

PETER KING

Keep your customers close

MELBOURNE CEC CHIEF EXECUTIVE **PETER KING** ON THE IMPORTANCE OF EMBRACING THE CUSTOMER JOURNEY



Peter King

The chief executive of Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre is a board member of AIPC.

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) that has meant a specific initiative focusing on the Customer Journey that we undertook two years ago: 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 focussed 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 every decision we made. This proved to be the most important decision we have made and has transformed our entire business, including even 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;
- Mapping how they currently make decisions and interact with MCEC;
- Using those maps to identify clear opportunities to improve the customer experience.

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 steps:

1. Crafted a set of seven customer personas to create a common language and customer objectives within the business;
2. Mapped the various journeys taken by our customers in their interactions with us;
3. 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

journey with us. Feedback since this change means we know that we 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 ever.

Of course, the Customer Journey project is ongoing. Our recently announced customer portal, myMCEC, 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.

Peter King is also a member of the AIPC Board of Directors. ■

AIPC represents a global network of over 185 leading centres in 60 countries with the active involvement of more than 900 management-level professionals worldwide. Further information: marianne.de.raay@aipc.org or visit www.aipc.org