

Letter from the Editor

By: Tim Young

"If you do build a great experience, customers tell each other about that. Word of mouth is very powerful."

- Jeff Bezos



I love my local grocery store. It's easy walking distance from my house, the selection is great, the produce is good, and they carry a lot of local items that some of the larger chains don't bother with. It costs a little more than some other places, but the staff is helpful and they seem to enjoy their jobs. They have a coffee roaster in the store, so you can get a high-quality pick-me-up while you shop. You can even get a pint of craft beer or a glass of wine to drink while you shop.

It's a nice place to buy groceries. And after years spent in large cities where large, luxurious supermarkets are a little harder to come by, I enjoy that store more than I, a man still not so far from the prime of his life, should comfortably admit.

A few months ago, a new feature popped up in that grocery store, standing quietly at the deli counter and the cake bakery and the meat section where you can get fresh house-made sausage: little smiley face customer survey terminals. Maybe you've seen these around: they're from [HappyOrNot](#), and they're called SmileyTerminals, which is undeniably cute. Four faces: Dark green with a big smile, light green with a small smile, light red with a small frown, dark red with a big frown. You slap the face that matches your customer satisfaction and wheel your cart on down the aisle.

I slap those smilies a lot, almost always giving a big, dark green smile. I go out of my way to do it. I am a promoter. Big time.

This store has always done a terrific job of exceeding my expectations, and they still look for ways to allow me to easily and quickly give them my opinion. And the sub-par grocery stores in my area? If they've got a comment box somewhere I've barely noticed it.

It works on two levels: They want to know what I think, and they want me to know *they* want to know what I think. And both are powerful messages.

We all know that communications and groceries are different things, and that I spend a lot more time using my phone and my Internet connection than I spend strolling the aisles of my grocery store. Still, even after decades as a consumer, and having used well over a dozen distinct service providers, I have a hard time remembering a CSP that ever seemed as interested in my opinion as my grocer is.

My experience isn't rare, and that's why we still talk about customer experience in the integrated communications and entertainment (ICE) market, the subject of this month's issue of *Pipeline*. We explore the measurement and enhancement of the customer experience, from billing to policy to service assurance. We explore what lies beyond catalog-driven approaches to traditional OSS/BSS functions and how those will impact the customer experience. We check out the role cognitive platforms play in CEM, examine the benefits of NaaS, discuss orchestration and Big Data, and ask why there are so many seams in an experience that should be—could be—seamless.

Enjoy!

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