

**Client**

Comcast

Industry

Telecommunications

Topics

Digital transformation

Challenge

Overcome organizational change and boost customer satisfaction

Solution

Leaders learned practical methods for fostering diverse perspectives and how to gain more innovation

Result

10 point rise in customer satisfaction scores

Surge in digital innovation

IMPROVING INNOVATION & CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

Talk about digital transformation. Comcast, born a cable-TV provider, has been rapidly adopting digital technology and transforming itself into a technology and entertainment provider. Comcast's brands now include NBC Universal, Sky, Comcast Business, Telemundo, Xfinity and DreamWorks Animation. With over 30 million customers and annual revenues topping \$100 billion, Comcast is focused on innovation and improving the customer experience to grow the business.



Challenge

When Peter Neill joined Comcast Business in October 2017 as vice president of the West Division, the company was undergoing an organizational transformation. Customers and employees were looking for more from Comcast Business. To improve customer satisfaction and reduce churn in an increasingly competitive market, Comcast needed to better understand the experiences of its customers.

Comcast already had a robust platform in place to elicit more specific feedback from both customers and employees about its products, programs and policies. It was particularly focused on making sure input from frontline employees who had daily interactions with customers reached the upper levels of the organization. To build on this platform, Neill wanted to give his team the skills to have more candid, inclusive conversations and create a culture in which employees at all levels of the organization felt comfortable to speak freely.

“In our transformation from being a cable provider to a technology company, the fastest path to accomplishing that is truly understanding what’s going on in the business,” Neill says. “I wanted to create an environment in which leaders, including myself, were seeking out diverse opinions.”



Solution

To create that culture, Neill began by having 300 of his leaders trained in a new approach to conversations that taught them how to be more open, honest and collaborative with each other. The training focused on four basic principles that every conversation should strive for: to interrogate reality, provoke learning, tackle tough problems and enrich the relationship.

“Interrogating reality” requires being curious about another person’s point of view by starting conversations with phrases like, “Here’s what I observed; what was your experience?” rather than focusing on arguing your viewpoint. Asking these types of questions provokes learning as both people gain a better understanding of the other person’s perspective. This understanding helps them tackle tough problems together. And a willingness to hear people out — without going on the attack or becoming defensive — lays a foundation for conversations that can enrich the parties’ relationship.

Another part of the training introduced the concept of “beach ball reality” in which every person in an organization stands on a different colored stripe of a beach ball based on factors like their function, seniority level, and experience. Depending on which stripe they stand on, each person’s view of reality will differ in unique and important ways. Companies willing to embrace diverse perspectives often come up with better solutions – a point Neill reinforced by bringing multicolored beach balls into team meetings.

“I wanted to create an environment that focused on seeking out the diverse perspectives of all team members, whether that’s a frontline supervisor, a manager, a director or a vice president,” Neill says. “Using this approach helped me and the team diversify our thinking so that we can make better decisions on behalf of the business.”



To address the external perceptions of customers, Comcast launched several new customer satisfaction initiatives. One program has Comcast employees calling customers who completed surveys and agreed to follow up calls. By interrogating the reality of those customers and listening carefully, Comcast has gained valuable insights that are driving significant change across the business.



Similarly, Comcast service agents are being trained to understand that what's best for the customer is also what's best for the business. For example, Comcast Business agents reach out to customers proactively, ensuring they have appropriate solutions for their business.



“Our goal is to understand what the customer is trying to accomplish, then provide customers solutions that fulfill those needs rather than selling them something they don't want,” Neill says. “This kind of a relationship requires a two-way dialogue.”





Results

Since the training in new conversation models, customer survey scores for Neill's division have risen by 10 points. The company's customer churn numbers have also strengthened, meaning fewer customers are leaving Comcast Business, which is driving nearly double-digit revenue growth that continues to outpace the industry average, Neill says.








Internally, the simple act of passing around the beach ball has led to more inclusive and productive meetings. "If I haven't heard from you, I just toss the ball to you and make sure you are part of the conversation," Neill says. "It's a physical way of getting everyone to engage and share their perspective."



Looking ahead, Neill sees an even brighter future as more employees have important, meaningful conversations about the business and use their new communication skills to give customers the products, services, and experience they really want.



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