



Experience: Listen. Simplify. Adapt.

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Brands today don't exist in a vacuum. They're not unilateral, broadcasting to the world what they want people to believe about them. They're dynamic, shaped and felt by people – their customers, their partners, their investors or their employees – across every touchpoint. Each audience passes judgement based on how that brand shows up, how it speaks to them, and how it makes them feel.

Winning brands understand the importance of meeting and surpassing customer expectations.

They ensure they are true to their brand values, and consistently deliver stellar experiences in line with those promises. As a consequence, they're turning their customers and their own employees into their biggest advocates and winning business and share of mind (and wallet) along the way.

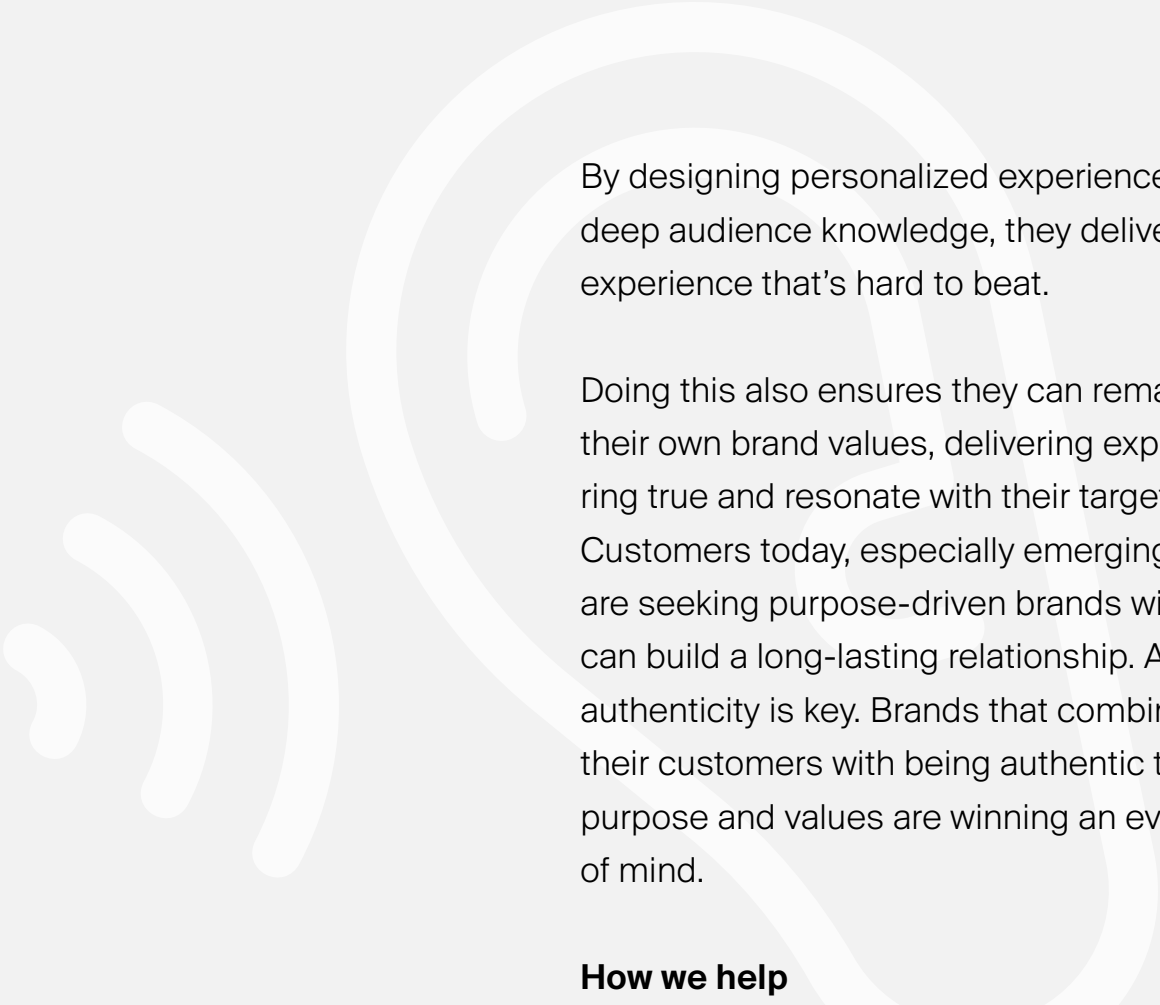
Design-led organizations are proven to be more profitable

With a plethora of opportunities to create and deliver experiences across both digital and physical realms, how can brands sift through the noise and focus on those signature moments that will truly elevate their brand above the competition? It boils down to a simple three step process brands can apply and fine tune to fit their unique environments.

