

SPRINGFAIR

AUTUMNFAIR

Hyve

# Ambience Playbook

A how-to guide to help companies of all shapes and sizes exhibiting at Spring and Autumn Fair to maximise their return on investment.



# Welcome

## What this Playbook will teach you

If you're reading this you're probably hoping to...

- Deepen customers + visitors' engagement with your brand
- Increase profitability + viability
- Spend money better + increase your ROI
- Maximise the benefits of both physical and digital in the most efficient way
- Embed values that are vital for you, your customers, and our planet
- Refocus or refresh your mission so that your customers will enjoy a joined-up brand experience
- Develop + retain a team that will own, deliver, and further enhance your customer experience.



## What is Ambience? Your opportunity!



Imagine that you walk into a famous toy store. Surrounding you are the colours of the products and brands across the store. The displays are clean and the Point of Sale and directional signage are clear, informative, consistently branded and well-placed, enabling you to read the offers and quickly find what you are looking for.

The air smells of candy from the pick 'n' mix department in the centre of the store. You accept a sample offered by a smiling team member: it tastes delicious. The soft toy displays demand that you touch and feel the soft plush of teddy bears and other animals. Everything is as you would expect – and yet, something is not right: over the PA system blares loud, heavy rock music with aggressive, adult lyrics.

This example – which is based on a real experience – shows how easy it is to undermine a carefully choreographed, brand experience. In this case, the background music was at odds both with the business brand and its target customers – that is, children, and adults buying for children.



Sight

Sound

Smell

Touch

Taste

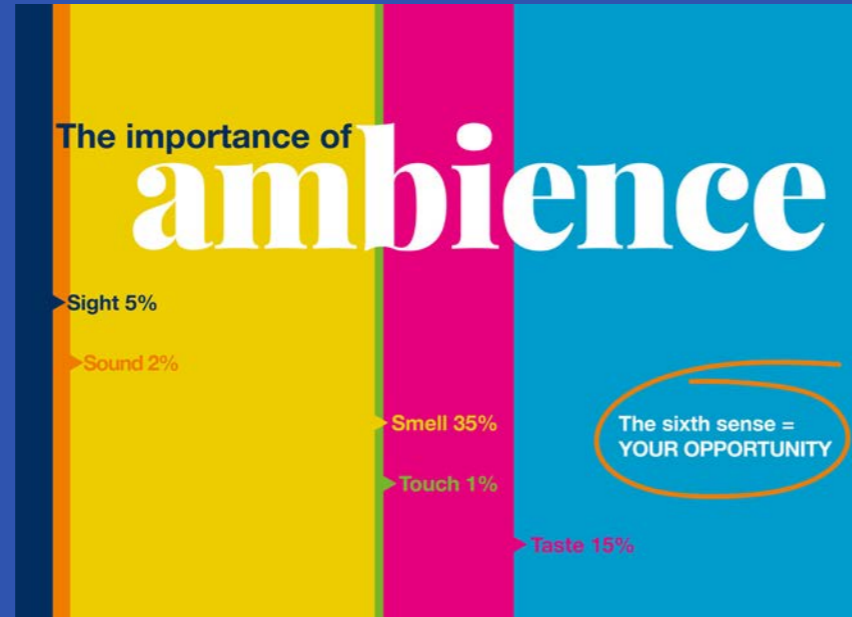
## “The theory page”

A study by Rockefeller University in New York suggested that customers remember:

- 5% of what they see
- 2% of what they hear
- 35% of what they smell
- 1% of what they touch
- 15% of what they taste

In our view there’s a sixth sense: the feeling customers get when the whole experience delivers the brand promise.

It’s that emotional response that could make the difference between a visitor becoming a customer or passing you by.



## Why a Playbook?

“**Playbook**” (noun)

1. (in Elizabethan drama) the script of a play, used by the actors as an acting text
2. a book containing the scripts of one or more plays
3. (in American Football) a notebook containing descriptions of all the plays and strategies used by a team
4. (informal) any plan or set of strategies, as for outlining a campaign in business or politics – adapted from Collins Dictionary

**This is your step-by-step guide to creating Ambience.**

**It will show you how to use the sixth sense to elevate your brand experience and results.**

# Is this going to be expensive?

A prospective customer walks into your business – or onto your exhibition stand.

