience at every stage.

For the purpose of experience design, it's valuable to pursue both quantitative and qualitative research. Surveys, UX analytics (heat mapping, etc.) and traffic reports are useful references with statistical relevance. Many of the best insights come from sample sizes of one, that are captured in ethnographies and casual conversations that uncover opportunities that may be missed in a purely quantitative focus. These insights provide a springboard for design thinking and prototyping for real-world testing.
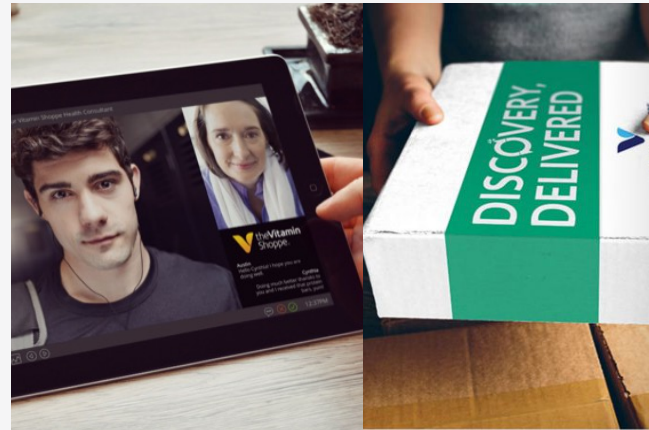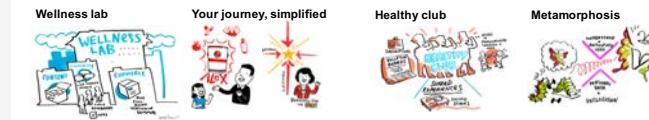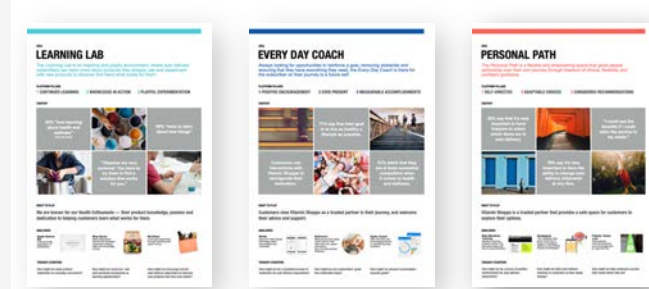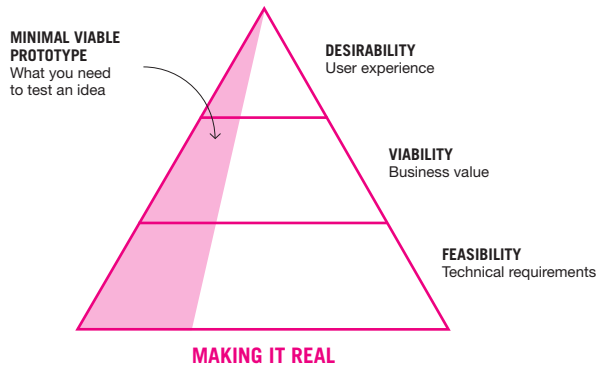
Even though we'd like to think of customers pursuing a linear journey through to completion, it's the very nature of their non-linear path that can provide insight into unanticipated experiential challenges.

SKIPPED

ADVANCED

LOOKED
AHEAD

CONNECTED

STEP 1   STEP 2   STEP 3   STEP 4   END GOAL

STEPPED
BACK

DISENGAGED

Make it fast. Make it real.

We call it Silicon Valley Thinking™. It's inspired by our experience working with some of the most innovative companies on the planet. We leverage agile strategy, rapid prototyping and immersive collaboration to create solutions we can quickly test and easily refine.

Idea generation is easy; making it real is hard.

MINIMAL VIABLE PROTOTYPE
What you need to test an idea

DESIRABILITY
User experience

VIABILITY
Business value

FEASIBILITY
Technical requirements

MAKING IT REAL

PROTOTYPE PRIORITIZATION

LEARNING LAB | EVERY DAY COACH | PERSONAL PATH

Wellness lab | Your journey, simplified | Healthy club | Metamorphosis

DISCOVERY, DELIVERED

The Vitamin Shoppe

Going beyond the transactions

The Vitamin Shoppe, one of the nation's leading specialty retailers of vitamins and supplements, sought to create an auto-delivery service that could foster repeat purchase and stave off competitors, from GNC to Amazon.

Through our discovery, we learned that only 50 percent of customers making an initial purchase returned once their products were consumed. With three opportunity platforms as our starting point, we brought 30 diverse stakeholders together across numerous silos. The team collectively developed 300+ ideas, leading to 12 prototypes, and of those, we selected six for feasibility analysis.

A unifying and insight-rich concept around the idea of "Discovery, delivered" provided the guidance for a range of products and services that collectively make up SPARK Auto Delivery. Within the first few weeks of launch, 10,000 people signed on as subscribers.

EXPERIENCE DESIGN SERVICES

Every experience, challenge, opportunity and journey begins here.

Lighthouse Vision
Create a long-term brand experience vision for your new product, service or business concept.

Journey Mapping
Design a lifecycle view of your customer's interactions with your brand.

Omnichannel Strategy
Develop a strategy to create a seamless shopping experience for your customer.

Signature Experience
Design an engaging experience as an expression of your brand.

Innovation Roadmap
Create a roadmap to define an evolution of your product and service experiences.

ABOUT LIQUID

Liquid Agency was founded in Silicon Valley, with offices in San Jose, Portland and New York. We define what your brand stands for and creates brand experiences that connect to your customers' hearts and minds. We do this with the passion and inventiveness that Silicon Valley is famous for.

We'd love to discuss working together. Especially if you're interested in building a great brand experience.

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