

Hi everyone. This is Wayne Rivers at the FBI where *We Build Better Contractors*.

This week I want to talk about a real-life experience economy example. You've heard us talk about Arlin's Newsletter, and we went with our peer group, including Arlin, to a place in Tampa called Bern's Steakhouse a number of years ago.

Now, we're all in the peer group business. We're all trying. We're all in the business of delivering experiences to our peer group members. We're always working on our businesses trying to figure out how to do it better, faster, more effectively, whatever. And I think most of us in that group have read the book, the experience economy, and you've certainly heard Dennis and I talk about it over time. Well, we go to Tampa, and everybody says, "You got to go to Bern's Steakhouse." And I'm like, "Come on man. I've been to nice steakhouses before. What's the big deal?"

Holy moly. Going to Bern's Steakhouse in Tampa is an experience. I guarantee you will never have a restaurant experience quite like the one you have at Bern's. So Arlin in his newsletter wrote a while back about the experience, and I want to read you some of the things that he wrote about in his newsletter. Because we experienced these things firsthand. It was amazing. The next day at our peer group meeting, we're trying to focus on the agenda, and all we can talk about is the amazing experience we had at Bern's the night before. It was crazy.

So, 10 components of the experience that Bern's Steakhouse delivers. Pride. The pride that those employees had working there and telling that story was tangible. It was really, really something. The inside tour, I don't know how they get away with this, with sanitation grades and everything, but they walk you right through their kitchen, right through their prep areas. And you stand there, and you learn about this station, that station and the other. I don't know how they're getting by with that, but it was really amazing.

You see everything that goes into your remarkable dinner, after you've already eaten, of course. But anyway, it's quite amazing. Then you go through number two of the inside tour, you go down into the wine cellar. And these folks have been accumulating fine wine for, gosh, it seems like 100 years now. In fact, we were trying to figure out, John Mayes and I were trying to figure out how could they have stayed in business as a small one location restaurant while simultaneously traveling the world and buying all this crazy expensive wine? And then storing it for all these years, and not really turning it over.

Anyway, it was amazing. The fifth thing, storytelling. Every employee told their story. They were beautifully spoken. You can tell they had a script. They had rehearsed, they had put time and attention and care into their presentations. They were proud to be doing it, and they took professional pride in delivering it. It was really, really something to watch. Training, of course, you can't do all the things that they do at Bern's as coordinated as they are. And not just the tours, but the dining experience itself without extensive training.

Consistency. Now, I've only been there once. Arlin's been there a number of times, and he talks about the experience is the same every single time you go through. Number nine, sought after employment. People want to work there. It's a great place to work. It's not easy to work there. They have a waiting list of people who want to work there. And I remember reading a few weeks ago a story about a chain of stores, and they pay premium prices for their employees. Because the theory that their CEO had was that one great employee can do the work of three good employees. So, they were willing to pay 80% above market wages for these particular positions. And the theory that, yeah, I'm paying a buck 80 for a dollar job, but I'm getting \$3 worth of value out of it. So, I'm still coming out ahead.

I don't know if that math works or not, but it makes a lot of sense. So having a place to work where people want to work, and there's a waiting list to come to work, means that they're probably paying well above market wages. 11, strong hiring process. They have a food experience system, those are Arlen's words, food experience system. It's not a restaurant, it's not fine dining, a food experience system that is completely well-thought out. And even though they charge premium prices for what they deliver, they still turn people away. There is a long waiting list.

In fact, when my peer group was in Tampa just a few weeks ago, we could not get in because of the waiting list. And we tried, we were six months ahead trying to get in, and could not make it work. Now, that's Bern's Steakhouse in Tampa. How do you apply that to my construction firm? Well, I crowdsourced that among some of our former contractors, and they came up with some ideas. Job site tours, teaching people about project life cycles. Some owners are quite sophisticated, some not so much. So, you've got to tailor these experiences to the experience and quality, I suppose, of the customer.

Touring completed projects, not the project I'm going to work on for you, but projects I've worked on for other people in your space. Whether it happens to be a church or a medical office building, or whatever. GCs should think about the experience economy as it relates to their trade partners, and trade partners should think of the experience economy as it relates to their GCs. What can you do to make your interactions frictionless between your trade partners or if you're a trade partner to your GCs?

Milestone celebrations, that's obviously something that you can embrace with your customers. Frequent updates, face-to-face communication, videos, introductions to the team members that are making the jobs come to pass. And one thing that one of my guys came up with was include the customers in problem-solving. They might not know much about construction, but they do know themselves. They know their project; they know their people. And getting them involved in problem-solving is a great thing, even if they don't come up with, oh my gosh, great light bulb answers, they might help you shape your thinking in such a way that you come up with the light bulb answers.

And then do post project follow up. Don't wait for your customer to call you. Be proactive, and make sure that when your project is done, you're in contact one month out, three months out, six months out with that customer just to make sure everything is perfect the way they wanted it. Now, one of my guys came up with the experience economy as it relates to your employees, because we're always thinking about customers here.

What about the experience economy as it relates to your employees, gatherings outside of work, doing nonprofit or non, I don't know if that's the right word or not, but doing community things that don't have anything directly to do with work are great things.

Offsite events. I know that one of our guys who worked for Goodfellow Brothers raved about their offsite events. They went fishing, hot air balloon riding, helicopter rides over to glaciers in Alaska. They drove rally cars; they did all kinds of things for the leadership group. And they also included spouses in that. Goodfellow Brothers didn't have to do it. They didn't have to spend that money or that time, but they did because they wanted to bond their team together and create a better experience for them.

They had great speakers, which included Navy Seals, the CEO of Caterpillar, gold medal goalie from the hockey team, fighter pilots, et cetera, things like that. And again, including the spouses in those non-work outside of work gatherings is definitely an experience enhancer. So like to know from you, share with us in the comments, what are you doing to improve the experiences for your customers, your trade partners, and your employees?

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