You're already spending £££s on



Team



Stock



Utilities



Marketing



Rent + Rates

How much can your customer contribute:

- In that single visit?
- Over a lifetime?

You do the maths: most of your costs are 'sunk' – using the sixth sense will help you to maximise your ROI. (We call this ROEE – Return On Excellent Experiences).



## CASE STUDY: The first-time exhibitor – Chuug

**My name is Mike Chamberlain and I'm the Founder and CEO of Chuug, a lifestyle brand that is currently focused on high-quality gifts for men, more specifically, customisable beer tankards.**

### Why did you decide to exhibit at Spring Fair?

I have visited many times before and thought it would be the perfect place to launch the brand to retailers and get an immediate answer to our unanswered questions about whether our offering had potential in the B2B market.

### What was your concept in putting the stand together?

I wanted a minimal and professional stand that did not cost the earth. I also wanted it to be a clean and simple stage to showcase the products above everything else.

### What were your results?

I got exactly what I wanted. After Day 1 I knew I had something so immediately moved to the next phase of commitments and growth (mainly purchasing our expensive dot com domain and ordering a large quantity of stock). Financially we did quite well also. We'll see how the long game plays out, but for now it's looking good.

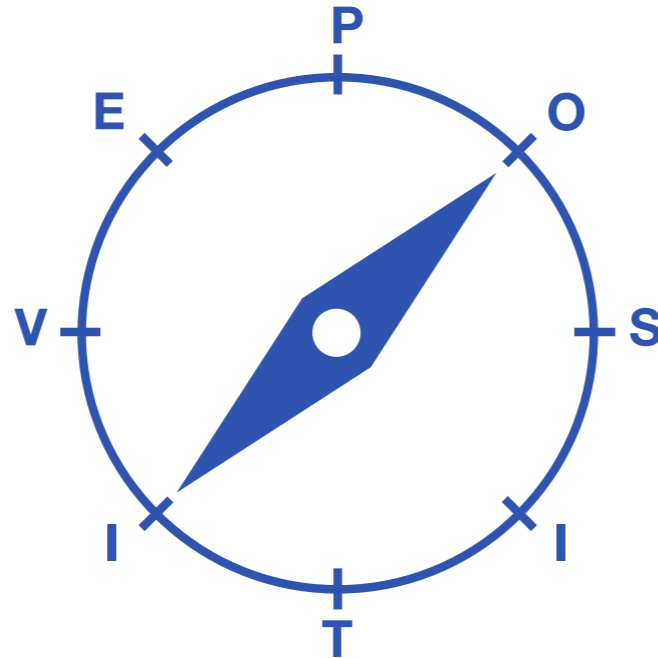
## Asset review

Whilst there's always the temptation to focus on problems, we prefer to concentrate on opportunities. This is the first step in harnessing the sixth sense: what are your key assets that could be maximised to delight your customers?

This is a great exercise to do with your team.

Our checklist includes:

- ✓ Your **Purpose** (mission, vision, values) – will they engage your team, as well as your customers?
- ✓ How does your Purpose translate into the **Service** your customers experience?
- ✓ What is the current **Verdict** on your performance (financial, customer + team results?)



Scan the QR code for more resources to help you get your bearings.



## So now we know where we are – where do we want to go?

### We need a guiding star!

To help everyone in your business focus on a single vision of the customer experience that will be unique to you, we invite you to embark on what we call “Project STARS” – developing a simple model of your business to create focus, and momentum, to achieve the desired change.

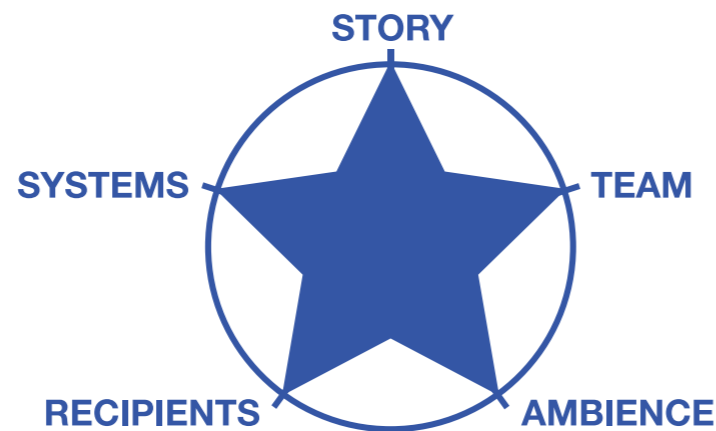
By creating a story that everyone in the organisation can understand and buy into, your project will have a far greater chance of success.

