



Opening up communication within the comms team.

EXPERTISE

Design thinking. Individual interviewing. Prototyping. Collaborative workshops. Kanban boards.

Context.

SKYCITY Auckland is an entertainment destination with a casino, two hotels and multiple restaurants. It has a large customer base including loyalty customers segmented into a tier based loyalty programme. The organisation markets multiple monthly promotions through a direct mailer to these loyalty customers which drives casino visitation and spend.

The process for producing SKYCITY Auckland's Direct Mailer (DM) was fraught with too many errors, too long timeframes, missed deadlines, and seriously required a process for all stakeholders to buy into and embrace to ensure it became a streamlined communication channel.

CHALLENGE

The Direct Mailer process affected most areas of the Marketing department - Gaming, Food and Beverage, Customer Engagement, Customer Insights, Design Studio as well as other business areas such as Legal and ultimately the end customer.

The strategy and purpose were not clearly articulated or understood across stakeholders. The process was not clear, documented or visible. Understanding of purpose and lack of process had affected the ability to produce the direct mailer quickly and efficiently.

IMPACT

A breakdown of communication across the departments resulted in silo working patterns, unnecessary stress, frustrated stakeholders, late delivery and a possibility of compromising a great customer experience.

GOAL

A successful solution would be a simple and efficient process, visible to all and clearly documented with the purpose of the direct mailer understood and aligned to the communication strategy. In addition, better communication and transparency would result in improved trust and a better experience for all stakeholders, including customers.

Approach.

The design led approach was put in place which has five stages.

1. DISCOVERY

The discovery phase leveraged design and critical thinking techniques to comprehensively understand the SKYCITY Auckland business and cultural context – it was essential to uncover and understand the root problem(s).

Interviews were held across key departments to uncover the various pain points and to get a high-level understanding of the processes. The stakeholders were highly motivated to improve the situation and fully engaged. The interviews and workshops were productive, quickly revealed pain points, and arrived at suggestions for improvement.

The discovery findings revealed that the original problem statement; that the process was “broken” was not the key or only problem.

2. SIMPLIFY

In this phase workshops were conducted to document the exact current state processes, improve the Direct Mailer processes, reduce pain points, remove duplication and increase efficiency. RACI was established to create a baseline and framework in which to work. This phase was about fostering effective relationship management, taking the stakeholders on a journey and improving communication and understanding.

3. IDEATE

A series of ideation workshops proved to be very successful in getting people together. Many suggestions for improvements were forthcoming; everyone was actively involved and contributed, and that meant that SKYCITY Auckland decided how to fix the problem.

Results.

SKYCITY Auckland originally thought that the Direct Mailer process was broken but it went deeper than that.

By leveraging the design framework, it allowed SKYCITY Auckland to identify the root cause of the problem, engage the right people in the right collaborative way,

4. IMPLEMENT

Following a presentation SKYCITY implemented many of the recommendations.

Recommendations implemented included:

- Timings defined - clearly articulated and commonly understood
- The employment of a “Kanban” board to make the process and progress visible
- Added additional QA and communication feedback points throughout the process
- Introduced a late approval requirement to protect the timeline
- Ensured that through slight changes to the timings that the Direct Mailer tile was approved before it was rolled out. This was fundamental to the solution and required bringing together the Studio and the Marketing sides of the department to jointly fix the issue

5. SHARE

A handover was presented to senior stakeholders of the Marketing department. The presentation highlighted those additional issues that were uncovered from the original “broken process” problem statement and what had to be done to remedy these. It stressed the areas that still needed attention from SKYCITY Auckland such as a clearly articulated and documented communication strategy.

define roles and responsibilities, agree ownership of tasks, and timeframes. A path was highlighted for streamlined, dependable, and productive Direct Mailer activity in the future.