

Success has a Thousand Fathers

Perspective from the Top



A study conducted last year by the research firm Statmetrix sought to assess various companies' commitment to maximizing customer experience and driving revenue growth through customer loyalty. They wanted to know how likely customers were to recommend a company to a friend or colleague and created a "Net Promoter Score" that allowed them to do just that.

Not surprisingly, Apple received the highest score in the computer category and Google the highest for online services. These leaders in the technology world consistently rank among the most well known, successful and innovative – and their passion for exceeding customer expectations is legendary.

If, as they say, success has a thousand fathers, we, at Epitec, should be able to learn from the way both Apple and Google use outstanding customer service and a healthy dose of innovation to create a strong business and loyal customers of our own.

Apple Innovates

In the 1980s, as personal computing was in its infancy, computer users needed a strong command of computing languages. Apple realized the fundamental fault in this method and created a new way for users to interact with their computer. The graphical user

interface revolutionized the industry by easily displaying the underlying logic of these complicated programs in a way the average person could understand.

Today, Apple's following is so dedicated that it's even been dubbed the "cult of Mac." These loyal followers have been known to get Apple tattoos, search for dates in Apple stores and write blogs dedicated to evangelizing the company. One couple even used the company's annual Macworld Expo as the site of their wedding – now that's brand loyalty.

Google Aims to Please

Like Apple, Google's innovation came by drastically simplifying an existing technology. The company's search engine stood apart from its competitors Yahoo!, AOL, and MSN by supplying users with a clutter-free interface that produced more accurate and considerably faster results. This approach proved a breath of fresh air to consumers who quickly adopted Google as their primary search tool.

Today, Google is one of the largest companies on the Internet, with a soaring stock price and millions of users. Its status was built by the word of mouth of highly satisfied customers. Basically, Google grew to dominate the industry by following a simple rule – if you can do something to improve the user's experience, do it.

What can we learn?

What drives such brand loyalty? Put simply, customers know Apple and Google are looking out for them. Both companies consistently deliver customer-friendly products that never fail to amaze. At Epitec, we can do this same thing. By giving our customers service that simplifies their lives and consistently shows value, we can continue to show Epitec employs only the best people, who always do the best work.

The Desk of the Future

Are power cords constantly tripping you up? Does your office décor include walls lined with extension cords? Imagine an office where the only thing plugged in is your desk. This may become a reality thanks to two Michigan-based companies.

Furniture maker Herman Miller teamed up with Fulton Innovation to incorporate wireless power into a desk. This system, called eCoupled, allows devices such as Blackberrys, iPods, laptops and cell phones to be charged upon contact with a magnetic field embedded in the desk. Through the use of inductive coupling, power is transferred from the magnetic field, so only the desk itself needs electricity. Soon the days of searching for your power cords will be gone.

A release date and price has not been given, however, Visteon is planning a summer release of an eCoupled charger that will plug into a car's cigarette lighter, which can then charge gadgets containing eCoupled technology.

The adapter is slated to work with Motorola phones, iPods and many other gadgets. Phone companies are expected to embed eCoupled soon after Visteon releases its charger.

With Visteon, Herman Miller and possibly Motorola on board, Fulton Innovation's eCoupled promises to be the light bulb in a world full of candles, changing the way power is carried to and communicated with devices.

“Each Epitec team member is a customer service ambassador and has an opportunity to create a memorable experience everyday.”

Josie Sheppard

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Epittec Supports Clients by Rewarding Employees



DAIMLERCHRYSLER

At Epittec, we want to see our customers succeed. That's why we're announcing an exciting new \$600 tax-free reimbursement credit for any Epittec employee who purchases or leases a new DaimlerChrysler or Ford vehicle throughout the month of May. Known as **ecap** (**Epittec Client Alliance Program**), the reimbursement will be added directly to employee paychecks as an additional \$25 per month over the next 24 months.

"It's important to show our clients that we're true partners, who are on their side and support their business," said Josie Sheppard. "We hope everyone can participate and would especially like to see those employees who work on the DaimlerChrysler and Ford teams support the program and buy the products they help build."

Additional information about **ecap** will be mailed to all employees at their home. A complete list of rules can be found at www.epittecgroup.com.

The Fruit of Apple's Labor

Stemming from the recent launch of the iPhone, consumers are anxious to delve into the latest technology from Apple Inc. Although the product will not be seen on store shelves for a while, potential users are already beginning to check out the iPhone's quirks and perks. Will Apple's newest creation live up to industry hype?

The iPhone combines a mobile phone, widescreen iPod with touch controls, and Internet communications device into a small, lightweight handheld device. The seamless fusion behind the graphic, visual and media features of the new Apple iPhone fall nothing short of innovative. This quad-band (GSM 850/900/1800/1900) mobile phone features a multi-touch screen, sensor technology and new partnerships that ensure an easy transition between computer and phone. From music and movies to a variety of new features, the iPhone claims to have it all.