Listen while being true to your values

The most powerful examples of innovative products, services and experiences share key commonalities: they are all based on insights into people's lives, behaviors and needs. ApplePay eliminated the need for carrying a wallet when everyone has a phone in their pockets at all times. Babylon is changing the healthcare landscape by offering remote consultations and prescriptions for busy people unable to travel to their doctors' during working hours. Postmates is making it easier to get groceries, food and drinks to customers' doors after a long day at work. Spotify is constantly fine tuning its platform to account for customers' feedback and deliver a seamless and personalized listening experience.

Design-led organizations are proven to be more profitable, increasing their revenue and shareholder returns at nearly twice the rate of their peers.



By designing personalized experiences based on deep audience knowledge, they deliver a standout experience that's hard to beat.

Doing this also ensures they can remain authentic to their own brand values, delivering experiences that ring true and resonate with their target audiences. Customers today, especially emerging generations, are seeking purpose-driven brands with whom they can build a long-lasting relationship. And for them, authenticity is key. Brands that combine listening to their customers with being authentic to their own purpose and values are winning an even bigger share of mind.

How we help

When an established social enterprise wanted to launch its services in Uganda, we were there to help them understand what their customer needs were and how best to design a digital experience that was both functional and unexpected. With Tugende, we spent a lot of time on the ground in Kampala, shadowing our customers to truly get into their shoes and better understand what would work for them.

This helped create a meaningful product that empowered customers to set up small businesses of their own, all while fitting into their daily lives and delivering an experience that felt seamless and intuitive.

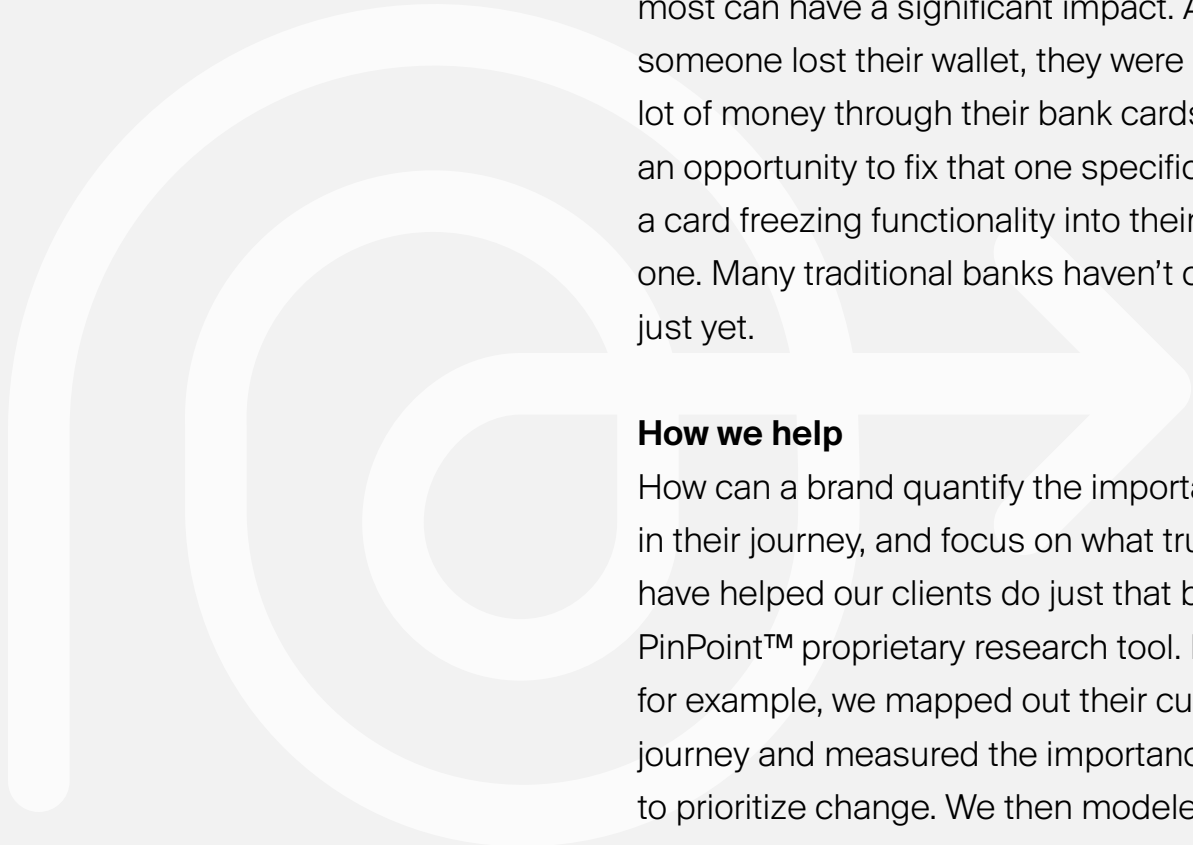
Nike invests in research to understand, segment and speak to its audiences in the most personal and effective way.

