

Designing Customer Experiences That Bring People Back

From Welcome to Return Visit: Turning Great Service into Your Best Marketing

Despina Karatzias, Institute of Excellence | 27 October 2026

More skill. More confidence. More you.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we meet today, and pay our respects to Elders past and present.

We extend that respect to any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people here with us.

BEFORE WE START

Designing Customer Experiences That Bring People Back
Institute of Excellence

Everything from today is yours

Today's slides and your workbook are ready to download.
No need to photograph the screen.

Scan the QR code and enter your details to download your resources.

Can't scan? Use the web address below.

instituteofexcellence.com/resources/albury1026



TODAY

What you will build today

Not notes. Three finished documents you take home and use.

1 Customer Experience Loop Audit

Score your business across six stages.

2 Customer Experience Playbook

The words your team uses at every stage.

3 30-Day Plan

One stage, one action, one weekly check, signed.





THE PROBLEM

They loved it. Then nothing.

A wonderful visit. Praise on the way out. Then no review, no mention to friends, no return visit.

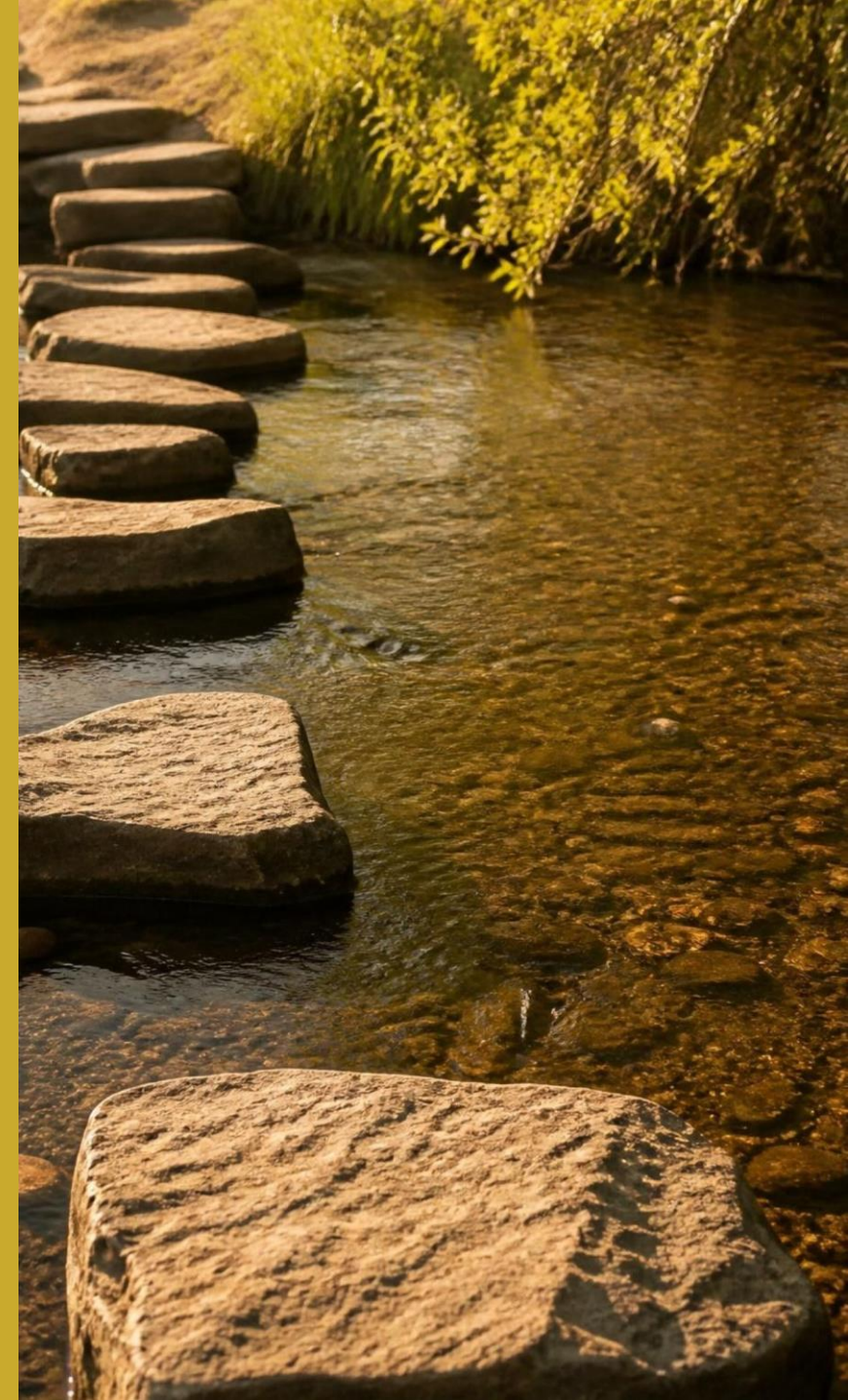
Nothing went wrong.
The experience was good.
It just was not connected to what happens next.

