

## 19 Steps for Creating an Awesome Customer Experience

### **Provide a great customer experience.**

To have profitable customers who stay with you a long time, your goal must be to create the kind of experience that will:

1. Attract your customers to purchase your products and services.
2. Persuade your customers to pay the prices you need to charge for them to be profitable.
3. Encourage them to keep their business with you.
4. Interest them in buying more from you.
5. Inspire them to tell others about you.

### **Customers are outraged and managers delusional**

Research shows that today's customers, even in New Zealand, are not disappointed or dissatisfied. They are outraged.

Managers on the other hand, are delusional. They think they are doing a great job of looking after their customers but their customers do not agree.

This provides a wonderful opportunity for businesses which want to gain a competitive advantage. If these businesses were to provide a great experience for their customers when their competitors were providing an aggravating one, their customers would not see them as being better but as being different.

### **How to create an awesome experience? Become customer driven.**

If you agree that the main thing should be to have profitable customers who stay with you for a long time, you'll want to become customer driven. Customer driven organisations know their customers **are** their business because without them they would have nothing. Customer driven organisations therefore put their customers in the centre of their world. They learn as much about their customers as they can and they use this information to change the way they run their organisation. People who run customer driven organisations know they must operate their organisation in a way that works for their customers, not in a way that works for them.

In traditional organisations, people think about their customers. In customer driven organisations, people think *like* their customers. There's a big difference between the two. If you think like your customer, then you would put yourself in your customers' shoes. Before you set any policy, before you spent any money, before you made any decisions, before you took any action, before you even opened your mouth, you would ask yourself, "If I was the customer, what would I want to see happen?" Then that's what you'd do. Would your customers have a different experience if your people (including senior managers) put themselves in their customers' shoes?

In most organisations, staff are advocates for the organisation. When a customer complains, or offers a suggestion, staff will explain to the customer why things have to be done the way they are being done. But in customer driven organisations, staff are advocates for the customer. They listen to what the customer has to say and then they pass that information on to their team leaders, managers and senior managers. And when they do, these managers don't take the view that this is just another whinging employee. They understand that they are effectively listening to the voice of the customer, and that's the most important voice in the organisation.

## ***19 specific ways you can create an awesome customer experience.***

If you have direct contact with the customer, it is your job to behave in the following ways. If you are a team leader or manager, it is your job to behave in the following ways to your staff, and to make sure they behave in these ways to your customers.

### **A. Basic Behaviours**

#### **1. Be available.**

- a. In a US study, 33% saw this as the major problem – 6% defected because staff weren't available.
- b. If you are slow to answer the phone, 31% hang up and call a competitor and 26% hang up and forget about the whole thing.
- c. You need to be mentally available not just physically available.

#### **2. Look smart.**

In British research, 92% said the way the staff member looked affected their perception of how good the customer experience was.

#### **3. Listen.**

- a. 49% of people in one study said staff not listening was the biggest cause of a bad experience.
- b. Listen to the customer's requirements not through the filter of your products and services but with an open mind.

#### **4. Be fast and easy to do business with.**

- a. In Canadian research, 24% said it took too long to be served, and 32% said it took too long to pay.

**5. Do what you say you are going to do.**

You want customers who stay with you for a long time. As you have learned in your personal life, long-term relationships are based on trust. If you don't do what you say you will do, you destroy that trust.

**6. Keep your customers informed.**

No news is not good news. Past experience will have taught your customers that 98% of all surprises in business are bad. Therefore they will want to be kept informed. Do this when things are going well and your customers won't have to worry. Do it when something outside your control is going to cause you to fail to meet a commitment you have made and then your customers can plan an alternative.

**7. Know your stuff.**

In one study, 40% said the quality of the customer experience could be improved by better staff training so they knew more about the business and its products and services.

**8. Deliver the solution**

At the end of the day the customer wants what they came to get and that is a solution to their problem. They do not want excuses or explanations. They want results.

**B. Intermediate Level Behaviours**

**9. Be adaptable and flexible.**

Because no two customers are the same, and because the world of your customer changes quickly, your customers need you to be change according to their needs, preferences and situation.

**10. Take responsibility.**

- a. Customers expect you will take immediate action to help them solve their problem. They hate getting the run-around or being handed on
- b. In UK, research found 88% of customers said, when I ask where a product is, take me to where it is located. Don't send me!
- c. In other research, 36% said they had a great experience if staff made a genuine attempt to help them.
- d. Look for things you **can do** for your customers instead of telling them the things you cannot do.
- e. Managers; Empower staff so they can take responsibility.

**11. Be genuine and honest.**

Tell no lies – big or small. Be transparent, open and honest or you will destroy trust.

**12. Be polite and respectful.**

- a. A US study found 25% complained staff were impolite or disrespectful. Three percent defected as a result.
- b. Another study found 26% said their customer experience was made poor by pushy staff.

**13. Be friendly, caring and enthusiastic.**

- a. One study showed 36% said this was the most important ingredient in getting a great experience.
- b. Studies show 61% want to be greeted
- c. Make sure your staff have a can-do, will-do attitude
- d. One study found 46% said their bad experience was caused by disinterested staff.

**14. Pay attention to detail.**

The devil is in the detail. Many large and costly mistakes are caused by failing to notice a small detail. These mistakes can make you look unprofessional and weaken your brand.

## **Advanced Level Behaviours**

**15. Get to know your customers.**

- a. Learn about your customers so you can personalise the experience.
- b. Use their name and otherwise make them feel important.
- c. Recognise their loyalty.

**16. Walk in your customers' shoes.**

- a. While you are dealing with your customer, put yourself in your customer's shoes and ask yourself: "If I was the customer would I like what I was hearing? Would I want to do what I am being asked to do? Would I like what I see happening?"

This includes what the customer has to do to get in touch with you, access your place of business, purchase your product or service, get after sales assistance or make a complaint. It also includes the sound of your voice, the way you look, and the way your place of business looks.

- b. Sell what your customers are buying.

**17. Put the customer in control.**

- a. Give them choices in what to buy and how to pay.
- b. Give them information.

**18. Go the extra mile.**

- a. Delight your customers by looking for problems your customers would just love you to solve but cannot reasonably expect you will – and then solve them!
- b. Going the extra mile is really important when something has gone wrong.

**19. Follow up.**

- a. Making a follow up call shows you care and gives you a great opportunity to find out what you are doing right, what you need to improve, what you could start doing and what you don't need to do.
- b. It is essential to follow up when dealing with a performance problem or customer complaint.