Here are some iPhone perks:

Widescreen iPod

The control is in your hands. Content such as music, audiobooks, videos, TV shows and music can all be enjoyed with iPhone's widescreen, touch-controlled iPod. The iPhone offers an easy-to-use media playback interface and an extensive collection of content from iTunes. This, along with Apple's new partnership with Paramount, ensures users will never be disappointed in selecting music or video files. The multimedia can then sync from the iTunes library on your PC or MAC. Users can scroll through media content with just a flick of the finger. "Cover Flow" also has been incorporated so users can browse their music library by album artwork. This is a first for any of Apple's iPods.

Internet Device

Connectivity options include stereo Bluetooth, Wi-Fi, POP3 and IMAP4 e-mail, and a Safari web browser. Safari is noted to be the most advanced web browser ever on a portable device. Web pages also will be seen as they are designed to be seen and users can zoom in by simply expanding their index finger and thumb over the multi-touch display. Safari incorporates built in Google and Yahoo! Search. The iPhone itself is capable of multitasking, allowing consumers to read a Web page while downloading e-mail in the background over Wi-Fi or EDGE.



Is the iPhone fit for business?

Many experts doubt the resourcefulness of the iPhone. Questions concern the ability to multitask and transition between business applications and the lack of a third generation wireless network compatibility. With prices at \$499 for the 4GB version and \$599 at the 8GB version, it seems that its affordability lies in the pockets of business users. On the other hand, business users are apprehensive because the phone's Yahoo e-mail is not compatible with Outlook. File compatibility also is called into question between MAC OS X and Windows.

3G Compatibility and Multitasking:

Consumers who want to stream audio and visual at the same time will be disappointed in the dismissal of 3G compatibility. With the lack of 3G compatibility, multitasking must be limited to applications within the MAC OS X. It is still uncertain as to whether the iPhone will be able to perform phone, media player, and Internet functions simultaneously.

Other Concerns:

- With Cingular as the lone carrier, many critics cite high data plan prices and poor signal quality as a deal-killer for potential iPhone customers.
- Wireless syncing is not an option. Although it has both Bluetooth and Wi-Fi capabilities, it still must be placed in a dock to connect to a PC.
- Apple is not likely to allow users to run third party applications.
- Early reports suggest that users cannot directly download from iTunes.
- Typing difficulties may arise on the iPhone's touch screen because of a lack of feedback.
- It still remains to be seen whether the Safari browser has the necessary power to run Web-based software built with Flash, Ajax and Apollo.

With a release date in June, the list of "unknowns" continues to grow. Many doubts surrounding the innovative technologies add to the list of apprehensions by consumers. Although no specifics have been mentioned concerning what's "under the hood," it allegedly contains a Samsung CPU video processor. It is also suspected that because of the lack of interest among business users, the iPhone looks like a starter smart phone for twentysomethings with a big paycheck. It is compared to a touch screen Sidekick 3 pro without the mini-SD card slot that allows capacity to be expanded. Only time will tell whether the iPhone will become as successful as its iPod predecessor. Until then, Apple will likely continue keeping consumers at the edge of their seats.

The Epittec Difference

With consultants holding positions outside of the main office at different client sites, it is often difficult for us to connect with our entire team on a regular basis. In an effort to unite with our colleagues in various locations, we hosted employee appreciation lunches throughout the month of February.

Overall turnout was great, with 126 team members in attendance in over 17 different client sites. Employees were given the opportunity to check-in with co-workers, have pizza and maintain the strong relationships that form the Epittec difference.

"We value any opportunity to show employees that we are here for them," said Maria Sitarski, coverage concierge, The Epittec Group. "The hard work and dedication of the Epittec team helps build lasting relationships that make Epittec successful, and we look forward to future events to show our appreciation."



Boys Hope Girls Hope of Detroit

Epittec is planning an extreme home makeover for the local Boys Hope Girls Hope of Detroit in May. Epittec employees will be asked to donate their time to revamp the house and give it a good spring cleaning.

The makeover includes plans to clean, repair, repaint and redecorate many areas of the house including the bedrooms and common areas. Three computer stations also will be incorporated into the home to aid the children with their education.

Epittec proudly supports this organization's mission and continually strives to make a difference in the personal and educational lives of these scholars.

For more information on Boys Hope Girls Hope of Detroit, please visit www.boyshopegirlshope.org.

Epitalk Readers Speak Out

In January, we conducted our second annual readership survey to gather your thoughts and suggestions regarding *Epitalk* and the results are in.