WHAT CHANGES

One change, every customer, 30 days

Know your weakest stage. Have the words to fix it.
Commit to one action for 30 days.

Not six changes. One. Delivered by everyone, every time.





HOW TODAY WORKS

This is work **ON** your best self and business time!

1

Use your own business. Score a normal day, not your best day.

2

When we pause to write, write. Everything you finish is yours to use immediately.

3

Questions are welcome at any point.

OPENING QUESTION

RATE YOURSELF RIGHT NOW

On a scale of 0 to 10, how confident are you that you could find the weakest moment in your customer experience, give your team the right words for it and deliver one change to every customer for the next 30 days?

0

Not confident

10

Very confident

Write your number down. We are coming back to it at the end.

OPA!

More than an enthusiastic expression. The lens for how businesses grow.

Every challenge contains an opportunity. This is how we look at customer experience today.

OPA is my Greek heritage, the spirit of possibility.

O • OPPORTUNITY

The customers already walking out happy and silent.

P • PURPOSE

Every honest review helps the next customer choose you.

A • ACTION

One change, delivered to every customer, for 30 days.

See the Experience

Hold this question in mind

Why do customers who enjoyed their visit still not review, recommend or return?

You will answer it before this module ends.

48%

of customer interactions in Australia are remembered as "nothing notable".

Not bad. Not good. Forgettable. This module helps you find those moments in your own business.

Source: Ipsos, Customer Experience in Australia: The Missing Link, December 2025 (3,400 Australian respondents).

WHY IT MATTERS

Philoxenia, love of the stranger

Philos

friend or loving

Xenos

stranger or guest

In Greek tradition, welcoming a stranger is a duty. You welcome them, care for them, honour them.

Every customer starts as a stranger. How you welcome them decides whether they come back, and who they bring.



THE DISTINCTION

Service is black and white.

Getting the order right.

Hospitality is colour.

How you made the person feel while you did it.

Will Guidara, recounting a line he heard from a job applicant

Two systems, rarely connected

1

The experience

Your welcome, knowledge and warmth. The part you work hardest on.

≠

2

The review

What your customer tells the world afterwards.

Often, those two never meet. Three things connect them: the ask, the follow-through, and a reason to return.



The Customer Experience Infinity Journey





STAGE 1 OF 6

Dream

What your customer is doing: They are scrolling, searching or listening to a friend, deciding whether you are worth a closer look. They have not contacted you yet.

WHEN IT IS WORKING

Recent photos, current opening hours, and a reply under every review, so they can picture themselves there.

WHEN IT SLIPS

Photos from three years ago and reviews nobody answered. They move on and you never know they were looking.

Ask yourself: if a stranger searched for us tonight, what would make them want to buy, visit, call or message us?



STAGE 2 OF 6

Plan

Asking about opening times, parking or bringing the dog.
Comparing options, often at night, on a phone.

WHEN IT IS WORKING

A clear answer quickly, plus a reason to say yes. Same day, in your voice, not a template.

WHEN IT SLIPS

The message sits for two days or the phone rings out. They book elsewhere without telling you why.

Ask yourself: how long do we take to answer, and does our answer make saying yes easy?



STAGE 3 OF 6

Book

Committing: booking, ordering, walking in or checking in. A quick moment, and the first direct contact.

WHEN IT IS WORKING

A warm welcome and a question showing interest in them, before any business is done.