# Creating your STARS

Project STARS refers to the STARS model of a world class customer experience, it is comprised of the following five elements.

- ✓ Defining your **Story** and what makes your business unique
- ✓ Aligning your **Team** to deliver the Story in every interaction
- ✓ Modelling **Ambience** - how your customer experiences your brand, through their five senses
- ✓ Bringing your key customer (**Recipient**) personas vividly to life
- ✓ Identifying the **Systems** that will drive the delivery of your experience

These five elements should inform how you operate and make strategic decisions as you progress towards your vision.



## CASE STUDY: The experienced exhibitor – Spice Kitchen



Hello, I'm Sanjay, one half of the duo behind Spice Kitchen, alongside my incredible mother, Shashi. Our journey began in 2012, driven by our shared passion for spices and exploration.

### Why do you decide to exhibit at Spring and Autumn Fair?

Participating in Spring and Autumn Fair is an opportunity to connect with our existing retail partners, nurture those relationships, and explore avenues for growth within our network.

### What is your concept in putting the stand together?

Our approach involves creating a colourful and inviting space that reflects our new brand identity. We go for an open layout that encourages discussions with visitors, eliminating barriers to them coming over to say hello.

### What were your results?

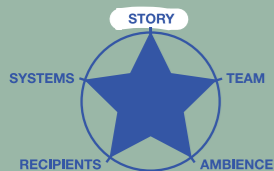
This year was great for us: namely because we secured numerous new accounts. It's so good to see this organic growth and validation of our efforts.

### What advice would you give to a new exhibitor?

Before the show, thorough preparation is key.

During the show, use time wisely by focusing on engaging potential buyers rather than vendors. Simplify the ordering process to encourage immediate sales.

After the show, follow up diligently on leads, maintaining thorough records and employing persistence in nurturing potential connections.



# Your Story.

## Exercise: elevator pitch.

Another great way to engage your team in defining the vision – the second step in developing the sixth sense.

You'll need:

- ✓ Flipchart paper
- ✓ Coloured pens
- ✓ Post-it notes

1. Invite the team to write as many words as possible (one word or short phrase per Post-it note), describing the experience **ONLY** your organisation provides
2. Group the words by category, e.g. location, facilities, ethos, experience etc.
3. Invite each individual or team to create an elevator pitch based on the words + ideas
4. Vote for the favourite, or combine the ideas that resonate to create your definitive elevator pitch.

**You have your Story!**

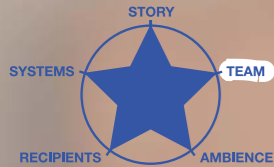


## Top tips

Use this checklist to encourage the team to evaluate the elevator pitch:

- ✓ Is it genuinely unique?
- ✓ Is it relevant – to the audience, and to the times?
- ✓ Would it make **me** want to visit?

**“Elevator pitch”**  
 (noun)  
 A succinct and persuasive sales pitch  
 – adapted from  
 Oxford Languages



# The essential ingredient is the Team!

“According to Gallup’s meta-analysis, the business or work units that scored the highest on employee engagement showed 21% higher levels of profitability than units in the lowest quartile. Companies with a highly engaged workforce also scored 17% higher on productivity.” – Haillo



Treating visitors as guests in our family home  
 BLENHEIM PALACE GUEST CHARTER 2022  
 BLENHEIM

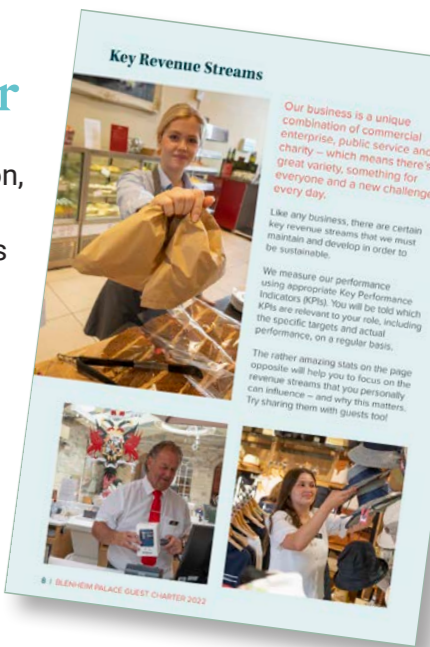
## Top tip: create a customer charter

A customer charter brings together mission, vision, values, business model, quality standards and all the ways the organisation supports its employees to deliver the brand experience (as described in the elevator pitch).

