

## CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE – MOVING FROM SATISFACTION TO ENGAGEMENT

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To compete in a world where more and more products and services are commoditized more quickly than ever before, you have to up your game and deliver great customer experiences at every point of interaction in your business. A consistently great customer experience is very difficult to copy and may represent a sustainable competitive differentiator for your company!

### **8 STEPS TO CREATING A GREAT CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE PROGRAM**

Your customers are essential to the success of your business. Consider these eight essential components to building a great customer experience program and your customers should all leave happy.

#### **1. Develop and deploy your customer experience intent statement.**

The customer experience intent statement directs all subsequent work. It's akin to a set of engineering schematics — a formal, defined set of criteria against which the organization can manage and monitor the delivery of customer experience.

#### **2. Build touchpoint maps.**

To provide excellent customer experience, you need a deep understanding of how your customers interact with your business at each of your individual touchpoints as well as across your entire organization. To that end, you must map your customer's journey and your organization's touchpoints.

#### **3. Redesign touchpoints.**

Chances are you'll need to redesign one, some, or even all of your customer touchpoints to improve customer experience. Fortunately, the redesign process for each touchpoint requires just four weeks, or 20 workdays. No more, no less. During this period, the touchpoint redesign team brainstorms, proposes change, and executes on its proposal. In addition to creating change fast, this process also results in a widely dispersed set of customer experience change leaders.

#### 4. Build customer experience knowledge in the workforce.

Most employees are trained only on the specific functions needed to execute their individual part of their siloed business process. Very few are given real-world, hands-on, practical experience in exactly *how* to deliver great customer experience. That has to change!

#### 5. Get feedback from customers.

When it comes to getting feedback from customers, annual surveys are *out*, and constant listening and providing real-time dialogue is *in*. That means you need to inventory where you are listening effectively today, prioritizing your highest-value listening and dialogue touchpoints, and creating a governance model for managing and responding to customer feedback. The end game here is to be able to converse with your customers in near real-time and to respond to customer concerns, problems, and suggestions as they are happening.

#### 6. Build a customer experience dashboard.

Real metrics and aggressive goals drive accountability and help kill misaligned initiatives. To help you keep track of your metrics and data, you'll want to build a customer experience dashboard and to regularly monitor, review, and discuss each measure it contains.

#### 7. Execute an integrated internal communications plan.

If your organization's leaders rarely mention the customer, then even the best internal marketing will fall short of fostering a significant culture change. The fact is, making your organization customer-centric is an uphill battle. It is winnable, but significant resources — both financial and philosophical — need to be brought to bear, including a robust internal communications effort.

#### 8. Recognize and reward customer experience done well.

Your organization's compensation system conveys what's important, and what isn't. If rewards (compensation and so on) and recognition programs don't reflect your focus on customer experience, then even your very best efforts to turn your company's culture customer-centric will ultimately fail. The program will also fail if you reward individuals who make their numbers but act in a way that is counter to a great customer experience.

## VIVA LA RESOLUTION: USING THE R.E.S.O.L.V.E.D. APPROACH

Of course, the best way to deal with angry customers is to do whatever you can do to prevent them from getting that way in the first place. Barring that, you need a plan to deal with these unhappy souls. To help you remember what you should do when you're faced with an infuriated customer, here's a handy acronym: RESOLVED. It stands for the following:

- **Respond to the person who is upset.** If you're dealing with an upset customer, it's imperative that you respond to him in such a way that he feels heard, attended to, and respected. Take care of the person first and the problem second.
- **Empathize and apologize.** When faced with an upset customer, job #1 is to empathize — that is, to focus on your customer's emotional state — and to apologize. Dignity and genuine concern are the watchwords here.
- **Seek to solve the problem.** If a customer is upset, you must work to solve her problem. First and foremost, that means cleansing your speech of the phrase "It's our policy." If a customer is unhappy, she doesn't care what your policy is. Second, be aware that the customer doesn't care what caused her problem. Was it a cumbersome internal process? Are you short-staffed? Frankly, it doesn't matter. All the customer wants to know is what you're going to do about it.
- **Be open to the customer's proposed solution.** Often, the best solutions come from the customers themselves. Customers will frequently devise solutions and alternatives that you would have never considered. Don't be afraid to ask what would make the customer happy.
- **Listen intently.** To listen intently, you must practice *active listening*. That is, you must concentrate deeply on what is being said, giving your undivided attention. It isn't enough to simply hear the message; active listening requires you to pay attention with all of your senses. When you listen in this way, upset customers will begin to calm down.

- **Verify the solution.** After you propose a solution, verify that it's what the customer wants. Say, "If we do X, Y, and Z, will that satisfy you?" This shows the customer that you will not move forward unless you are both in agreement that the situation is resolved to his satisfaction.
- **Eliminate the problem.** When you and the customer agree on the solution, you must act immediately. Don't let anything get in the way of implementing the resolution you've reached.
- **Document the problem.** After you solve your customer's problem, you must document it to prevent it from happening again. This can be as simple as jotting down notes about your conversation, or more formal, like entering your notes into a database. In this way, you can track the complaint, maintain a history of it, learn from it, and identify and eliminate preventable problems in the future.

## **20 QUESTIONS TO BEGIN YOUR OWN CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE DIAGNOSTIC**

The majority of customer experience problems arise in one of the four following areas: personnel, processes and technology, customers, and financials. For this reason, the following questions that pertain to your customers' experiences can be categorized accordingly.

### **5 QUESTIONS ABOUT PERSONNEL**

- Have you clearly articulated the experience you want your customers to receive, in a way that all employees can understand?
- Are you hiring for the best basic customer service traits, such as warmth, empathy, optimism, detail-orientation, and teamwork?
- Are you recruiting new customer-facing employees with the skills and abilities to deliver the customer experience you want?
- Have you profiled your existing successful customer-facing employees to identify traits that work in your organization?
- If given the choice to steal something from your organization, would your competitors choose your people?

### **5 QUESTIONS ABOUT PROCESSES AND TECHNOLOGY**

- Do your processes give employees enough time to listen to, diagnose, and solve individual customer problems?
- Can a customer press 0 at any time within your interactive voice response (IVR) system to talk to a customer service representative?
- Do your customer-facing systems pass the necessary customer information and data from touchpoint to touchpoint so that an ongoing customer dialogue can be maintained throughout the customer journey?
- Do you have a good selection of leading and lagging customer-performance metrics regarding the use of your process and technology?

- Are all your key customer-facing processes mobile enabled?

## **5 QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR CUSTOMERS**

- Do you know what your customers' expectations are of your service, product, and brand?
- Do you proactively solicit customer feedback at your key customer touchpoints?
- Do you immediately respond to customer complaints and concerns, no matter what channel is used to communicate with you?
- Have you mapped all your customer touchpoints?
- Do you know who "owns" each customer touchpoint within your organization — who is accountable and responsible for improving it?

## **5 QUESTIONS ABOUT FINANCIALS**

- Have you created a list of "perfect" customer behaviors?
- Have you worked with your CFO or financial team to identify elements of your return on customer experience (ROCE) model?
- Do you know all the costs associated with poor service in your organization — for example, customer defection, churn, buy-backs, cancellations, and non-renewals?
- Have you calculated the cost to acquire a new customer versus the cost to retain an existing one?
- Have you determined what percentage of customer defection is for price-related issues versus service-related issues?