

## Shifting gears to focus on the customer experience

See how two different projects fueled a powerful, customer-centric movement.



### PROJECT #1

#### WHERE WE BEGAN

From the late '80s into the late '00s, a major automotive manufacturer masterfully moved from its position as an upstart to driving alongside GM as one of the largest automobile manufacturers in the world. They garnered the title of a "most admired" company from Fortune magazine, but then a recession hit, the economy took a downturn, and growth eased to its slowest. To put it mildly, they began to experience a few bumps on the road to success.

The brand was struggling to get back to where it was. They had lost ground in two key differentiating areas: reliability and fun. Therefore, they did some research and ultimately landed on a new tagline. Prior to that, the brand also launched a customer care program that worked to slowly build back their reputation and perception in the marketplace. These customer-facing initiatives were great, but we identified a need for more.

If this client was to return to the lead and hold on to that position, they needed more than a tagline change and a customer care program. They needed a company-wide shift that would help amplify the evolved brand image. Haig Barrett saw this, and thus recommended an executive-led initiative that informed, engaged, and educated employees on the importance of a shift in the brand.

#### HOW WE APPROACHED IT

Taking cues from the tenets of the new branding, Haig Barrett constructed a type of live "roadshow" that would help guide stakeholder experiences with the company.

Our process was unique. We got personal with our clients; we interviewed them to determine the best material that would engage and inform our client's regional offices. Furthermore, we worked with the analytics team to identify the most salient data points that helped tell the story and measure customer perception of the new branding. It didn't stop there. We engaged over-the-top, unexpected assets including an astronaut to act as an ambassador for the roadshow experience. We used video footage of initiatives that demonstrated the new brand in action. We developed breakout sessions that gave our audience members a time to provide input and insights that improved our strategies.

Lastly, we rolled up our sleeves and coordinated all the logistics for these meetings. To do so, we needed to organize everyone's travel schedules, coordinate the room setup, run dress rehearsals with the speakers, roll out the program with participants, distribute materials to the audience members and handle other minute incidentals that contributed to the pace and rhythm of this "well-oiled machine."

This roadshow experience was more like an exciting "rally tour" than your typical prepackaged meeting. The enthusiasm among participants was infectious. It was made personal for each participant and aligned with the new brand image. We engaged dialogue with the audience, offered eye-opening content and gave the audience working knowledge that was useful and easy to implement.

#### WHAT IT YIELDED

We created more than a program or a simple branding exercise—we created a movement. We completed the tour in six months, covering over eleven different regions. We held feedback sessions with each region, and each time they expressed excitement and gratitude for bridging the gap between the corporate headquarters and the regional offices. Due to the overwhelmingly positive feedback of our process and work, we have been asked to help bring the movement to other divisions and departments of the corporate offices and plants so that each employee fully embraces the brand and becomes a positive spokesperson for it. In doing so, we are shaping the vision of what a successful brand shift looks like in our client's mind.

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# + Haig Barrett

management consultants

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## PROJECT #2

### WHERE WE BEGAN

In 2011, this large automotive company was still reeling from a series of misfortunes and the recession. They saw their leadership position slip and found that customers no longer perceived the brand as reliable. In an effort to change this perception, the leadership team recognized the need to place customers at the forefront. A new customer-focused department was created with the goal of improving the customer experience during the shopping, buying, and ownership process.

After a year and a half of building the foundation, this new department needed to take the customer experience to a new level. The timing was right to also bring the customer experience to the forefront of the entire company, and they asked Haig Barrett to initiate the process.

### HOW WE APPROACHED IT

Customer retention and loyalty are based on the customer's experience throughout the shopping, buying, and ownership process. However, after a year and a half, most people within the company did not understand their role with the new customer-focused department, and didn't quite grasp how they fit into this new paradigm.

Haig Barrett got to work right away by digging deep into what the key stakeholders thought about the current customer experience and how they fit into the process. In one of the first meetings we held with the key stakeholders, we found that most people did not fully understand how their initiatives impacted the customer experience throughout the shopping, buying, and ownership process. It became evident that we needed to create a framework for bringing the diverse groups together. We also found that there were a few important issues facing the company, and created two solutions for these:

- 1. We created customer expectations filters to shift the perspective of key stakeholders when planning initiatives.** Prior to our involvement, the company viewed each part of the process of what their customers wanted through the company's lens and not the customer's point of view. By helping all stakeholders better understand the actual customer expectations and their genuine needs, we shifted the view 180 degrees to create customer-centric programs.
- 2. We developed a new business model for the department to align goals and priorities.** The shopping, buying, and ownership process involves a number of phases and departments working on various initiatives. We found there was no forum for collaboration among departments or prioritization of the initiatives; therefore, there were overlapping projects and gaps in the customer experience. Instead of focusing solely on department initiatives, we developed a business model to help the company determine the cornerstone initiatives for each part of the process. This uniform approach empowered the entire organization to work toward the same end goal: an exceptional customer experience and improved relationship with the brand.

### WHAT IT YIELDED

We were able to successfully get the various departmental teams excited about working together to create a seamless and exceptional customer experience. They also learned how to identify and prioritize initiatives within each step of the experience. This new business model is in the process of being implemented.

### TWO DIVERSE PROGRAMS. ONE SINGULAR FOCUS – CUSTOMERS.

While approaching the same issue from very different roads, each program has helped the company arrive at the same place.

Bringing the needs of the customers to the forefront helped build lasting bonds and long-term relationships with loyal customers. Working closely with our clients, we taught them how to relate to their customers in a whole new way. This customer-centric approach is creating excitement and allegiance to the brand. The genuine focus on customer care at every turn offers a whole new way of thinking about this automotive brand while warranting long-term loyalty among customers.

To learn how more about how Haig Barrett can help your business, call us at 213.223.2380 or send an email to [info@haigbarrett.com](mailto:info@haigbarrett.com).

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