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Expert tells businesses how to stand out

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To attract and keep customers today, businesses need to ask themselves tough questions, and the answers must go beyond products and prices, according to a customer relationship expert who spoke Tuesday in Fish Creek.

Pay attention to clues and look at the customer's experience from the inside-out of the organization, advised Steve Tyink, vice president of business innovation at Miron Construction Co. Inc. and a national speaker on customer attachment tools and strategies.

His presentation, "Standing Out: The Clues & The Cause," was sponsored by the Door County Economic Development Corp., Northeast Wisconsin Technical College and the Door County Visitor Bureau.

"The key to a customer relationship is to develop a promise and communicate it. We have to keep the promise, and that doesn't happen in the world today," Tyink said

In fact, he shared research that suggests 70 percent of people feel their experiences with companies were "completely forgettable."

Customers are tired and angry. They feel taken for granted, and they are bored, he said.

Tyink, who visited 33 leading companies including Apple, Southwest Airlines and REI, said those brands are successful because they understand customer outcomes first and "create the systems and processes and people to bring them to life."

They also "think differently" and stand for something greater than the products being delivered, he said.

"We want you to start thinking differently about outcomes. One way is to take a walk in the organization. Design the experiences rather than leave them to chance," he said.

Look for clues, he said, at places that he called "attach points" for customers: parking, entrances, the employee's greeting at the front desk and how people get to a room in a hotel, for example, or are integrated into any facility.

Tyink encouraged the 40 people gathered to envision what ideal experiences are for their customers.

He said business leaders and their teams must ask questions like these: Why do we exist? What is the cause? What would happen if we went out of business? The idea, Tyink said, is to unearth the truth and uniqueness about the organization and not to copy competitors — or else.

"We can't lie. If you try to be someone you are not, you'll get caught. The promise isn't lived," Tyink said.

"What is unique about you? How is it relevant? Why should people care about it? What are the first impressions? What are the five words people should say in the parking lot after the first time they visit? And what is the reason they should use you again — other than you have the stuff?" Tyink asked.

"My question is, 'What's your story, and how do you bring it to life?' We crave experiences," Tyink said. "Everyone is offering the same thing. If I can relate to you on an emotional level, you get my business. End of story."