WHEN IT SLIPS

The first thing they hear is a transaction. Name? Next? Have you booked?

Ask yourself: what are the first words every customer hears from us?



STAGE 4 OF 6

Experience

Being served, shown around, looked after. The stage everyone thinks of as customer service.

WHEN IT IS WORKING

They leave feeling looked after, pointed towards something they would not have found alone.

WHEN IT SLIPS

Correct but forgettable service, depending on who happens to be working that day.

Ask yourself: would every customer get this experience, whoever is rostered on?



STAGE 5 OF 6

Share

Telling other people: a review, photo, tag or dinner conversation. It happens whether you ask or not.

WHEN IT IS WORKING

Every customer is asked for an honest review, in the same words. Sharing takes under a minute.

WHEN IT SLIPS

Happy customers leave unasked. Your reviews don't reflect the experience most customers had.

Ask yourself: do we ask every customer, or only when we remember?



STAGE 6 OF 6

Thank, Refer & Repeat

They have gone. Deciding, without thinking about it, whether to return and recommend you.

WHEN IT IS WORKING

They hear from you within 48 hours, have a reason to return, and know who else you would send them to.

WHEN IT SLIPS

The relationship ends at the door. Nothing prompts a return. Nobody asks for a referral.

Ask yourself: what happens after a customer walks out, and who makes it happen?

EXAMPLE

A small business built on consistency.

