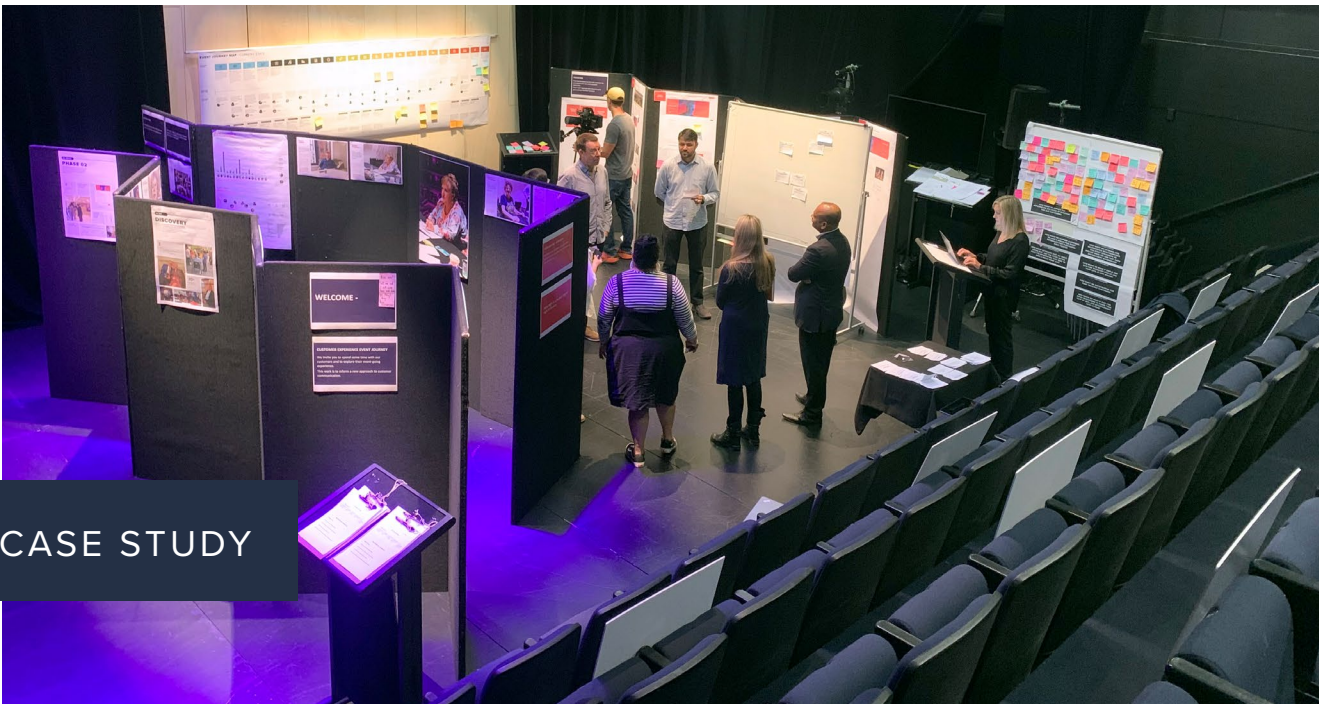


Auckland Live: Putting customers at the centre of everything



When Auckland Live decided to dispense with assumptions about customer experience and instead examine the complete journey taken by visitors to the events it hosts and curates across the city, it engaged Assurity Consulting to illuminate the path. Through a series of targeted interventions, Assurity Consulting has delivered a clear view around how individuals and groups engage with Auckland Live, tracking every step of the process from how they hear about an event, through to ticket booking, arriving at the venue, attending, and post-event actions. The result is unparalleled insight into the end-to-end customer journey, providing actionable insights and the informed specification for a future Customer Relationship Management (CRM) solution. On the conclusion of the project, learnings, artefacts, and outputs were showcased in an interactive exhibition, to socialise and enable Auckland Live's staff and partners to immerse into the customer mindset.

Auckland Live is a world-class leader in live arts and entertainment, and a significant contributor to the vibrancy and creativity of Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland. Each year, the organisation hosts some 900 events and welcomes to its venues, over 800,000 Aucklanders, visitors from around the country and the world to the City of Sails. Iconic locations and public spaces including the Aotea Centre, Aotea Square, Auckland Town Hall, The Civic, Bruce Mason Centre and Queens Wharf are Auckland Live's stages for presenting a programme of live arts and entertainment for the enjoyment and inspiration of everyone.

Situation

Conscious that there was room for improvement in customer communications and the potential for missed opportunities, Auckland Live GM Customer Experience and Innovation, Penn Trevella says the organisation recognised this and was focused on enhancing their customers' experience. "We also recognised the potential for an investment in a new CRM platform, but before doing that, we wanted a customer-led approach informing the features and functionality of an eventual system. If we are clear on what adds the most value to the customer, then we can be clear on how to set up the CRM system for success."

At the back end of many organisations, where systems and processes like the proposed CRM system are designed and executed, there tend to be broad assumptions around the wants and needs of customers. What is often missing is a direct link to those customers who can be achieved in a surprisingly simple way: Just ask them.

Trevella says getting stuck with assumptions about what customers want is a dangerous mistake to make. "That's where a customer-led approach differs – and when you're taking the voice of the customer to organisational stakeholders, when you're empathising and understanding the challenges your customers face, you're in a better position to address those issues."