It’s a great way to induct new employees into the organisation’s culture.

It also provides context for customer experience programmes and training.

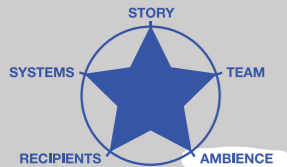
You could start with something simple – such as a poster, co-created with your team!



Discover more about customer charters...







## It's time to create your Ambience

The sector in which you operate can be imagined as a giant marketplace (both physical and digital).

Your business is in there, your stall is set out and you are promoting your products and services to passing trade.

Meanwhile, there are thousands of other businesses, in the same marketplace, offering the same or similar products and experiences.

And, in this marketplace, there are of course the Recipients:

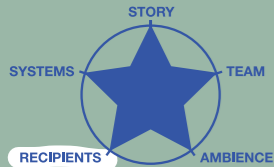
- ✓ Our current and past customers
- ✓ Our potential customers



...all of them are trying to find the products and experiences they need. Perhaps they will even be persuaded to buy something they didn't know they needed.

They will use a variety of ways to find out who offers the best experience:

- ✓ **Their senses:** who stands out, with a clear story and eye-catching presentation? Whose products smell or taste the best?
- ✓ **Their market knowledge:** who have they visited or bought from before? Which area of the market features the type of experience they are looking for?
- ✓ **Navigation aids:** are there signposts pointing them to the categories of business they are looking for?
- ✓ **Recommendations:** who are their peers using, or avoiding?



# Customer segmentation: The 3 'R's

## Recipients, Relevance, Resonance

A powerful Story needs an engaged audience. However well you think you know yours, this exercise will help you to utilise all the latent customer insight in your team, to take customer focus to a whole new level.

The questions are:

1. Who are your customers (audiences, **recipients**)?
2. How **relevant** is your Story to them?
3. How strongly does it **resonate** with each segment?



## Exercise: your customer personas

“Your customers are only satisfied because their expectations are so low and because no one else is doing better. If you really want a booming business, you have to create Raving Fans.”

– Ken Blanchard + Sheldon Bowles, Raving Fans

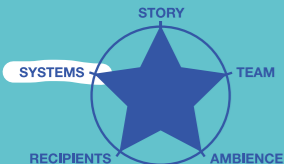
Invite the team to identify all the recognisable customer types they see, as follows:

1. Age, gender, party size
2. Appearance – style, demeanour
3. What do they want?
4. One word to describe them
5. If they were a character from fiction, or a celebrity, or sports team, who would they be?
6. Approximate proportion of total customers\*
7. Propensity to spend\*

\*You can check these against your data – or start collecting data to verify and refine the personas.

It's all about everyone truly seeing the customers and what they want from us (the sixth sense).





## Now to bring it to life... Systemise it

Use your STARS model to develop some simple processes to maximise each of the elements, for example:

**Story** – starting with the elevator pitch, develop a customer charter induction process to make it ‘real’ for every employee.

**Team** – complete a training needs analysis to support investment in developing your people to fulfil their potential.

**Ambience** – develop a promotional calendar to coordinate and maximise every opportunity to excite your customers.

**Recipients** – set up a cross-functional, continuous improvement forum to drive action in response to customer and team feedback.

# S

## CASE STUDY: The bellwether – Enesco

I’m Aylish Ellwood, Trade Marketing Manager at Enesco in Carlisle. Our products are sold through retailers nationwide and we pride ourselves on delivering high-quality, unique items that bring joy to the everyday.



### Why do you exhibit at Spring Fair?

It’s a valuable platform which hosts a celebration of the gift industry. Spring Fair offers the opportunity to network (one big brainstorm!), build brand awareness, secure existing and new partnerships, gain insight into industry trends, showcase Enesco as a leading licensee and distributor, support our teambuilding and of course, take immediate and future orders, helping us to forecast for the year ahead.

### What is your concept in putting the stand together, to achieve your objectives?

To create a relaxed and focused buyer experience and journey through storytelling, displaying products in key categories.

