



NEWGROUND



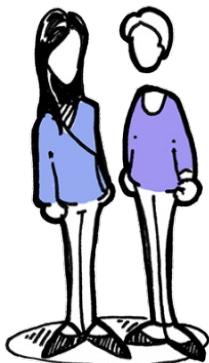
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# Branch design & the experience economy

## Branch Design & the Experience Economy By Kevin Dulle

The emergence of the *Experience Economy* is changing the way businesses interact with each other and their customers. And inevitably, those changes will reshape the spaces we occupy. To better understand how this new economy is changing design, I sat down with two recently minted Certified Experience Economy Experts (CEEE) in the interior design field—Laura Meyers and Susan Fischer. Their perspectives provide a window into concepts and design approaches that banks should be preparing for in the not-so-distant future



*KD: Has thinking about design through the lens of the Experience Economy changed your perspective?*

**Laura:** It definitely has. You are more perceptive of how things are utilized. A space might be designed really cool, but nobody's using it effectively. Had they applied some of this thinking, would they would have done things differently.

It is this change in perspective that allows interior designers to rethink ways to stage a better customer experience. This same change also impacts a shift in staff roles. As banks move away from in-branch transactions and the traditional teller line to more of a relationship-management role, the space must be adaptable and flexible. The design must be forward and future thinking, because technology advances and the purpose of the branch is ever-evolving.

***KD: What are some of the major impacts the Experience Economy has had on modern branch design?***

**Susan:** We've seen the transition in the industry utilizing universal bankers to work the whole environment. Along with advancements in technology for mobile banking, the branch's purpose has to change. The Experience Economy has provided us with tools to apply with our clients. By implementing these concepts, we're able to create a new experience within the branches for not only the employees, but also for who they serve.

**Laura:** Across the industry, there's a need to have a better experience. The customer is changing and the business needs to respond.

Banking is also seeing a huge change in the design of the headquarters. As mobile banking has changed the experience within the branch space, so too has the experience begun impacting the back office and headquarters. The experience extends to the employees handling customer calls, performing daily operations and interacting with each other. Staging the employee experience is just as important as the customer's experience.

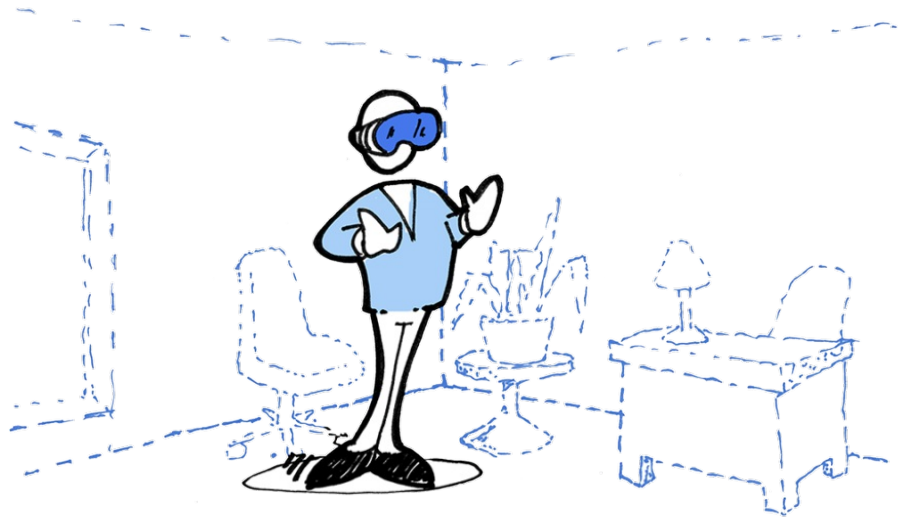
***KD: How do you see the Experience Economy affecting headquarter design?***

**Susan:** It significantly affects headquarter design. Before, you had your checklist of what should be included for employee engagement. You should have collaborative spaces, quiet

rooms, mother's rooms; etc. You'd include them to discover later that no one is using them as expected. We now know how to design these spaces to engage employees to utilize the space.

One thing that came out from the Experience Economy is that you can provide it for them, but you also want them to know how to engage people with it and make it exciting.

**Laura:** We can set the stage, but how do you get them to use it? Now we have all these tools to help them engage in the spaces and know how to use the environment more effectively.