Simplify & focus on what matters most

Very few brands manage to be everything for everyone (Amazon is a strong contender for that crown). Some highly successful brands are doing quite the opposite. By using data and insights, they find a niche by deeply understanding their customers and creating hyper targeted propositions to cater for specific audience needs.

Nike invests in research to understand, segment and speak to its audiences in the most personal and effective way. Their SNKRS app was built and targeted at sneakerheads, customers who are obsessed about original and limited-edition trainers. Instead of cluttering their mainstream brand platform, and diluting the value of limited editions, they spotted an opportunity to treat that part of the business as a different experience altogether. By getting under the skin of that very specific niche audience, Nike managed to create a high engagement platform that attracts the most loyal fans. This in turn helps build a stronger relationship with high intent consumers who are already, or could quickly become, the most vocal Nike advocates.

Another aspect of simplifying the experience is focusing on points of the journey that matter the most to customers. Instead of reengineering a whole experience



from scratch, small changes where it matters the most can have a significant impact. A few years ago, if someone lost their wallet, they were at risk of losing a lot of money through their bank cards. Neobanks saw an opportunity to fix that one specific problem, and built a card freezing functionality into their service from day one. Many traditional banks haven't caught up with that just yet.

How we help

How can a brand quantify the importance of each point in their journey, and focus on what truly matters? We have helped our clients do just that by leveraging our PinPoint™ proprietary research tool. For CVS Health for example, we mapped out their current pharmacy journey and measured the importance of each step to prioritize change. We then modeled the impact of our changes to understand the ultimate impact on the customer experience, brand perception and the business bottom line.

This helped us focus on the moments in the journey that would truly impact the customers' perception of the brand, from the first time they chatted to a pharmacist, to picking up a prescription or getting a reminder for their next visit, creating hyper-targeted touchpoints that make a disproportionate impact.

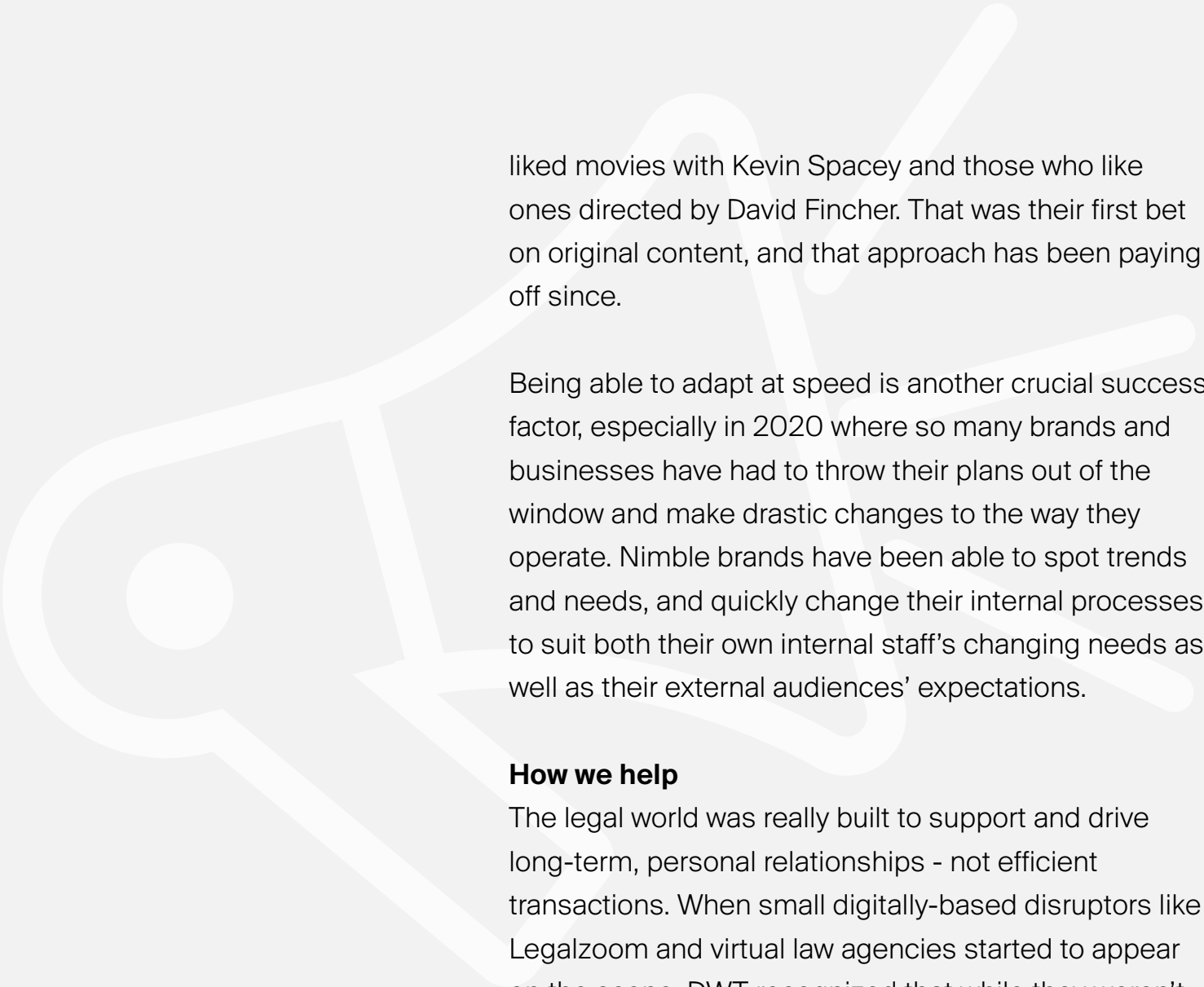
“If you don’t
like change,
you’re going to
like irrelevance
even less”