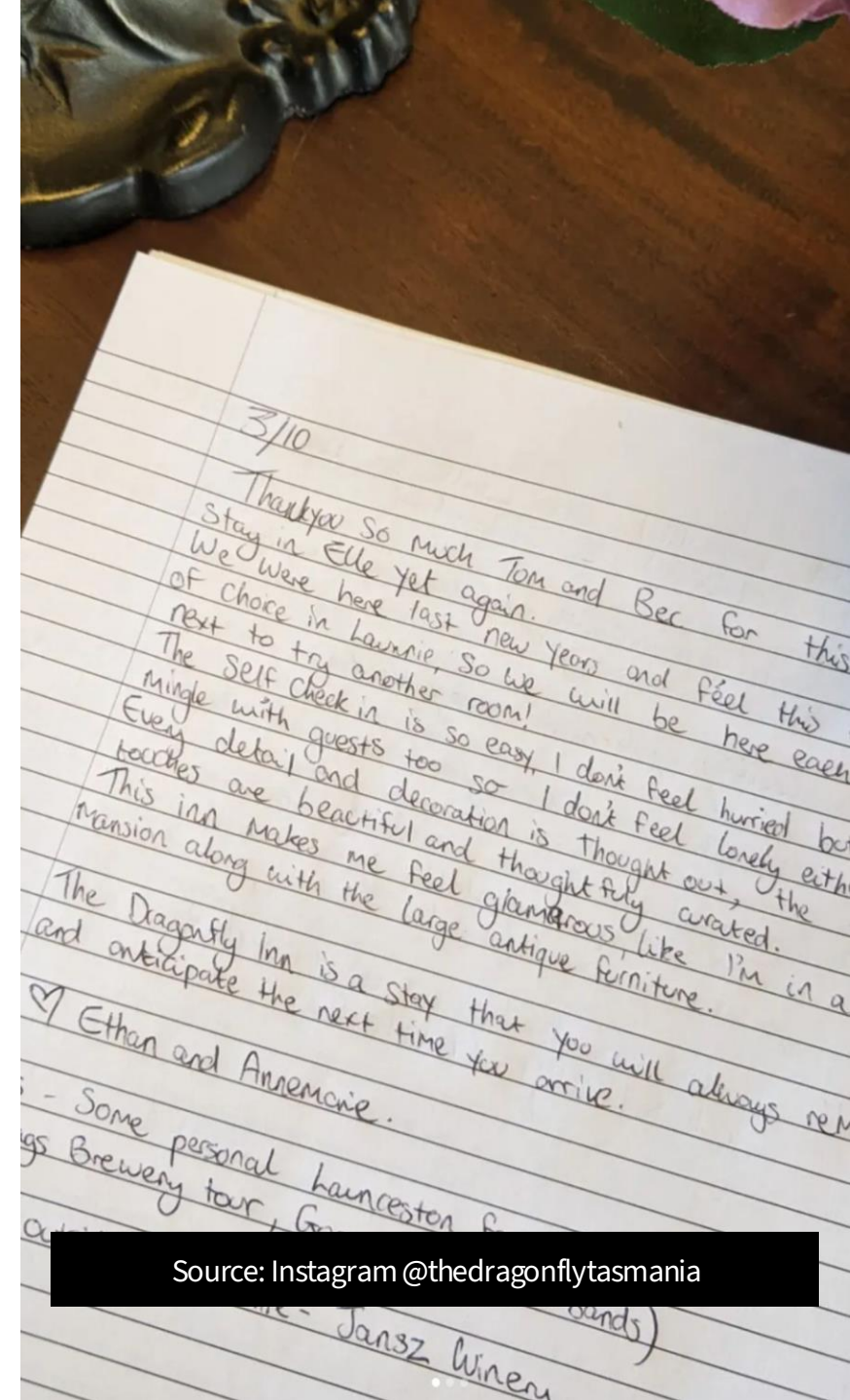
The Dragonfly Inn, Launceston

Real case study, for illustration only

Ten rooms in a heritage mansion, run by Tom and Bec with managers and housekeepers. Warm and welcoming, without being in guests' faces.

Australian Tourism Awards: Hosted Accommodation gold three years running, then the Hall of Fame.

Consistency can be designed. A warm welcome for every guest, every time, is a standard any business can set.



Source: Instagram @thedragonflytasmania

EXERCISE 1

The Customer Experience Loop Audit

20 minutes. Workbook, Exercise 1.

01

Score six stages

Yes is 5. Sometimes is 3. Not yet is 0. Score a normal day, not your best day.

02

Find the gaps

Total out of 30. For your two lowest stages, write what happens, why customers slip away and what it costs.

03

Loop at a Glance

Finish it. You will use those six scores twice more today.

What your score tells you

25 to 30

Your loop is largely working. Your next gain is in your lowest stage.

15 to 24

You have real strengths and at least one stage is costing you customers.

Below 15

One stage at a time. A low score is not a failure. It usually means no set moment, no agreed words, or nobody whose job it is.

MODULE 2

Design the Moments

Hold this question in mind

How do you turn your best customer moments into something every person on your team delivers, every time?

Four short rounds. Learn together, then write it into your Playbook.

174 studies

show the high point and the ending carry real weight in how an experience is remembered.

That is why this module designs your welcome, one memorable moment and your goodbye on purpose.

Source: Alaybek et al., Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes, 2022.

WELCOME

Welcome first, then business