### What were your results?

The response at the show was positive. Post-show we review conversion and quality of leads, increased penetration with existing customers, repeat orders, and collaborations, regularly, to gain a true insight into the results and benefits.

### What lessons would you pass on to other exhibitors?

Plan ahead: work with the Hyve team to engage your company with customers – pre-show marketing is key. Once at the show, talk to everyone who will listen. It is about the people you have met and those you haven’t... YET! Above all enjoy Spring Fair and all it has to offer.

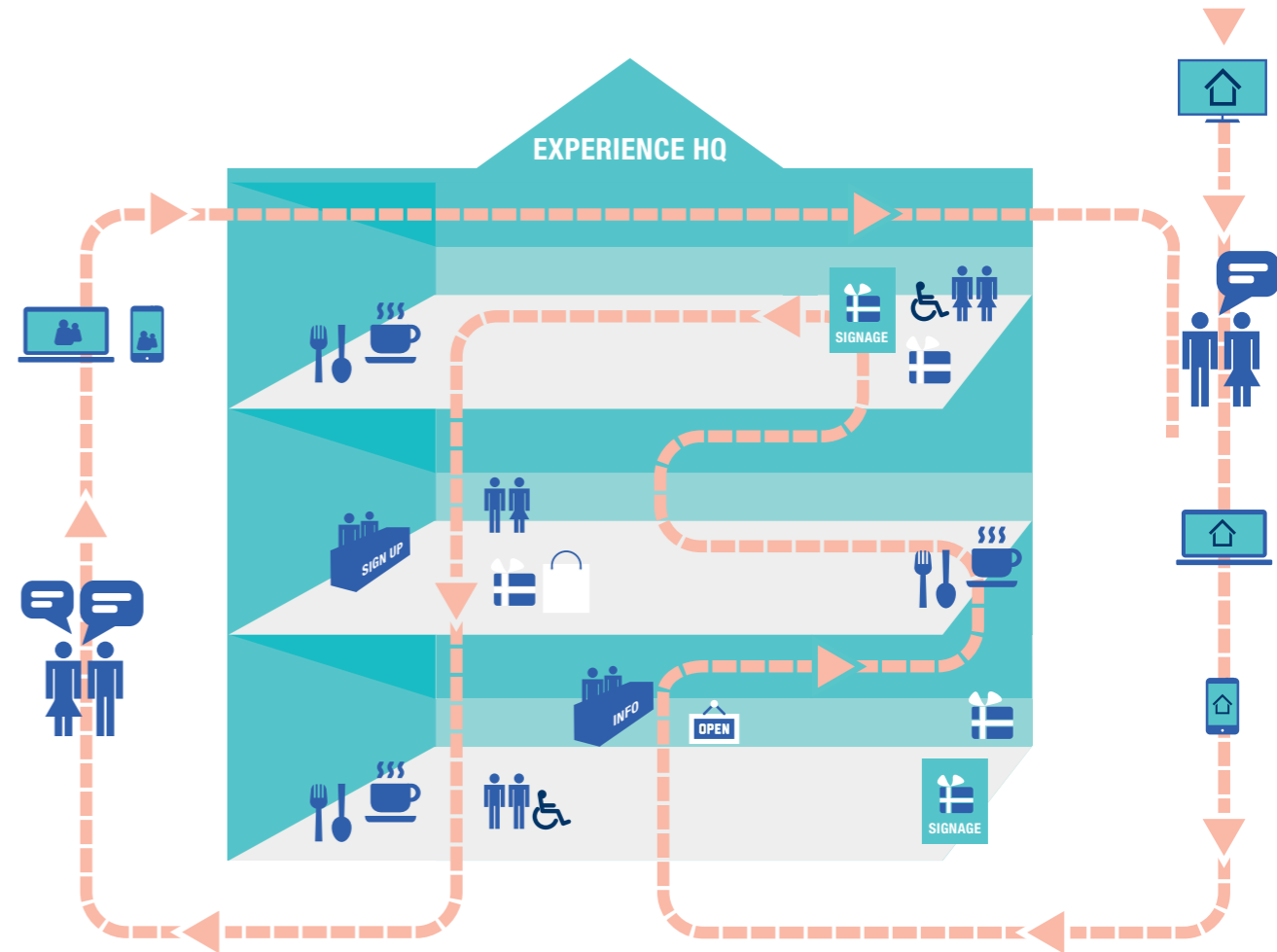
# How customers... experience buy become loyal become advocates

“Not looking at the basic, fundamental comfort issues of the customer experience has a direct relationship to your profitability.” – Paco Underhill

Understanding how customers buy is essential to maximising the customer experience, in order to maximise engagement, revenue, and loyalty. It's also a fundamental component of your sixth sense.

