

INDUSTRY
VIEWS

AIPC on how the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre has changed the game

Embracing the customer journey

These days, centres need to put a major effort into staying ahead of the competition by understanding who their customers are and what's important to them.

AT THE MELBOURNE Convention and Exhibition Centre (MCEC), we undertook our Customer Journey initiative two years ago. It has been a game changer for us, and a project that has generated great interest among other venues around the world. In fact, it is a piece of work that provides insights that impact all customer-facing businesses. MCEC had built a thorough three-year plan encompassing all parts of our business, resulting in a detailed series of goals, objectives and delivery strategies designed to help MCEC remain ahead of its competition. This is nothing different from what most businesses do these days. However, in our view, one critical element was missing – MCEC's customers. We were historically operationally focused and prescriptive in the way we interacted with our stakeholders.

This needed to change. We felt we needed to become completely customer centric, with the needs and expectations of our customers driving our every decision. This proved to be the most important decision we have made and has transformed our entire business – our relationships, our understanding and our structure, even including our event delivery model.

The Customer Journey project had a very clear scope and sequence, which was:

- to accurately define our key customers
- to outline their needs, desires and influences with respect to events – effectively humanising them and providing consistency across the business
- to map how they currently make decisions and interact with MCEC
- to use those maps to identify clear opportunities to improve the customer experience, be that through service, communications, content, food and beverage, etc.

Ultimately, we wanted to deconstruct our customers and their needs with precision, so we could determine the best

way of satisfying their requirements. Faced with these four challenges, we took the following three steps:

- We crafted a set of seven customer personas to create a common language and customer objectives within the business.
- We mapped the various journeys taken by our customers in their interactions with us.
- We identified ideas for improving their respective customer experiences.

EACH OF THESE STEPS INCLUDED A SERIES OF DETAILED ACTIONS

As a result of our findings, we reorganised our structure to ensure we provided assistance and support to customers at critical times in their particular journey with us. Our team has received constant positive feedback since this change, and we know that they now feel more empowered to provide immediate outcomes that satisfy our customers. Across the business, our post-event survey results are at the highest levels we have ever seen.

Of course, the Customer Journey project is an ongoing one. We recently announced the launch of our customer portal, myMCEC, which is a direct result of our Customer Journey work and aims to ensure customers continue to find it easy to do business with MCEC. We are also soon to commence stage two of our Customer Journey understanding, as we all know our customer and visitor expectations are evolving very quickly. We have to reset our teams, continue to challenge them and improve our delivery performance every year.

Standing still is not an option and – by basing our evolving structure and practices on very specific customer perspectives – we are ensuring that changes will work to their greatest advantage. **M**

Our team has received constant positive feedback since this change, and we know that they now feel more empowered to provide immediate outcomes that satisfy our customers



PETER KING is a member of the AIPC Board of Directors and the chief executive at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre.

AIPC
EXCELLENCE IN
CONVENTION CENTRE
MANAGEMENT