The approach, he adds, also means empowered advocacy with internal stakeholders, who are better equipped to assess the value of targeted initiatives for organisational improvement.



Solution

Trevella says the project was greatly assisted by Assurity Consulting's ability to rapidly grasp the context and complexity of Auckland Live's operations. "Working on something of this nature rests on confidence and trust. It involves multiple stakeholders, from the core project team through to senior leadership. And it is the nuances of understanding and extrapolating key insights from customers that builds credibility," he explains.

Assurity started with a simple problem statement: 'How might we better understand our customers' needs to ensure Auckland Live is relevant across the entire event experience?' and then due to the impact of the pandemic on live events, responded with a phased approach. The first phase directly engaged customers with in-depth and intercept interviews, as well as interviews with key internal employees and subject matter experts. This was focused primarily on the pre-purchase and ticket purchase phase of the event experience. A second phase included shadow interviews, data analysis, validation of early-stage digital prototypes and resulted in the creation of the Customer Decision Making Funnel, and a comprehensive Customer Journey Map. The map consists of 24 key step customer insights across the five phases: from Pre-Purchase, Purchase, Post-Purchase, Day of the Event, and Post-Event.

"In-depth interviews with individual customers are really at the heart of it," says Trevella, noting a particular skill in empathising with customers, talking freely, and relating to individuals while tracking and identifying the challenges faced across whole journeys. "And then there was the shadowing, where customers were tracked from their homes, through departure, on to the event and after. Professionalism was evident as Assurity's people knew when and how to probe and pick up on the nuances."

If there were any surprises which came out of this direct engagement, Trevella says it is an appreciation of the extent to which event-going is a social experience. "You get a wakeup call. For us, it is daily business. For our customers, it's truly special."

When the results of the engagement were in and the customer journey mapped, the project team did something unusual which dramatically amplified the results of a consulting engagement. Where most reports end up in a PDF distributed by email, a physical interactive exhibit was setup to engage staff members, senior leaders, and external partners. "This made the customer journey real. Our people could see it in action – and better understand their role in creating and delivering a great experience," Trevella notes.



Results

Trevella says Assurity Consulting’s work has delivered the better understanding of the customer sought by Auckland Live. “More precisely, we have identified those areas where we can make a difference, where we can alleviate any challenges the customer faces. We can prioritise our efforts.”

He stresses that the work done to date is not ‘solutioning’, but rather preparatory in nature. “There are multiple next steps, including the design and implementation of a suitable CRM system; what we have now is a clearer idea of what we want from the CRM, and there is still experimentation and design work to be done to solution what we now know our customers want.”

There is more to it than an eventual system, too. “When talking to customers, plenty more than their direct experience comes up. This puts the leadership team in a uniquely informed position to make more informed decisions; the work Assurity has done, in other words, will influence operational processes and systems too.”

As something of an ‘added bonus’, in the discovery phase of the project Assurity identified large quantities of data from previous events. This data had not been analysed – so Assurity put a data scientist on it, delivering further customer insights from a dormant asset. “This really showed the value of engaging with a multi-competency consultancy. They recognised an opportunity for us and rapidly demonstrated further value,” Trevella notes.

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Penn Trevella, GM, Customer Experience and Innovation, Auckland Live

His colleague Stuart Lyon, General Manager Operations, Auckland Live and Auckland Conventions, is impressed with the outcome. “The project delivered valuable and detailed insights into our customers and their experience with our services in a succinct manner. What’s pleasing is the insight was further developed to provide the business with tangible areas of focus to improve our service to customers.”

Finally, sharing findings, recommendations, and customer journey design through the ‘immersive experience’ has ensured maximum impact for the work done. “We walked our people through an exhibition of the entire project, including pictures of and core insights from customers, the phases they go through, and the journey map. We have had teams popping by from all over the organisation, genuinely interested in how their work impacts the customer. And that has really helped extract value from the work,” Trevella concludes.



At a glance



AUCKLAND LIVE

Company:
Auckland Live

Industry:
Entertainment

Situation:

- To gain deep insight into the current customer experience of Auckland Live and its events.
- To inform the design of a new Customer Relationship Management platform.

Solution:

- Mapped out a 2-phase approach around customer research to bring integrity to the insights factoring in the impact of Covid.
- Analysis and cleansing of existing Auckland Live data sets and dashboard play back of the results to inform the project through quantitative analysis.
- In-depth qualitative insights, through direct customer interviews (in-depth, intercept and shadowing) to form key themes and areas for improvement.

Outcomes achieved:

- A comprehensive 24 key step Customer Insights and Journey Map across the five phases: from Pre-Purchase, Purchase, Post-Purchase, Day of the Event, and Post-Event.
- Mapping of existing communication channels and pathway of customer enquiries coming into Auckland Live.
- Previous, relevant data-event information now able to inform and support the extensive qualitative findings, enabling richer insight.
- Interactive share-back of project outcomes across key stakeholder groups to ensure understanding, buy-in and value maximisation for Auckland Live staff, and providing them accurate insight to enable them to creating and delivering a great experience for their customers.
- Prioritisation metrics identifying key pain-points for solutioning.