Some simple ways to gain customer insight include:

- ✓ Invest quality time in really understanding your customer personas, what they want and how they want it (see page 14)
- ✓ Take part in a customer safari – walk in your (or your competitor's) customers' shoes
- ✓ Review the customer journey and how you can optimise the Moments of Truth (see page 24)

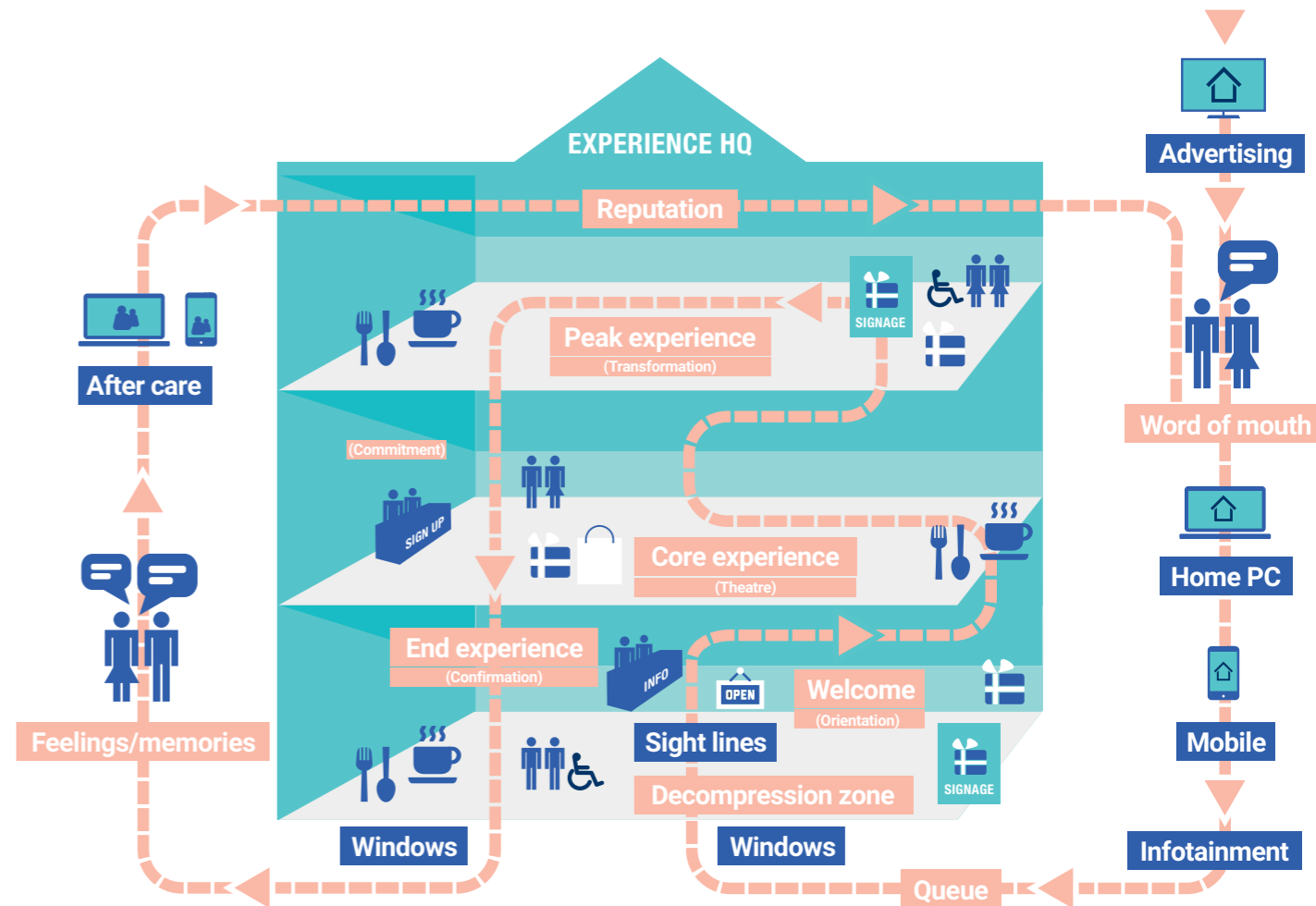


# Mapping the customer journey

“ These ‘moments of truth’ are the moments when we must prove to our customers that [our organisation] is their best alternative.”  
 – Jan Carlzon