It starts before arrival: what a stranger finds online, how fast you answer, and whether you give them a reason to come.

At the counter, make your first words about the customer, not the transaction.

What brings you in today?

How did you hear about us?

What would make today a good one?



Dream, Plan and Book

15 minutes. Workbook, Exercise 2, pages 1 to 3.

01

Dream

What a stranger sees when they search for you, and one thing to fix this month.

02

Plan

Your answer to the question customers ask most.

03

Book

Your welcome line and three discovery questions, in your own words.

If these are among your two lowest stages, spend your time there.



THE EXPERIENCE

Recommendations they remember

A warm handoff: name the place, say why it suits this person, make getting there easy.

“There are a few cafés in town” is a shrug. “Go to the bakery two doors down, their pies sell out by eleven, turn left and look for the blue awning.” That is a warm handoff.

Bunnings sausage sizzle

Real case study, for illustration only

More than 25 years of community barbecues. Every weekend, expected. A memorable moment does not need a budget. It needs to happen every time.

PLAYBOOK BUILD 2

Experience

15 minutes.

Workbook, Exercise 2, page 4.

1

Write three local recommendations. Be specific, add the reason, make it easy.

2

Write one memorable moment your team can offer every customer, at little or no cost.

We will build a shared recommendation list for the room at the end of this block.



Ask every customer, the right way

Google does not allow

- Incentives for reviews
- Asking only happy customers
- Pressure to review on your premises
- Staff review quotas
- Collecting reviews that name a staff member

Australian law

The ACCC is clear: do not create fake reviews or suppress, edit or remove genuine negative ones.

