



CUSTOMER JOURNEYS

You got to laugh. Or cry. Me, I prefer to laugh, because crying just gets me down.

So Poochie – that’s the new guy, remember? Head of Darkness – Poochie got another bright idea. Like with all Poochie’s bright ideas since he got here, we get to sit round a table for three days on end, admiring it, talking it through. Consensus, that’s the name of the game. Consensus on everything, except when it comes to meetings: they’re obligatory, like it or not. Oh, and Synergy.

Poochie got the power picture show. Great big hieroglyphs, in case you miss the point. Walls full of them. When he gets the chance, he hauls men off the pyramids and gets them to do carvings. Osiris loves it.

‘Helluva presentation you got for us today, looks like, Poochie,’ he says, almost without fail.

Poochie laps it up. ‘Just facilitating things, sir,’ he says.

The guys poke fingers down their throats, off-camera. Serqet the scorpion guy overdoes it. When the mess is cleared up, Poochie begins.

‘So, colleagues,’ says Poochie, ‘what say we start with a bit of a puzzle today?’ He points at the first hieroglyph. The usual, a couple of birds, some wiggly lines, some guy like a jackal mooching around in the background. ‘What’s this?’

Anubis gets it straight away. Well, he is the jackal, after all.

‘Passage to the Afterlife,’ he says. And grins at everyone. Bless him.

‘Nice work,’ says Poochie. ‘Excellent start. Reckon we’re on the same page today!’ Anubis grinds his teeth. Just realises what he’s done. Too late.

‘OK,’ says Poochie. ‘That’s the “As is” scenario.’

Here we go – the “As is” and then the “To be” scenarios. Every time, just every time. We’re all way ahead of him, though, looking round the walls for the “To be.” Apep and Hapi, they’ve already started a book on which of the thirty-five hieroglyphs is the one.

Poochie continues to his next picture. Same one, but with a nice-looking necklace drawn across it. ‘And this is where we need to be.’

Holy shit. Now that took us all by surprise. Normally it takes at least two hours to get to that one, taking in a Gap Analysis on the way. Khnum is smiling, though: must have had his money on that second picture. Scooped the pool.

Poochie spots that straight away. Say what you like about the boy-wonder – and we do – he’s sharp when he needs to be. ‘So, Khnum. You’re nodding with those horns of yours. You know something, I’m guessing. Want to share it with us?’

Khnum’s smile vanishes in an instant. ‘Gold necklace,’ he mutters.

‘Good work, Khnum,’ says Poochie. ‘Yes, the difference is a gold necklace. Anyone care to tell us what that means?’

Nope, none of us cares to be treated like school-kids. We’re all grown ups now. Let him answer his own question.

‘Money,’ pipes up Seshat, goddess of writing and measurement. She smirks. The guys across the table make a note to spike her coffee at the next tea-break. Something that’ll send her to the latrines for three days. The team hates a team-player.

‘Money, spot on! That’s Seshat, am I right? Nice work, Seshat. Nice work, all round, guys. So here’s what the proposal is. We’re going to introduce a new charging-structure for the Journey to the Afterlife. Strictly cash up-front, pre-authorisation, no queue-jumping. We’re going to have proper Governance, too. We play hardball. Forms to fill out, the whole nine yards. Anyone want to

contribute to the discussion at this stage?’

Poochie looks round the table. Osiris smiling at the back of the room. Just observing, he said right at the start. But mostly just smiling.

Only Anubis got a contribution. ‘What we doing that for?’ he asks. The jerk. Just what Poochie wants him to say.

‘Maximising income,’ says boy-wonder. ‘Channel-shifting Enhancing the Customer Journey. Sustainability. Stakeholder satisfaction. All of those good things.’

Anubis is looking confused. ‘Enhancing the Customer Journey by making the punters pay more?’ He leaves the question hanging.

‘100%,’ confirms Poochie.

Six hours later, we all stick our hands up. Consensus: it’s what you do when you need a drink, real desperate. We’re all on-message, now. Even Gengen-wer, the Great Honker, who’s usually away with the fairies someplace, thinking about geese. He’s bought into it, too, though he don’t know it for sure.

Next few weeks, we’re all fulfilling the Business Plan. Progress-meetings every second day. Poochie’s in seventh heaven. The rest of us are just shaking our heads, wondering how we ever got into all this as a career-choice. Thoth got the dumb-ass job – collecting all the complaints. Well, it was him who poked his head above the parapet at the wrong time. And he calls himself the God of Wisdom? Not. Still, he was able to report that he had far exceeded his monthly target on complaints. More than half the population of the Lower Nile was up in arms about it. Everyone from Pharaohs downwards, High Priests, Master-builders, all the way down to farmers. If slaves had a say in anything, they’d a been moaning as well.

‘Reckon we might have pitched the pricing-structure too high?’ says Thoth at our nineteenth project-meeting.

‘No such thing as too high when it comes to Death,’ says Poochie. ‘What they going to do? Not pay and risk ending up in Nowheresville? Do the math.’

The boy had a point. But was it good PR? I think not. Yeah, so I’m only in charge of Scarabs, but even I can see there’s a real big Customer Service challenge here. There was that high priest, come into the offices last week, threatening lawyers. But they’re the gods, says the girl on reception. Nice girl. Real nice. Not your usual bimbo that Osiris likes to hire. Reckon Isis had something to say about the last six or seven he went through.

‘But they’re the gods, sir,’ she says to this guy. ‘The immortals.’

‘Mortal, immortal - don’t care what they are, this new system is downright illegal.’ These High Priests reckon they know it all.

Course, Set was sent out from back-office to deal with him. That stakeholder won’t be making any more complaints, that’s a certainty. At least, not this side of the Afterlife. Some Customer Journey he had. Robust.

Three months in, and income is rising. Poochie’s all over pleased.

Six months in, Poochie’s looking glum. Lots of hieroglyphs on the walls for our monthly Project Board meeting. There’s one with a line going up, and then suddenly dropping. That’s the income graph, says Poochie. Gold necklaces suddenly on a slowdown. Even Poochie can’t think of the reason. Osiris not smiling any more.

The guys notice Anubis is looking a bit smarter than usual. Hard to tell, sometimes, if you’ve got the head of a jackal. But for sure there’s a lot more bling hanging around his neck and wrists. We’d noticed he’d a brand-new chariot in the car-park, top of the range, spoilers fore and aft, a real beauty.

‘Hey, man: what’s new?’ asks Nut, goddess of the sky, when we’re on a comfort-break. The guys

stand round, pretending not to be having a conversation. Has to be said, they're not good at that. Isis is looking straight at us, dead suspicious.

'Undercut them,' confides Anubis, beaming all over his face. 'Me and Ammut saw – what's that thing? A business opportunity.' Ammut's in charge of crocodiles. Not your most attractive job – most of her work is arranging for the devouring of the dead. But, hey: someone's got to do it.

'Yep,' whispers Anubis, 'me and Ammut got it all tied up.' We look at Ammut. Sure enough, she's got a new outfit, had a facial. Scrubs up quite nicely, even with that long green snout of hers. 'No frills, just your basic package. "Dead Straight", we call it. Comes in at 45% cheaper than Poochie's programme. Slaves go free. Man, they're queuing up!' He rubs two fingers together. 'Loadsamoney!'

Holy shit. Now why didn't I think of that?

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