Customer journey mapping is a fundamental tool for the experience economy. It's a simple and powerful way to identify all the touchpoints (interactions), and the Moments of Truth, which make or break the experience:

1. With your team, draw a map of your customer journey
2. Discuss and plot the Moments of Truth
3. What should happen at each one?
4. Consider the most important senses at this point
5. Identify the specific desired outcomes for each MoT
6. What quick wins and longer-term improvements can you make?



## CASE STUDY: The first-time exhibitor – Bare Kind



I'm Lucy, the founder of Bare Kind. We sell bamboo socks that save endangered animals.

### Why did you decide to exhibit at Spring Fair?

We actually won the stand! We won it through Theo Paphitis' Small Business Sunday.

### What was your concept in putting the stand together?

As we have such an awesome range of animal socks, we wanted to display the whole range all in one place with our fabulous sock wall. I used Command Strips to achieve this effect, as it was our first trade show I wanted a cheap and portable way to build my stand.

### What were your results?

We got a lot of comments on the stand, people loved it! It worked so well that we even had our current retailers come up to us and ask us to re-produce it for them in store. We have signed up as a paying exhibitor for next year and can look to invest further in our stand set-up.

### What did you learn?

Having built the stand cheaply for our first show, now we know it was a success we can look to invest further in our stand set-up.

## Applied innovation – the last 98%

Now we need to think about the key products, services and experiences you will create for those customers.

### “Innovation” (noun)

the practical implementation of ideas that result in the introduction of new goods or services or improvement in offering goods or services – Wikipedia

In our experience, many organisations (excluding sectors such as tech, engineering, medical, etc) don't always “do innovation” consciously: product development in retail, interior design, new builds – tend to be thought of as projects. This approach has a fundamental flaw: projects end; the organisation moves on, and in doing so many of the full benefits risk being lost.

“Never forget implementation: in our work, it's what I call the ‘last 98 percent’ of the client puzzle.” – Al McDonald, former Managing Director, McKinsey & Co

## Exercise: ECT (Extreme Customer Treating)

This is a fast, simple and effective group exercise to generate relevant ideas to improve your customer experience.

It's called Round Robin Ideation:

1. Remind everyone of your business' Elevator Pitch – this exercise is about finding new or refreshed ways to deliver it
2. Seat everyone in a circle and hand them a sheet of A4 paper
3. In silence (or with background music), each person chooses a customer persona to treat
4. Next they write an idea to surprise and delight that customer, before passing the paper to the person to their left
5. Each participant then writes suggestion to enhance their neighbour's idea and passes that along
6. Repeat until everyone has their own, developed idea in front of them.

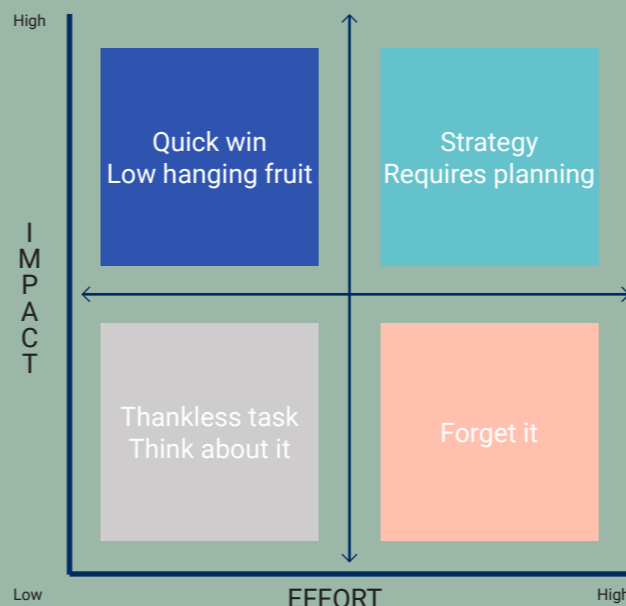
Discover applied  
innovation tools here...