Penalties have reached millions.

Ask everyone, in the same words, every time. Make the review link easy to find.

The four-part review response

ACKNOWLEDGE

Thanks for taking the time to write this.

BE SPECIFIC

You're right, Saturday lunch was slow.

REDIRECT

We've added a second person on the counter at weekends.

INVITE BACK

We'd love the chance to show you a better Saturday.

Your response is written for the next person reading it, not just the reviewer.

Share

20 minutes. Workbook, Exercise 2, page 5.

1 Write your review ask: the same words for everyone. Decide when it happens and who asks.

2 Decide where your Google review link or QR code will be easy to find.

3 Name your photo moment and how to invite customers to tag you.

4 Respond to one real review using the four parts.

AFTER THEY LEAVE

Close the loop

Within 48 hours, send everyone a thank-you with your review link and a reason to come back, no discount attached.

One nearby referral partner. One real reason to return. Invite them to join your email list, consent comes first.

HOPR, Sydney

Real case study, for illustration only

Subscriptions, ambassadors and office programs turn customers into referrers. The company reports revenue has grown tenfold in two years.

Disclosure: IOE is a HOPR affiliate and content partner.



Source: Instagram @drinkhopr



PLAYBOOK BUILD 4

Thank, Refer & Repeat

10 minutes.

Workbook, Exercise 2, page 6.

- 1** Write your 48-hour thank-you message, including a review invitation.
- 2** Name one referral partner and one genuine reason to return.
- 3** Finish the rest of the page after today. Then answer the module question in your workbook.

Bring Them Back

Hold this question in mind

What evidence will prove, 30 days from now, that your customers are experiencing the change?



THE EVIDENCE

642 tests

found people are more likely to follow through when they plan the exact moment they'll act, and practise it.

That is why your plan names the exact moment, and why your team practises the words.

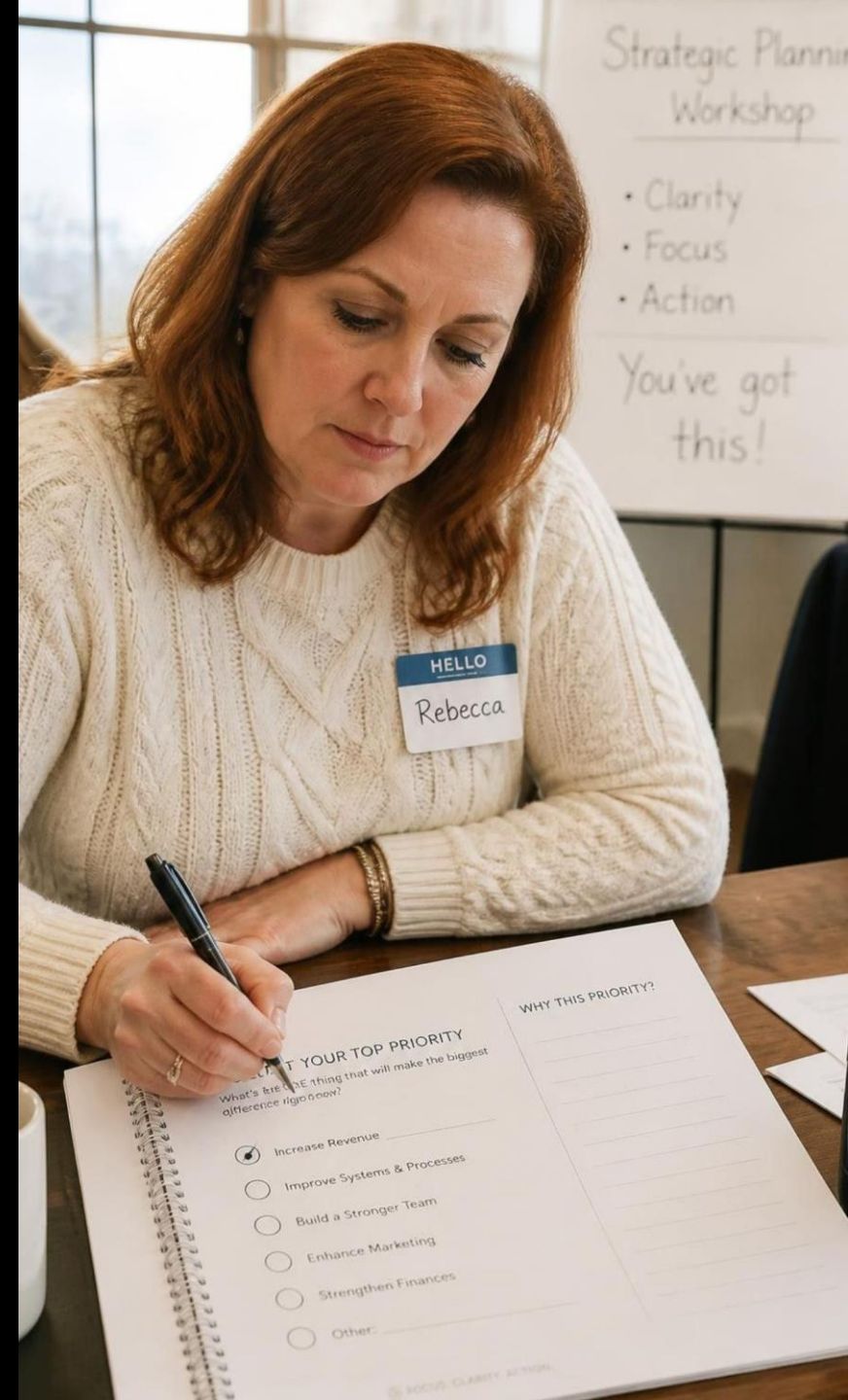
Source: Sheeran, Listrom and Gollwitzer, European Review of Social Psychology, 2025.