We received nearly 60 responses and found that the majority of readers were happy, with nearly 75 percent saying they were either satisfied or very satisfied with *Epitalk*, a 17 percent increase from last year. More than 80 percent of respondents said they read most or every issue, up from 68 percent in 2006, and we again found that readers are most interested in the technology features, Industry Insight and Perspective from the Top sections.

We appreciate everyone's feedback and hope to continue making *Epitalk* a valuable part of your experience as an Epittec employee.

Please send any questions or comments to support@epittecgroup.com. Your input may become a topic in future issues of *Epitalk*.

Industry Insight

Josh Linkner, Founder and Chief Executive Officer, ePrize



As a pioneer in interactive marketing and promotions, Josh Linkner has been involved in the development of thousands of digital marketing strategies over the last 13 years. As the founder and CEO of ePrize, he has led the firm from inception to being ranked the #1 fastest growing and #3 overall promotion agency by *PROMO Magazine*. ePrize has produced an industry-leading 2,500 interactive promotions for clients including Coca-Cola, American Express, The Gap, Procter & Gamble, Warner Brothers, Dell, Adidas, Citibank and General Motors.

Josh has won several business, technology, and design awards including the 2004 Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year Award, The Inc. 500, Crains' Detroit 40 under 40, Fast Company's Reader's Choice Fast 50, and the 2006 Automation Alley CEO of the Year.

The most significant change I've seen in Southeast Michigan's technology economy recently has been the growth outside of the automotive industry. The success of companies like ours, and bold moves like those taken by Google and Compuware, have reshaped the community's economic landscape and created space for younger companies while challenging established industries in Silicon Valley, New York and Los Angeles. Instead of founding another automotive supply company, our best minds opened the doors to a new generation of businesses that are making Michigan a leader in the marketing research, information analysis and medical fields. Michigan has always been a global player in the auto industry – and we are continuing to make strides there as well – but the greatest change I've seen in our economy in the last 15 years has been the opportunities created by exploring new industries.

Q: With all your success, why have you decided to stay in Michigan rather than move your headquarters to another state or country?

A: I am committed to Michigan. The business reasons for staying and growing in Michigan just scream out to any creative organization. Southeast Michigan is the single best place in the country right now to start a business. This is where technology was born, from the assembly line to biofuels. It all may have started with the Big Three, but today Michigan has fostered an extraordinary number of innovative companies, right here in our backyard. With more renowned universities in the neighborhood than any one community has a right to dream of, our Metro Detroit headquarters location gives ePrize access to an enviable pool of intelligent people with a knack for technology and a penchant for entrepreneurship and hard work. In the last four years, we've opened offices across the globe and we absolutely have excellent talent across the board, but I don't think we could have experienced the kind of success we've seen if our headquarters were somewhere else.

Q: Given Michigan's economic climate, where do you see technology jobs fitting in? Is there room for growth amid these circumstances?

A: There is no question in my mind that technology jobs are the single most important growth sector of our state's economy right now. Securing and supporting these positions is critical to the renaissance of Michigan in general and Detroit in particular. Our manufacturing companies are being undercut on price. Our service businesses are being bought up, closed up or packed up. Companies like ePrize are driving growth in our state, despite an otherwise struggling economy. The question then is not, is there room for growth, but how much growth can we make room for?

Q: What significant changes have you seen in Southeast Michigan's technology economy over last 15 years?

Q: Where do you think Southeast Michigan's technology economy is heading in the next 15 years?

A: Michigan has been the technology capital of the automotive industry and anyone who thinks that we will give up that industry now that we've lost a little dominance doesn't know the people of this state very well. Breakthroughs in areas like alternative energy begin right here and will be central to Southeast Michigan's economic comeback. Our region has also made some great strides in a whole range of fields in the past decade, and soon we'll be stepping far out in front of other metro areas with a future that is considerably reshaped, consistently refreshed and highly regarded. At ePrize, we're proud to be a founding member of "Silicon Ridge," and we expect that as our company and others, like Google, flourish in Metro Detroit, the world will begin to see our state as the home of interactive marketing, the same way that Detroit has become a synonym for cars.

Q: What new technologies coming down the pipeline in the next 5 to 10 years will improve or revolutionize the way we do business today?

A: Electronics convergence is about to change the way the world does business to a degree unparalleled since the printing press. We are about to enter an age where one device will function as cell phone, Web browser, PDA, notebook computer, television, video game system, MP3 player, camera and a host of other capabilities. It will be portable enough to take anywhere, accessible enough to be used by anyone, and functional enough to do everything so well that the single-task machines we use now won't have much purpose. When we finally achieve this technology, I don't think we'll be surprised at how much it changes the electronics industry, so much as how much it changes us. We are about to enter a world where work and play are open 24/7, where the line between the office and the home pretty much vanishes, and where old ideas of 9 to 5 universally will give way to 24/7. And I think that, in the end, this will make us more productive, give us more time at home, and allow business to fully connect and compete in a new "always on" economy.