Erik Shinseki

Adapt to stay ahead of the curve

In recent years, a lot of disruptive players have radically changed entire sectors. When’s the last time you hailed an actual cab? Or bought a physical CD? Or maybe rented a DVD? Some of these sectors have been completely reshaped by new players who didn’t even exist a decade ago - the first Uber ride was on 5 July 2010. Other sectors have been impacted by established players entering that vertical - Apple Music went live on 30 June 2015. Brands that have stayed ahead of the curve for decades have done so by listening to their customers and predicting shifts in behavior and technology.

Netflix has been around since 1997. Back in the day, it used to compete with Blockbuster as a DVD rental company. In fact, Netflix even offered itself up to be acquired by Blockbuster in 2000 - Blockbuster said no. Today Netflix has 183 million subscribers⁽²⁾, \$20 billion in revenues, and has won multiple awards for its original content⁽³⁾. (Fun fact, it has since bought DVD.com to cater to audiences who still like to have their movies posted out to them on DVDs.) Netflix has managed to stay relevant and shape trends by giving viewers what they want. Its use of analytics is legendary. For example, having initially spotted a correlation between viewers who watched the original House of Cards, those who



liked movies with Kevin Spacey and those who like ones directed by David Fincher. That was their first bet on original content, and that approach has been paying off since.

Being able to adapt at speed is another crucial success factor, especially in 2020 where so many brands and businesses have had to throw their plans out of the window and make drastic changes to the way they operate. Nimble brands have been able to spot trends and needs, and quickly change their internal processes to suit both their own internal staff's changing needs as well as their external audiences' expectations.

How we help

The legal world was really built to support and drive long-term, personal relationships - not efficient transactions. When small digitally-based disruptors like Legalzoom and virtual law agencies started to appear on the scene, DWT recognized that while they weren't looking to depart from what made them a leading national firm, if they didn't evolve these disruptors would eat their lunch.

DWT's website experience was built around bringing their collegiate nature to the forefront. The website, once seen as an unnecessary barrier to the lawyers, was now repositioned as a tool to help, as one partner said, 'make calling a lawyer a less terrible thing to do.' Bringing a level of humanity into the practice by helping their individuals stand-out helped re-position the firm to continue to lead the way into the future.

Summing it up

What all these brands have in common is their ability, and even obsession, to listen to their customers. They're staying relevant by staying close to what customers are thinking, feeling and doing. They're tapping into changes in behaviors and expectations to build more seamless experiences that slot in nicely into their customers' already busy lives.

If 2020 has proven one thing, it's that change is not always a choice, it's an imperative. Brands will continue to move, experiences will continue to evolve and customers' needs will be harder to predict than ever. Being ready and willing to adapt to those changes will become even more crucial in the next few years.

Brand Research + Strategy

Naming, Communications + Verbal Identity

Customer Experience

Visual Identity

Employee Engagement + Culture

Training

By embracing simplicity, brands drive results for their business, for their employees and for their customers, evolving through a clear understanding of who they are.

Siegel+Gale is a brand experience firm that collaborates across seven offices around the world - New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, London, Dubai, Shanghai and Tokyo. We have been leading brand programs for start-ups, global businesses and national institutions for fifty years.