THE PRINCIPLE

**One priority.
Not two.
Not three. One.**

Six new habits become six half-done ones, usually from whoever is most enthusiastic.

Ask for one and you can get it from everybody, every time.





WHY THIS STEP MATTERS

An intention is not a plan

“We will ask for more reviews” does not say when, where or who.

A review of 94 studies found people who planned exactly when and where to act, “if this happens then I will do that”, were meaningfully more likely to follow through than people who only set a goal.

The situation becomes the reminder, especially when you are busy.

YOUR PLAN

What you are signing

ONE STAGE

Chosen from your audit, with your reason written down

ONE ACTION

What happens, when it happens, who does it

ONE WEEKLY CHECK

A team question, and one number you already have

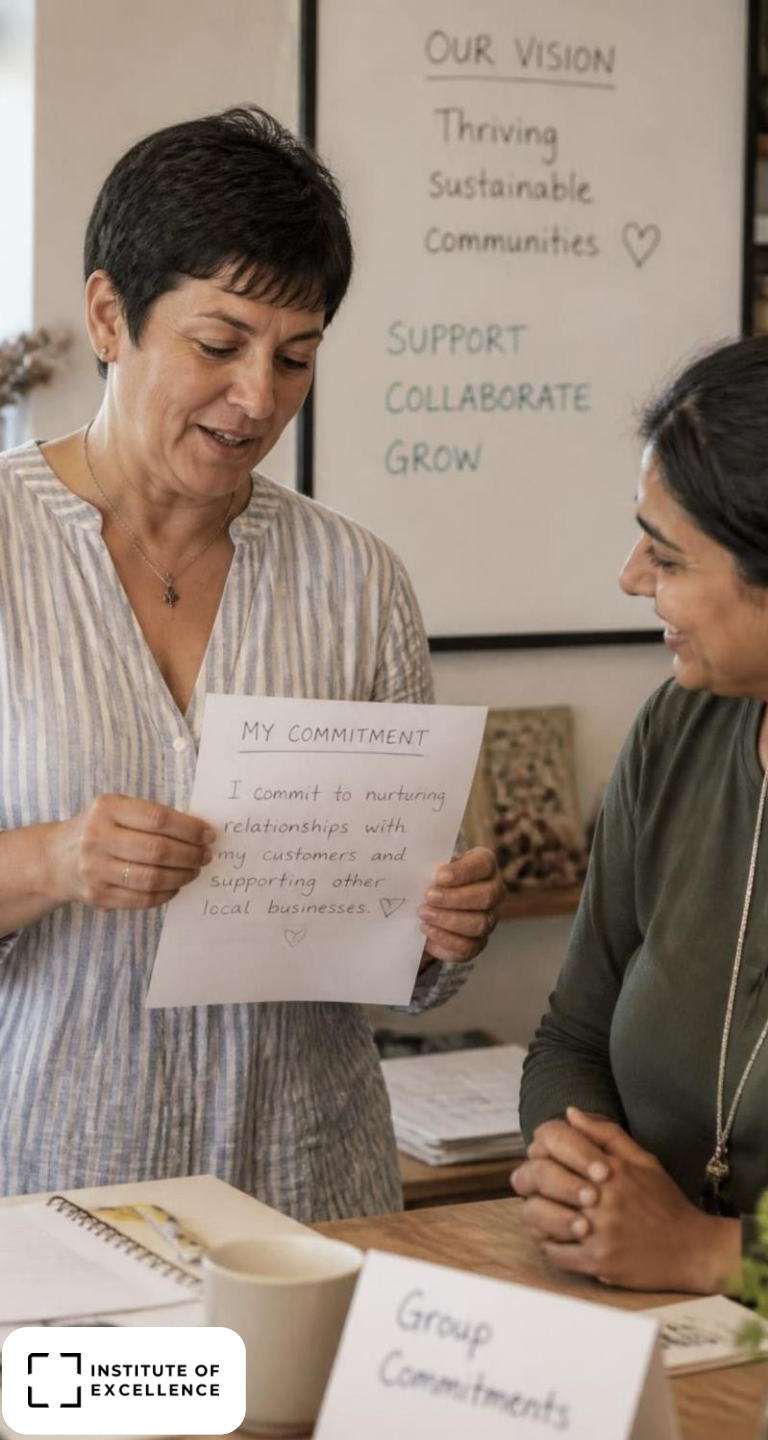
MILESTONES

Day 7 running, day 14 checked, day 30 re-scored

A SIGNATURE

An unsigned plan is still only an intention





EXERCISE 3

Your 30-Day Plan

15 minutes. Workbook, Exercise 3.
One stage only.

- 1 Copy in your six audit scores and your Playbook ratings. Tick one stage, your lowest that is ready to use, and write why.
- 2 Write what happens, when it happens and who does it.
- 3 Choose your weekly team question and the number you will check. Set your start date. Then sign it.

Complete your Team Briefing Guide after today.

TODAY

What you built today

Customer Experience Loop Audit

Six stages scored. Two weakest named.

Customer Experience Playbook

The words your team uses at every stage.

30-Day Plan

Signed and dated.

This week: print your plan, brief your team within seven days, set two weekly phone reminders. Five minutes each.



CLOSING QUESTION

RATE YOURSELF AGAIN, RIGHT NOW

On a scale of 0 to 10, how confident are you that you could find the weakest moment in your customer experience, give your team the right words for it and deliver one change to every customer for the next 30 days?

0

10

You gave yourself a number at the start. Give yourself a number now. What changed?

You are walking out with a signed 30-day plan. That is what changed.

YOUR RESOURCES

Designing Customer Experiences That Bring People Back

Institute of Excellence

Take today home with you

Download today's slides and your workbook, then start your 30-day plan on Monday.

Scan the QR code and enter your details to download your resources.

Can't scan? Use the web address below.

instituteofexcellence.com/resources/albury1026



YOUR GIFT

Your gift from today's session

Complete the Business and AI Capability Audit. Receive a personalised report with your three priorities, delivered to your inbox.

To talk through your results, book a free strategy session with me.

This is where today becomes Monday.

audit.instituteofexcellence.com

Business & AI Capability Audit



ONE LAST THING

An honest review, in your own time

If today was useful, an honest review helps other business owners decide whether it is right for them.

No incentive, no pressure. I value your honest words either way. Do it in your own time, not in this room.

It is the same ask you are now making of your customers. It is only fair that I practise what I teach.

Your Review is Appreciated



Institute of Excellence on Google

INSTITUTE OF EXCELLENCE

Thank you

More skill.

More confidence.

More you.

Despina Karatzias
Institute of Excellence
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