



JENN SPILLERS

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Paying the price for the experience

Banking is facing dramatic change. The digital world is having immense impact on the physical transaction. More customers are obtaining their banking service via mobile apps and online banking portals. As a result, the foot traffic in branches has diminished. Yet it refuses to disappear entirely.



In today's economy, customers still desire a face-to-face engagement with their banks. From problem-solving to consulting, the physical branch still plays an important role for the relationship between the bank and the customer.

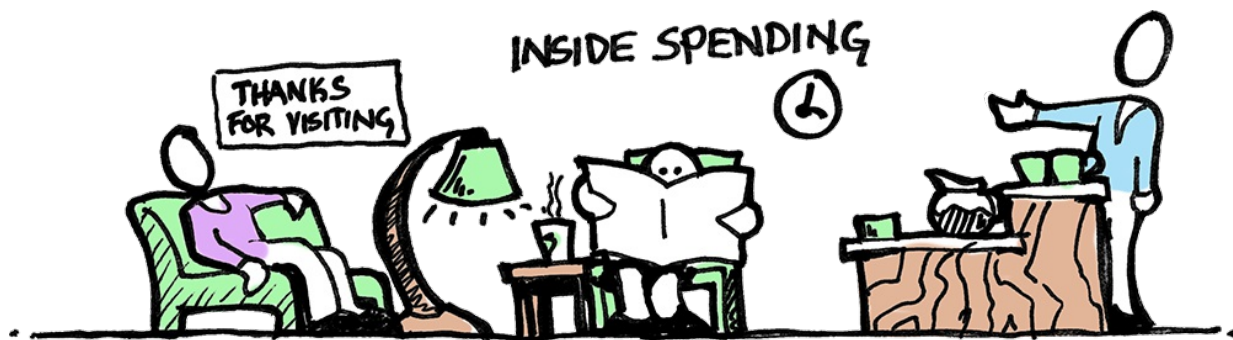
The challenge: traditional branch design does not promote engagement.

Many branches are still designed primarily to handle physical transactions. Even many new branches continue to use outdated design. It's a lost opportunity. And the cause of it is a lack of clear strategy on how the physical space can be used to stage experiences for customers in order to create improved engagements with them.

Authors B. Joseph Pine II and James H. Gilmore described the change almost 20 years ago with their book *The Experience Economy: Work is Theatre and Every Business a Stage*. That title is not meant as a metaphor for the business. Rather it's an actual directive of what your space should be. Your branches are your brand theatres—and every employee has a role to play to stage the experience for your customers. But how?

One of the best places to begin is by taking a serious assessment of how your teams currently interact with customers. Then ask yourself, "Why are our customers still coming into the branch? And how can we leverage these visits better?"

If physical transactions are diminishing, the reason for physical visits must be something more. Something that requires human interaction in the physical place. Understanding the nature of this interaction can help with staging the optimal experience for your customer.



Here is the real challenge—it's a question that you can put forth to your team:

What would we do differently if we actually charged admission?

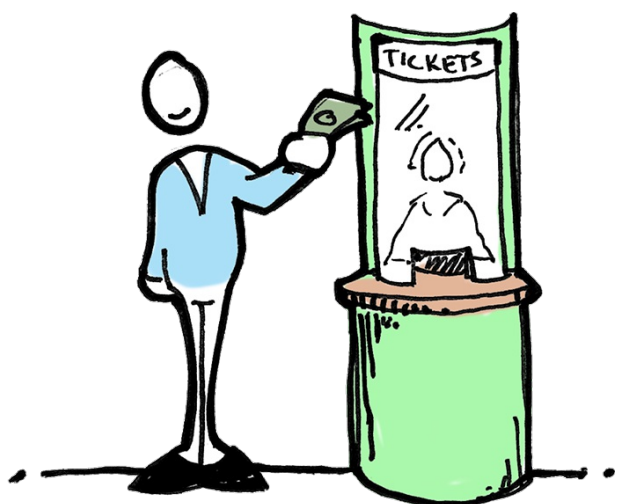
How would the roles of the frontline staff change? One of the ideas central to the concept of the experience economy is the idea that all staged experiences have value that customers *would be willing to pay for* in order to experience.

This is not to say that banks should immediately replace their vestibule ATMs with ticket windows and charge for the honor of doing business. No, that would never fly with consumers.

What I do suggest is that you change how business is performed—so that you engage customers at a level that would be worthy of an admission fee. Think about creating non-banking activities or engagements. One recent trend, for example, is to redesign the unused floor space and transform waiting areas into a stylish public lounge with hosted coffee bar.

Think beyond just providing personal banking service. Consider using your locations as staging areas that can expand the idea of what a branch is in order to change the value you provide.

Who knows—maybe the experience you stage will be so outstanding that you'll replace those vestibule ATMs with a ticket window so you can charge admission. I'll be the first in line if you do.



About Kevin Dulle, CEEE

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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.