Q: What obstacles do you anticipate IT professionals in Southeast Michigan will face in the near future, and what suggestions do you have to overcome these obstacles?

A: The storied Big Three are in a situation that will get worse before it gets better. They're already the Big Two and in danger of becoming the Lost Legion of OEMs. For technology professionals, that reality is going to cause some heartburn as our economy adjusts and as the auto companies find footing in their market. My advice to those professionals worried about the security of their jobs is to resist the temptation to put their heads in the sand and, instead, to stick out their necks. Now is the best time to open your eyes and start your own firm. Start-ups and small companies always need the expert advice of an experienced consultant. If building your own shop sounds a little risky for you, take your expertise to one of the hundreds of small businesses that are reshaping Michigan's economy every day. The small companies will lead our state into the future, and if you are willing to get behind the wheel, you might just find yourself driving our economy in the next ten years.

Consultant



Vijay Almeida

STATS

Title: Product Consultant

Hire Date: January 2007

Responsibilities: Administration, troubleshooting and implementation of middle-ware products, IBM Tivoli Access Manager and IBM Tivoli Directory Server.

Education: Vijay is certified in IBM Tivoli Access Manager for e-business version 6.0. IBM Principal; Lotus Professional - Lotus Notes Version 4.x, 5.x & 6.x, and also is a certified Novell Engineer.

Quote: When asked about the reason for his career choice, Vijay responded, "It is one of the most happening fields."

iSpot Exclusive: Vijay has been in this line of work for more than 12 years.

Corporate Employee



Sue Hall

STATS

Title: Recruiter

Hire Date: September 2005

Responsibilities: Recruiting top-notch candidates that exceed customer expectations.

Successes: Sue's greatest successes within Epitec have been learning the IT business and placing 18 consultants with various clients.

Quote: "Success comes from working with a team of people that are always willing to go out of their way to help you in overcoming any obstacles you may encounter."

iSpot Exclusive: Sue did not choose this particular field, it chose her. After working as a support specialist for years, she was offered the opportunity to get into recruiting. She has always enjoyed working with people and considers recruiting a very rewarding profession.



(L-R) Back Row: Jim Hoxsey, David Walton, Tony Solosky, Jagadish Myana, Jim Briscoe, Steve Rydzewski, Bob Moon, Janikiram Ponnamm, Nallan Srinivasan, Scott Curtis Middle Row 1: Ed Gosselin, Krishna Konakala, David Spencer, Andrew Eliachevsky, Manjunath Prabhu, Latha Gourishankar, Lakshmi Sastry, Sonali Karandikar, Ping Xu Middle Row 2: Elango Srinivasan, Phil Richter, Rob Bromley, Nikkita Bryant, Jimmy Chang, Venkat Kadali, Kavitha Kukkadapu, Surekha Mothiki, Anjana Sahu, Nehal Shah Front Row: Jennifer Gentry Saulski, Haifa Jolagh, Candy Boerner, Morton Chalom, Karishma Patel

Epitec is partnering with Ford Motor Company's export and growth operations to develop integrated mainframe and J2EE applications that process Ford's export orders worldwide (from any one country to another). Each regional project typically last 6 -12 months and consists of streamlining and integrating order processing, improving order visibility for dealers and expanding the portfolio's capability to include processing of domestic sales orders from Thailand and other Asia-Pacific countries.

The Epitec team is fully integrated into Ford's 46-person team and is responsible for various roles such as production and business support, analysis and development, senior analyst/application architect, and project management.

"Rebecca Csatari has worked closely with Ford management to provide nine personnel resources, specifically selected for the team's requirements," said Morton Chalom, application supervisor. "They are highly respected by our Ford business partners and greatly valued members of this diverse team."

Milestones

January

- Titus Gaines (10 years)
- Fred Gordon (17 years)
- Keith Hollie (5 years)
- Thirumal Madavan (7 years)
- Arthur Nash (18 years)

February

- Chung-Ing Chen (12 years)
- Lawrence Crehan (14 years)
- Karen Hunt-Barker (4 years)
- Jeyeshkumar Kurup (4 years)
- Appa Prattipati (3 years)
- Josie Sheppard (23 years)

March

- Rebecca Csatari (9 years)
- Wendy Zheng Fane (5 years)
- Michele Rodeffer (8 years)
- Jerome Sheppard (29 years)
- Maria Sitarski (8 years)



From Start To Finish, We're There For You.

535 Griswold Street
Suite 2500
Detroit, MI 48226