

THE COMBUSTION CHRONICLES

**EPISODE SEVENTY-FIVE
PUTTING THE HEART
BACK IN BUSINESS**

HOST: MICHAEL HARPER

GUESTS: SHAWN NASON & ZACK HAMILTON

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Shawn:

Hello, everyone. I'm Shawn Nason, CEO, and founder of MOFI, and I want to welcome you to The Combustion Chronicles podcast, where bold leaders combined with big ideas to make life better for all of us. We're excited to depart from our usual programming for a few weeks, so I can step away from my hosting duties to dig into the world of Experience Ecosystems with my good friend and fellow maverick, Zack Hamilton. Zack currently serves as the Chief Experience and Strategy Officer at Chatter by Stingray. As you'll hear in our conversations, his people-first leadership mindset and his 20-plus years of working in the Experience Management industry come together to challenge tired, outdated systems that are holding organizations, maybe like yours, back to what they need to do. And leading the conversation in this mini-series is Michael Harper, the Chief of Radical Experiences at MOFI. When the three of us get together, we cut through the bullshit to think bigger and bolder about designing a human-obsessed world. Ready to blow up the status quo and ignite a people-first experience revolution? Yeah? Me too! So, let's do this.

Michael:

On this episode, we continue our conversation about all things experience and ecosystems and rethinking how we approach organizations to actually invest in experience. And we've had fantastic conversations throughout the series. We're going to end it with an episode about heart, and I'll tell you, I'm here with Shawn and I'm here with Zack, both of them have a commitment to heart and business. I'll be really honest that I'm the leery one about too much heart in business. Shawn is the over-the-top, we must have heart and over-users of the word. Zack, my guess is you're probably in the middle somewhere, but talk to us, both of you about why heart matters and then we'll dig into the value proposition of it. But Zack, let's start with you. When you talk about heart in business, what are you talking about?

Zack:

Yeah, it's really an interesting question. I think about it this way, think over the last 10 or 15 years, heart has really been taken out of the business and we've over indexed or over rotated on machine learning, A.I., natural language processing. We've over rotated on all these different data models in order for us to make better decisions, but ultimately what's happening behind those scenes, it's still humans making decisions with everything that's being presented in order to deliver great experiences for other humans. Like we're all human natured. We all want to have great experiences and that ultimately at the end of the day, we want to feel valued. We want to have self-worth and we want to feel loved. I mean, if you think about our self needs as humans, those

three needs that we all want, want. And when we give our loyalty to a brand, it's because we can connect with them deeper than just purchasing a product or service with them.

Shawn:

Yeah. Listen, those that know me and know me in the social media world. You know, I use a hashtag experience evangelist because of my days as a pastor and Michael's right. I probably lean too much to the heart and it goes back. I use four words, honesty, integrity, transparency, and loyalty. And I expect that in my relationships with people, but I also expect that in the brands that I visit when I travel or from where I shop at, if you can be that right or wrong or indifferent, I may not always agree with what you do, but if you're at least that and you put it out there, I can respect that. You know? And then as a leader, it goes back to, I said it earlier on one of the episodes that you need to build relationships. I don't know how you can be a leader and not love people and be transparent, be transparent about what's really happening in the business. I just believe you get rewards from it. Sometimes you get burned as Michael knows, but in the end, I believe you get rewards from it.

Zack:

Yeah. I mean, we all want our needs met. I mean, when was the last time, Michael, that you interacted with a brand and you went back a second time when you didn't have your needs met?

Michael:

Yeah. It'd be hard to come up with that example, for sure.

Zack:

Yeah. And so to me, you know, we've heard things like heart centered leadership, right? That's a book that's out there and ultimately human behavior is really about connecting with people. And I think we've over rotated. We've put profits above people. I mean, think about it. People don't leave brands, they leave bad leaders. And they leave leadership because not because you've had a transparent conversation with me, but maybe it was, you were significantly disrespectful towards me. You didn't respect my home life. You didn't respect, you know, that I am balancing being a single parent and I have kids at home, right? Or you didn't get feedback at all, but yet you continue to crush me every year in my annual performance evaluation and that's in air quotes. And so, you know, it's the same with customers. I truly believe as customers, we don't leave bad brands. We leave them because when an issue happens, they're

not transparent. They don't want to connect with us. And they're not trying to resolve all that issue.