*Designing the spaces for the Experience Economy is not enough to make a bank successful. Understanding how to perform in these unique spaces is just as important. One way designers can convey how an experience works is to change the process of design and interaction with the client.*

**KD:** *How have you changed your approach to the design process?*

**Laura:** One of the things we changed is when and how we do product excursion tours in Chicago. Before, we did them near the completion of the space design. Now we stage the tour experience earlier in the process in order to get our clients engaged. By staging this earlier, everyone can see how the furniture and space can be used before there are space limitations. This way we are designing for what they truly need, not with what fits.

**Susan:** During our programming meetings with a client, they're asked questions to help us program and determine adjacencies for their new space. We've learned to move up the tour experience earlier in the process prior to that discussion for them to see different spaces and how they work.

One of the primary principles of the Experience Economy is customization of your offering. For interior designers, this means more than a client picking from a collection of fixtures, furnishings and finishes—it means understanding that each project, space, or environment is customized for them and their unique brand and culture.

**Laura:** Something important is that we are consciously aware that every business culture is different. How they work together is unique to each organization. This helps guide us on what could or should go into the spaces as well as what shouldn't be used.



*Knowing the bank's culture is one key aspect that the Experience Economy leverages when it comes to staging the right environment. Interior designers use cultural insights to develop functional and effective spaces for engagement. Understanding the motivation and purpose of the engagement is critical for the designers' ability to create unique spaces that enhances the company's brand promise and purpose. It also requires that the client have insights of themselves. In order to help this, Laura and Susan offered some suggestions.*

**KD:** *What would you share with clients who wanted to embrace the Experience Economy?*

**Susan:** The number one advice I would give is not to only involve the executive team in making decisions, they need to pull in key players who are working in the space. This helps to avoid assumptions of how it's thought their employees operate.

**Laura:** Use a living lab. Create events earlier and throughout the process at certain key points along the way so you get input and feedback from those who would be using the spaces. Mock-ups and stage role-playing activities make it more experiential. This way the design becomes more customized for them rather than mass production solution.

*Here's are how the interior designers responded when asked if it was possible for the banking industry to embrace the Experience Economy and evolve its offering.*

**Susan:** Absolutely. Those who are starting to think outside the box are adapting, growing and thriving. They're looking out into the markets and seeing the change. One client didn't agree with the executive team's decision on the new brand and design, personally. However, they trusted the design team on what was needed. Since the launch, their new branches are thriving.

**Laura:** Change management is key. Employees who don't understand the new design or different equipment can create push back. Having training on changes in design is important. It gives the staff a clear understanding of changes. It also gives them the confidence to perform in the new space.

As more and more designers embrace the design principles of the Experience Economy, they'll be better equipped to assist the banking community to grow and thrive in an ever-changing economy.

There are many new financial services providers trying to enter into the marketplace of banking. In the end, bankers who have a strong understanding of both their culture and their customers will be able to grow and create an offering that is a true experience. An experience that creates a positive interaction and greater relationship between the bank and the customer.

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*Kevin M. Dulle, Certified Experience Economy Expert (CEEE), is Director of the Experience Innovations Strategy Team at NewGround, an experiential design build firm. He has spent over*

*25 years serving the financial industry with strategic planning, visual thinking, and experiential business development. With visual translations and graphic thinking techniques, Kevin guides clients in discovering unique strategic solutions, develop long-term planning options and organize complex concepts into cohesive strategies.*

**Laura Meyer, NCIDQ, CEEE**

***Certified Experience Economy Expert (CEEE) and Interior Designer***

*Laura Meyer, Certified Experience Economy Expert (CEEE), is an Interior Designer for NewGround. She is skilled at creating environments of distinction inspired by the mission and culture of the client. She specializes in modern, yet timeless use of color and materials while making sure project delivery, client restraints, quality control, and time management are all kept top priority.*

**Susan Fischer, NCIDQ, LEED Green Associate, CEEE**

***Certified Experience Economy Expert (CEEE) and Interior Designer***

*Susan Fischer, Certified Experience Economy Expert (CEEE), is a Senior Interior Designer for NewGround. With 12 years' experience as an interior designer, Susan has the perfect combination of field experience and artistic vision. The majority of her time is spent strategizing with clients and interfacing with the field to ensure the interiors of each of her projects are implemented seamlessly into the client's building.*