

MARKETING

## Customer is most valuable resource for improving customer experience: Tiffany exec

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*Tiffany & Co. has always put customer voice first when making strategy decisions. Image credit: Tiffany & Co.*

By DANNY PARISI

NEW YORK As luxury brands look to improve their customer experience, it can be easy to get caught up in complicated data models and forget that the most important resource for determining what customers want is the customers themselves.

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This is the philosophy of Jami Blake, director of voice of customer at jeweler Tiffany & Co., who spoke at Forrester's CX NYC 2018 conference on June 19. Beginning her career at Tiffany in the contact center, Ms. Blake learned firsthand that customers are often quite open about telling marketers exactly what they want from a brand.

"Tiffany started with the customer in mind," Ms. Blake said. "We have always been customer centric.

"One of the things we've done is listen to our customers," she said. "We always did that thorough our employees.

"They were listening to customers desires and sharing that internally. But how do you evolve that for the modern day?"

### Customer voice

Ms. Blake spent her first eight years at Tiffany working in the contact center and listening to customers call in with questions, problems and requests.

During that time, she learned that the best resource for improving customer experience is the customer.

While data is important, it can sometimes lead to a "missing the forest for the trees" situation. Brands that focus too heavily on impersonal data could lose some of the human touch of simply talking to customers in person.



*Tiffany's Flower Flash. Image credit: Tiffany & Co.*

"We are not looking so much at the metrics," Ms. Blake said. "We are trying to look at what the customers are saying and what they want from us.

"What can we do to meet their expectations but also surprise them?" she said. "We still want there to be this magical moment of surprise and happiness."

Ms. Blake praised Tiffany for being a brand that has always put the customer first over the course of its long life.

Tiffany has also always been focused on experiential retail. For example, the Blue Box Caf is a recent effort from the brand that has been seeing massive success with customers.

"It's surprising that it took us this long to get a caf," Ms. Blake said. "We have about 2,000 people per day on the waiting list for the Blue Box Caf, so we definitely know we hit the mark on this.

"Our leadership is really about taking the brand and allowing the customer to co-create the experience," she said.

"They want it, they want something for their bucket list and they want to have their aspirational moment."

Primary source

Some of Tiffany's other experiential efforts have included a campaign to bring some more color to New York. Tiffany worked with Lewis Miller Design for an out-of-home campaign that seeks to liven up its hometown with some seasonal floral imagery.

In a new campaign, Tiffany and Lewis Miller teamed up to create large floral installations in unexpected places around New York. The campaign was created in part to herald the arrival of spring and to drive up engagement for the brand outside of the digital world ([see story](#)).

These efforts have translated into growth for Tiffany.



*Tiffany's Blue Box Cafe. Image credit: Tiffany & Co.*

The jewelry company saw a 15 percent jump in global net sales for this year's first quarter, ended on April 30. Amongst the better-than-expected growth, the company is launching a \$1 billion stock repurchase program to buy its shares back from stockholders ([see story](#)).

But Tiffany does not totally eschew the importance of data. Instead, Ms. Blake's philosophy revolves around combining data with actual customer voice to inform the brand strategy.

"Don't assume, do the work," Ms. Blake said. "It really is about taking the data and taking the customer's voice, whether it's anecdotal through employees, through comments, social media, analytics.

"Don't make the assumption that when you hear something once, that's what they'll always want."