**“Ideation”** (noun)  
The process of  
forming ideas,  
from conception to  
implementation -  
Investopedia

“Deciding what not to do is as important as deciding what to do.  
That’s true for companies, and it’s true for products.” – Steve Jobs

## And now prioritise ROEE (Return On Excellent Experiences) Matrix



Prioritising opportunities is key to getting results. As a group, plot all the ideas from the Extreme Customer Treating process onto this matrix to gain insight into your next steps, as follows:

1. Give each of the ideas a number
2. Plot each idea, using its number, onto the matrix, based on your assessment of how difficult or expensive it might be to implement, compared to the potential reward
3. Develop a plan showing how you will implement the ideas, with timelines, milestones + accountabilities

**TIP:** low-hanging fruit are not only quicker and easier to implement than some other concepts, they also create confidence in the process, and potentially generate some quick sales too!

# Meet our Advisory Board

Our Advisory Board is a dynamic group of industry leaders representing leading industry associations, exhibitors, and retailers. The board brings together wide-ranging expertise to drive innovation, foster collaboration and ensure the continued success of Spring and Autumn Fair. Be part of it: send your comments and ideas to [exhibitor@springfair.com](mailto:exhibitor@springfair.com)



**Daniel Kullmann**  
Head of Corporate Communications, EK Retail



**Ben Massey**  
CEO, National Association of Jewellers



**Jason Bensohn**  
Managing Director, One Dot World Ltd.



**John Halliday**  
Director of Membership & Marketing, British Independent Retailer Association



**Karen Wilson**  
Vice President, The Greeting Card Association



**Kay Hutcheson**  
Head of Product Marketing & Product Operations, Coopers of Stortford



**Aylish Ellwood**  
Trade Marketing Manager, Enesco Ltd.



**Maggie Thornton**  
Owner, Alligator Pear



**Nick Ronald**  
Owner, Casa Verde



**Paul Sun**  
Managing Director, Gingko Design Ltd.



**Samantha Gibbs**  
Director, Nest



**Sarah Ward**  
CEO, The Giftware Association



**Stephen Illingworth**  
Owner & CEO, Widdop & Co.



**Tim Hollis**  
Retail Brand Development Manager, Talking Tables Ltd.



**Stephen Spencer**  
- Board Chair  
Ambience Director, Stephen Spencer + Associates



**Laura Rae**  
Head Of Community, Spring & Autumn Fair



**Jackson Szabo**  
Portfolio Director, Spring & Autumn Fair

# Spring and Autumn Fair – still essential in a digital world

## A captive audience:

Trade shows like the Spring and Autumn Fair gather national buyers in one location, providing exhibitors with a unique opportunity to showcase their products to a diverse and concentrated audience. Trade shows attract a wide array of new buyers and business owners in need of products for their retail establishments.

## Maximising sales potential:

Spring and Autumn Fair provide exhibitors with an invaluable opportunity to meet both their new and existing buyers in one location. Meeting face-to-face facilitates the showcasing of new product lines, upselling, renegotiation, and nurtures and strengthens existing client relationships in a way that digital formats cannot replicate.

## The statistics:

Annually, the two shows attract over 45,000 visitors, indicating the substantial potential for businesses to engage with a large number of potential customers in a single event. A staggering 85% of those visitors are the sole decision maker for buying in their organisation. This underscores the importance of trade shows as platforms for businesses to connect with motivated buyers and drive sales.

At the Autumn Fair, 71.5% of attendees identify themselves as independent retailers, while 28.5% represent chains, department stores, or large retailers. This breakdown underscores the diverse mix of potential customers present at trade shows, catering to businesses of varying scales and niches.



**“What would we do differently if we charged admission?”  
– Joe Pine + Jim Gilmore, The Experience Economy**

Your exhibition stand is your event space – an activation or extension of your brand experience. Every journey that a customer takes through your stand or showroom, both on and offline, should immerse them in your values and heritage, and leave them wanting more.

This Playbook will help you design and activate your brand experience to trigger human emotion at every level, because when people love your brand as much as you do, they become engaged followers and loyal customers.

Visit the  
Spring & Autumn Fair  
Exhibitor Zones



Produced by

**STEPHEN  
SPENCER+  
ASSOCIATES**