

Just to be clear...

It's not about customer service any more

The smell of sweet, delicious cinnamon rolls lingering in the air, the aroma of a turkey baking in a piping hot oven, the wonderful sound of laughter ringing in the air...all bring the comforting feeling of the holidays. With the holiday season approaching at a fast clip, people are making plans to visit family and friends and that means thinking about travel.

What's the first thing you think about when you say the word travel? Service, of course. You expect it! But isn't it interesting what we expect of other companies? We expect the travel industry to be friendly and helpful. Whether it's an airline, the train, a bus, a limo or a taxi...we expect friendly service from the time we make our reservation to the time we arrive at our destination. We expect friendly, efficient and easy-to-deal-with service. And, we expect

smiles all around, because after all, we're on vacation...and we want to feel good.

But is "vacation" travel really any different from any interaction we have with any company we deal with on a given day? Since emotions drive all of our buying decisions, it's all about how companies make us feel.

Make no mistake...it's not about customer service any more. That was something we focused on years ago. Now that markets are blurring at lightening speed, customer experience is the only differentiator for companies – in fact, it's a competitive weapon.

Delivering an exceptional customer experience is one of the most important things a company can do. Everything matters! Take a restaurant, for example. From the time you walk

in the door, the way you are greeted, the decor of the restaurant, how long it takes to be seated, the smells that tickle your nose, the kind of service you receive, whether your food is hot, and so on all form part of the experience. And that experience is either going to keep you coming back for more or not!

As customers, though, it's so important that we let companies know when their service is exceptional and when it's not. Fill out those comment cards, speak to the manager, but most important of all, tell the person who gave you an exceptional experience how they made you feel and why. Not only will they feel good, but so will you.

Warmest wishes for a wonderful holiday from all of us at CWA!

- Carolyn

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From our families to yours
Happy Holidays

from

CWA

The Customer Experience Company



Your staff have the answers you need

"It was taking too long for us to get our customer statements out the door, said one senior vice president in the IPD Division at Pacific Life. We knew we needed to take a look at how we were doing business. And we knew we needed some outside, objective help. In fact, we had a two-fold goal.

First and foremost, we wanted to improve the service we provide to our customers. But secondly, we wanted to look at how we could create an entrepreneurial environment which would strengthen our service capabilities through the efficient use of technology."

Pacific Life called CWA to help them look at the way they were producing customer statements. Initially the company wanted to look at the six functional units in the division. After an initial assessment, though, we suggested that they focus on the three lines of business and look at the products within each line. That was a key decision.

Although CWA didn't know it, Pacific Life was already thinking about restructuring the division. Once the project with CWA was complete, it was clear that the new structure was going to

work. Today, Pacific Life has reorganized the division based on the lines of business and the staff that support each line. It was, and is, an excellent decision!

The project unfolded like this. After in-depth interviews and observing the employees working, we drew flowcharts of the existing or 'as is' processes. We posted the charts for verification by the staff, and then facilitated a series of sessions with them to analyze and develop ideas for improvement.

Working with team members from other sections, employees learned how changes in one area affected another – they took a "process-oriented" approach to the solution. With a little coaching from us, the resulting 'to be' charts with the proposed changes were presented by the staff to their managers...along with more than 100 recommendations! Of those recommendations, 75% were implemented immediately and a further 10% scheduled for implementation.

This project reinforced to the employees that their company valued them. It also gave us a chance to remind the company

of the tremendous talent and resourcefulness of their workforce. Pacific Life has taken the bold step of unleashing the entrepreneurial spirit of their employees and has committed to nurturing it further in the months and years ahead. They are ready for change and, as we all know, change is the only constant there is!

Did CWA improve the service that Pacific Life was delivering to its customers? Absolutely! When the staff were able to objectively view their processes and make improvements, they did! And overall they reduced the time it took to prepare the statements by several days. That, of course, made the customers happier. But is also delighted the Pacific Life management team.

Pacific Life prides itself on persistence, performance, and strength. But what the company really understands and practices is how to deliver an exceptional customer experience. They have adopted the Oz Principle as their basic philosophy, where "What else can I do?" is the staff mantra. "And that is music to our ears!" says Carolyn Watt, president of CWA.

Did you know?

Customer experience is actually part of ISO 9001:2000 and the Malcom Baldrige National Quality Award? It's true. In both cases, an integral element of a quality organization is their approach to customer requirements and customer satisfaction. It's all about ensuring the customer will be happy.

You can learn more about ISO 9001:2000 by contacting Celerity Learning at (905) 479-7794, www.celeritylearning.com.

Reverse your reaction

Something is going on out there! While spending some time in the Midwest, I spent some time with my brother who is a sales manager for a firm specializing in warehousing systems and lift trucks. He said that in his process for recruiting territory managers, he was flooded with resumes of 'over-qualified' sales managers who have either been down sized, right sized or had their positions 'absorbed'. In other words they were out of jobs. That seemed strange to me.

