

instincts

Instincts is a monthly publication on branding for clients, associates and friends.

Leading and inspiring all those who touch the enterprise to understand, embrace and enhance the power of your brand.

How are you checking?

The best read of the month for me is usually Fast Company magazine and the July/August issue was no exception. There's a wonderful article about how a young Brand Experience expert was taking the crusty Credit Suisse bankers through a simple investigative process to see Credit Suisse in the way that their customers do. And not with their usual millions of dollars of Market Research but with simple observation and – get this – actually talking to clients.

“You don't have to spend half a million dollars on research. Just go and observe.”

He opened the whole subject during a presentation to 200 of the senior bankers who were busy with their Blackberrys and not the least bit interested... until he announced he was going to call the Credit Suisse customer service line LIVE from the podium! He did. They got his point.

He then began an immersion program where he would take a banker to three branches: first just to observe customers in action, second to perform a typical customer task (currency exchange) and, at the third branch, to ask customers questions and to use the website to check out current mortgage rates.

The customer service improvements are already underway. Two branches are being redesigned, they've implemented an initiative to reduce wait times, one to simplify signage and another to ensure they have friendly, helpful employees.

What would brand coach suggest?

When I did something similar with the senior brass of BMO last year, I picked a branch a half block from the King Street head office. 2 of the 5 people didn't even know there was a branch there! Once they did find it, they could easily see why in the clutter customers couldn't find a particular service offering.

When we interviewed Oxford Properties tenants about why they didn't like the customer service provided by the management of the buildings in which they worked, we learned that most people simply didn't know how to call when they had a problem.

And, in a recent ThinkAudit survey we completed for a Wealth Management company, we discovered that the industry's vocabulary had shifted and customers no longer understood the unique offering.

Do it. Get out and look and listen.