

Just to be clear...



It's all about customer experience

Why do people pay \$4.00 for a cup of coffee at Starbucks? It can't be because they're the only place to get a good cup of coffee. Or, because they're the only convenient place to buy coffee. No, it's because people will pay more for an enjoyable experience. Think about it. When you go into a Starbucks, everything you experience creates a picture in your mind and a feeling in your heart. And, when you like what you see and you feel good about the experience, you go back – again and again.

It's the same with your company. Everything – from the way you answer your company phones to the way you provide service to your customers and the quality of your communications – makes up the experience for the customer. And, that experience is either going to make your customers smile or give them a sick feeling in the pit of their stomach.

What feeling does your company create with your customers? The bottom line is that price is not the only deciding factor with customers – either initially or over the long term. In fact, people will pay more if they feel good about the product you're selling or the service you're giving. Yes, that's right, it's all about the experience. And, if you're concerned with customer retention, you'd better check to ensure the experience you're giving to your customers is a good one.

But, how do you find out what your customers really think about you? Well...you need to ask them. Some good research into how your customers feel about their experience with your company can go a long way to helping you attract and retain customers for a very long time. And, believe it or not, they love it when you ask. Everyone loves to tell you what they think – especially when they're spending their hard-earned money.

Armed with information about what your customers think, the next step is to look at the way you provide service. How does your company's service measure up to your customers' expectations? Every area from your sales staff to your call centres and your support areas is fair game. The key to ensuring a good experience is to review all of your customer touch points. After all, everything from the amount of time a customer waits after making a request to the way you make your customers feel and the appearance of your employees contribute to

their "experience". Streamline, improve and try some new things here. How can you improve the experience?

Next, you'll want to review your customer communications. After all, your corporate communications are really just your story of who you are, what you do, how you do it and how customers can interact with you. Take a look at everything from your customers' point of view. Does your corporate brochure make sense to your customers? What about your company website? Can your customers and prospects find what they're looking for? And, are your forms clear and easy to complete? What about those booklets and guides you give out? Clear communication is a key to a great customer experience. And, clear communication results when you look at things from your customers' point of view.

Finally, you'll want to check with your customers to make sure you're on track. Go ahead and tell them about your new way of doing business and show them your new clearer communications. Take the opportunity to show your customers that you're listening. You can do this in a number of ways – assemble a customer advisory group, run some usability testing or even just visit a few key customers. It doesn't matter. Just do it and don't forget to incorporate any feedback from your customers.

After all...it's all about the customers' experience.

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