Michael:

So you're saying then that as a consumer, even as an employee, as a human, when I am interacting with an organization, as a customer, as an employee, that I can somehow feel whether or not they are meeting my needs, taking care of me, putting me first, like what are those things that companies have to do to be able to send that message to me?

Zack:

So there's really, if you think about experience today, we've been able to look at millions of pieces of data. And we know there's four key levers to, of really what, what customers want. The first one's convenience, how convenient it is for me to interact with your brand to do business? So for example, convenience is a priority, especially for like that single parent. So can I buy online, pick up curbside and I know there's going to be that consistent experience. And I can trust you to pick out the produce for example, that I need for my kids. The second one is really ease. How easy is it, right? And what happens when we have experiences that aren't easy, we get pissed off, our stress increases, right? So that impacts our emotional state. The third one is really personalization. And this isn't just, hi, Shawn, how are you doing? But it's really, I'm trusting you with all of my personal data and I want you to deliver great personal experiences to me, that is showing that you truly care about me. That's putting the heart forward when it comes to me. Last but not least, it's emotional connectedness. As humans, I think the pandemic has taught us, we strive for human connection. We want to connect with you. And so when I'm walking into, to a location and I need help, I want to be able to connect with someone, to get my needs met and finding whatever it is that I need to, that I'm there searching for. So if you really think about those four needs, they are deeply rooted in my head, my heart, and just overall feelings of being connected.

Shawn:

Well, and this is going to sound like a broken record and I'm okay with that. But listen, we at MOFI say, when we design experiences, we have three principles and it's know me, it's surprise me, and make it easy for me. All of which all four of those points you just talked about then, and what's happened is I feel like in industry and particularly again in healthcare, but in all kinds of industry, we have this pendulum like 10 years ago, where it was billions of dollars invested into technology, technology, technology, how do we actually take the human out of everything, right? All healthcare is based on

humans, right? So again, credit this to a very dear friend of mine, how do you still have high touch human experience and high tech? How does tech become your enabler to that human connection and not the answer, right?

Zack:

Yeah. I absolutely agree with that. I think, again, we've over rotated on technology being able to drive operational efficiencies and can we cut the human out of it versus technology being an enabler that really drives the employee to deliver a great experience. If that makes sense. Um, if we just want to speak in that realm, I think the other piece of all this as well is to your point, you know, Shawn, we've invested so much in technology and we've utilized so much data, but we've never really incorporated our feedback into those data models. And I call it, it is the EQ behind the IQ. And so many brands have incredible IQ models with all their data, but they can't answer the question 'Why?' Because they don't understand that EQ from the customer or employee.

Shawn:

And the last thing we need is more data. We got more data going, we know what to do with it.

Michael:

Amen. And on that note, Shawn, thank you. And Zack, thank you for this conversation. Before we wrap up this mini-series in this episode, though, what is your final takeaway? What one thing do you want our listeners to take away from all these episodes? We've been talking about experience and the importance of experience. What one thing can they take away?

Shawn:

Keep the human in experience and don't get so caught up in the metrics.

Zack:

That's a good one, Shawn. I would say for me, it really is start small. It seems like it can be very daunting to move from a traditional experience management to an experience ecosystem, but just start small, start with one thing and take action on it every day. And then what will happen is the flywheel will start to spin, right? And other cross functional teams will say, oh my gosh, I want to be part of that. And then you just created the momentum within your organization.

Michael:

So change is possible, experiences are possible, thinking differently is possible, finding a business model that works in this space. All these things are possible. So thank you for unleashing these possibilities with us and getting us to, to think differently in this mini-series. So thank you to Shawn and to Zack. And we look forward to having other conversations, maybe around a beer someday.

Shawn:

That's right.

Zack:

That's right.

Michael:

Take care.

Shawn:

Thanks so much for listening to this episode of The Combustion Chronicles. If you've enjoyed this episode, please take a few minutes to subscribe, rate and review our podcast. Remember that I'm always looking to meet more big-thinking mavericks. So let's keep the conversation going by connecting on LinkedIn. If you want to discover more about human-obsessed, maverick-minded experience ecosystems, go to MOFI.co where you'll discover ideas and resources to help you ignite your own experience revolution. As always stay safe, be well and keep blowing shit up.