

Success is Staring You Right in the Face

Even the most successful companies are in constant competition for business. What sets them apart often boils down to one factor: outstanding customer service.

I have spent 44 years focused on customer service. I have written hundreds of articles, as well as 7 books on the topic. I have also been interviewed plus presented to thousands of customers with seminars worldwide. No matter what business you're in, here's some advice I highly recommend you consider:

Most firms in the world believe they provide awesome service. They are addicted to advertising and marketing using expensive media. The biggest issue I see is they have no idea how inconsistent and weak their service really is. Most firms believe they need no help, but employee turnover is high. *The solution is staring them in the face; do not be reluctant to invest in people to develop a customer driven workforce.*

“MAKE your service so outstanding that they wouldn't think of doing business with anyone else. And then... find a way to MAKE your service even better!”

First, you've got to understand you're in the service business. Most companies think they are in manufacturing and retail. For instance, airlines don't know they are in the service business. Southwest Airlines is successful because they understand they're a customer service company - they just happen to be an airline.

Second, you have to look at all the policies, procedures and systems you have in place “that make life miserable for customers.”

You could have the nicest people in the world, but you could have stupid hours, stupid rules, or stupid procedures that just tick your customers



off. When you make it that difficult for customers to patronize you, they find someone else who is more accommodating. Your customers can do quite a few things much better than you can, and if your business isn't embracing this fact by viewing customer service as a branch of your marketing department with tremendous ROI, you're doing yourself as well as your customers a disservice.

Third, you have to have empowerment and speed. Every single person has to be able to make fast powered decisions on the spot, and it better be in favor of the customers. Employee empowerment may be the most underutilized tool in all of customer service. Intellectually capable employees know what to do, but they need to be authorized and empowered by upper management to take action. No one should have to go “higher up” to get permission to help a customer.

Fourth, you have to be more careful about whom you hire. Service leaders hire one person out of 50 interviewed, sometimes one out of 100, but they're very, very careful. Look for the cream of the crop, the A players, instead of bringing on B and C players. Identify several people in your organization you wish you could clone. Write down their characteristics and traits, and create your own benchmark of the right person for each position.

Fifth, educate and train the entire staff on the art of customer service with something new and fresh every four to six months. No matter if you have a few or a thousand employees, you better have something new and fresh, so it's constantly in front of them. When management is committed to customer service by daily word and deed, the result is an infrastructure that facilitates free communication internally and that yields organizational culture.

Finally, measure the results financially so that you know the impact it's making on revenue, sales, profit, and market share. Everything you do should be built around the concept of creating an incredible customer experience. Perhaps the simplest way of creating a service culture is a variation of the golden rule: Treat your customers as you wish to be treated.

“MAKE your customers excited that you're in business. MAKE them grateful that they have the opportunity to buy your services or products. MAKE them feel like they are your most important customer. MAKE your service so outstanding that they wouldn't think of doing business with anyone else. And then... find a way to MAKE your service even better!”
~John Tschohl

About the Author:

John Tschohl is a professional speaker, trainer, and consultant. He is the President and founder of Service Quality Institute (the global leader in customer service) with operations in over 40 countries. John is a self-made millionaire traveling and speaking more than 50 times each year. He is considered to be one of the foremost authorities on service strategy, success, empowerment, and customer service in the world. John's monthly strategic newsletter is available online at no charge. He can also be reached on Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter.



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COMPETE WITH BIG BOX STORES,
FOLLOW THESE 5 STEPS, P29

at the VDTA Show

COVER STORY, PAGE 26

2019 VDTA SHOW
INFO, P31