As a result I talked to other clients, associates, friends, etc, and found that their story was similar. Tons of over-qualified sales managers in the job market. Why? It can only be for two reasons. The first one is that there are a lot of sales managers out there who cannot sell or cannot manage and are being let go.

Yet it seems that there is another reason. As the economy has gotten softer and revenues dwindle, the natural knee jerk reaction is to cut back on expenses. The first place to go for some organizations is in the sales and marketing area. What a dumb thing to do!

When revenue is down, that is the time to spend more on sales and promotion, not less. The

formula for declining revenue is to promote more. The problem with cutting sales in down times is that it diminishes your ability to maintain contact with prospects and clients. As I mentioned in a past letter, these times are the BEST for grabbing market share, building solid relationships and proving your mettle to customers. If you build traffic now during difficult times, that will be multiplied in good times.

So there are two lessons. Number one, promote, promote, promote. Everyone has to spend. Companies have to spend on sales, promotion and getting people and materials into the field. Do not cut back now.

Number two. If you personally are not producing revenue or actively pursuing the market and you are in sales, you are about to become a casualty. You need to spend also. Spend on training and education. Spend on direct response marketing. Spend on expanding your networks any way that you can. This is YOUR responsibility, not your boss's.

Interestingly enough most of us have it backwards. We spend when money is flowing in and conserve when revenues or income is down. That is because

of your emotional response. When times get tough, what comes up is fear. With fear comes contraction. When times are good, the emotion is joy and exuberance and the desire to spend.

A little known fact is that you need to discipline yourself and your organization to counter those knee-jerk responses. When you are making lots of money, that is when you conserve, re-invest, save, pay debt etc. If you spend when money comes in, the money will siphon off quickly. Salespeople do this all the time by buying new cars, trinkets and 'doo-dah'. When times are tough, that is when you spend on getting your face out there.

You have to think like a small business owner, not like an employee. Spend and promote when times are tough. Reinvest and save and build your ability to deliver in a bigger way when times are good. Control the emotional urges and you will gobble huge chunks of the market. Do this as an individual and you will build your presence, your value and your viability wherever you go.

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to do business with you!**

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**Our customers
tell us:**

"You are truly professionals and are very knowledgeable in your work. I enjoyed working with you. You made my job easier!" says Andre Morin from Petro-Canada.

Casual dress gets a thumbs down

It's 10:55 a.m. and you have a meeting in 5 minutes in one of the business towers downtown. As you open the front door to the company where your meeting is taking place, you glance at the reception desk in front of you. Feeling a sense of shock, you notice that the receptionist is revealing a little too much skin, is chewing bubble gum, and greets you with a stern "Yes!" What is your first impression of the receptionist and, worse yet, of the company?

When you walk into a corporation, no matter how large or small, or where it is located, your first impressions about the company are set. And, those first impressions are instantaneous and unconscious. Worse yet, those impressions will help you decide if you want to do business with that company.

Today, business casual dressing has become a standard for the workplace. But economic turbulence and the resulting conservative times are causing

some companies to take a second look in the mirror. In fact, two of the largest companies in Canada, Scotiabank and TD Securities are doing just that.

Has business casual gone too far? Does it do more harm to a company than good? In a recent poll by a U.S. employment law firm, 40% of Human Resources managers linked relaxed attire to a laxity in workplace behaviour, 44% noticed an increase in tardiness and absenteeism, and 30% noted a rise in flirting.

On the flip side, though, adopting a business casual style of dressing can be seen as a positive symbol of an employer's attitude towards meeting employee needs. Business casual days improve morale, increase productivity and even make employees more comfortable. Some companies are even using a casual dress code as an employee benefit and as a way to attract new employees.

What role does the company play, though, in deciding on an appropriate style of dressing? It starts with your corporate brand and the image you want your customers and colleagues to have of your company. What type of experience do you want them to have? It is generally agreed that employees who are seen by customers in the course of everyday business should wear business attire. But it is up to the company to clearly define what business attire is or it may be confusing for the staff.

Remember, business attire is only one part of your company's image but a key component of the experience you deliver to your customers. Whether you're easy to do business with, how clear your information is, and whether your products are meeting your customers' needs all contribute to the customer experience. And that experience is either going to keep your customers coming back to you for more or send them to your competitors.

Just to be clear

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Share your experiences

We all have them...good and bad experiences. And, we'd love to hear about yours. Send us an email or a fax along with your contact information. As a courtesy, we always contact the company that we write about before we send out our newsletter.

"Mark Mosier, from Toronto Motor Car and Leasing in Markham was extremely thorough and attentive to my needs!" says Alex Stojanoff. Alex was recently in need of a new vehicle. "It was a truly amazing experience. Not only did we do most of the work by fax and phone, but there was no haggling, no hassle and I got the best price, says Alex. My son even got his own set of keys!"

Saint Cinnamon is giving people an experience that they can really sink their teeth into. "I am hooked on the cinnamon rolls! They are awesome...so delicious!" says Amy Harding from New Brunswick.