

9 CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE STRATEGIES

**TO DOMINATE YOUR
INDUSTRY AND MAKE PRICE
IRRELEVANT**

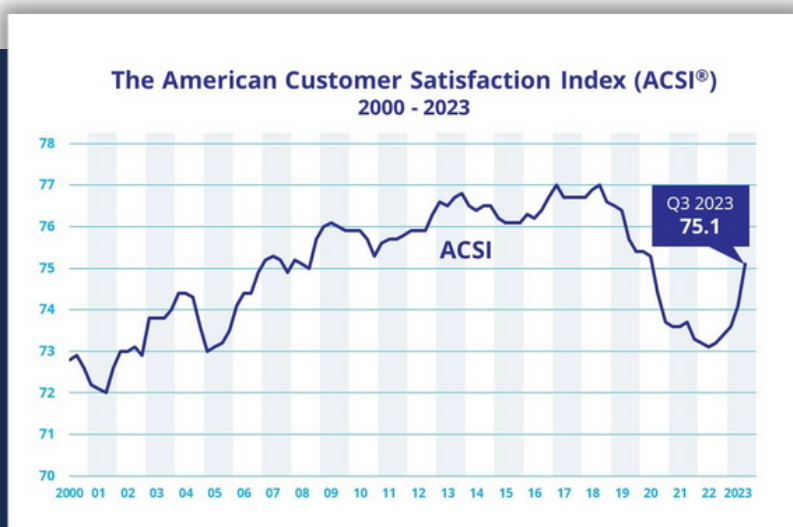


"If your customer experience is not consistently great, you'd better be the cheapest."

Since the pandemic, customer experience in nearly all industries has dropped to a two-decade low. Customers, patients, clients, tenants, guests, or whatever you may call the person buying your services and products have been frustrated during these tough times. Due to an unprecedented booming economy, leaders started taking shortcuts, solely focusing on sales and profit, reducing their hiring standards to fill positions because of rapid growth. They expected and demanded more of their employees including their customer service representatives, yet not investing in the employee culture and customer experience. All of this caused employee burnout, low employee morale, high turnover--enter the Great Resignation. Add to that the supply chain issue and the customer service recession ensued.

Is The Customer Service Recession Ending?

However, there is evidence that CEOs realize the critical importance customer experience is to customer retention, loyalty, referrals, sales growth, and employee opportunities. Companies are investing in customer experience like never before and it is paying off. More and more organizations are finally realizing that the customer experience they deliver is their biggest competitive advantage.



According to the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ASCI), fueled by strong consumer demand, U.S. Gross Domestic Product (GDP) grew by 4.9% in the third quarter of 2023 – well above most predictions and driven by a 4% increase in consumer spending. Customer satisfaction – a major driver behind consumer spending – posted its largest increase in 25 years. Nevertheless, customer satisfaction remains at a low historical level



“THE MOST FUNDAMENTAL TENET OF A WELL-FUNCTIONING MARKET ECONOMY IS THAT COMPANIES ARE REWARDED FOR TREATING THEIR CUSTOMERS WELL AND PENALIZED FOR TREATING THEM POORLY,” SAID CLAES FORNELL, FOUNDER OF THE ACSI AND THE DISTINGUISHED DONALD C. COOK PROFESSOR (EMERITUS) OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN. “THIS IS STILL TRUE WITH RESPECT TO CUSTOMERS, AS COMPANIES WITH HIGH CUSTOMER SATISFACTION CONTINUE TO HAVE GREATER REVENUE GROWTH THAN COMPETITORS WITH LOWER ACSI SCORES.”

The key to building long-term customer loyalty is not through chasing price or luring new customers with discounts, rather it is time to focus on building a positive experience so engaging, so memorable, that your existing clients can't stop talking about you to others.

Is it Possible to Make Price Irrelevant?

When I say you can make price irrelevant, it sparks conversation and debate. Some will say, "That is impossible!" I disagree, it is possible. I am not saying you can double your prices or even raise them 20 percent tomorrow and not lose existing or potential customers.



MAKING PRICE IRRELEVANT MEANS BASED ON THE EXPERIENCE YOUR BUSINESS CONSISTENTLY PROVIDES AT EVERY TOUCH POINT, BY EVERY EMPLOYEE, YOUR CUSTOMERS HAVE NO IDEA WHAT YOUR COMPETITION CHARGES.

Most of us as a customer, are acutely aware how much the companies we do business with charge compared to their competitors. However, we all have a few businesses we are loyal to because of the relationship they have built, the consistency they deliver, the peace of mind they give us, or how they make us feel. In those cases, often we have no idea what their competitors charge, nor do we care.

Stop Competing in Price Wars and Start Competing in Experience Wars

Every business must decide where they want to compete—in the price wars or the experience wars. I prefer to compete based on an outstanding customer experience. There's a lot less competition. Many times, when a customer complains about the price, it isn't because they were not willing to pay for something; it is because the experience didn't justify it.

A great example of this, in the first business I started, John Robert's Spa, occasionally we would have a customer who expressed disappointment about a haircut they may have received from one of our lower level (less experienced) designers, who charged around \$50 for a haircut. To make it right, we would give them their next haircut experience with one of our higher designers (\$75 haircuts) complimentary. Three years later, that same customer is still going regularly to the higher-level designer, who now charges over \$100. It is not about price!

In fact, 85 percent of US consumers say they would pay 5 to 25 percent more to ensure a superior experience. Price is something you offer when you have nothing else.

Price Match Guarantee with a Twist

I do believe in price guarantees. How can that be? Am I a hypocrite? Not at all. I do know a paradigm shift is needed from selling a commodity someone can get anywhere to an experience customers can only enjoy with your company. Everyone in your organization needs to have this mentality:



"WE ARE THE PREMIUM EXPERTS AND ULTIMATE EXPERIENCE PROVIDER. WE WILL NOT BE OVERSOLD.

IN FACT, IF YOU CAN FIND IT MORE EXPENSIVE SOMEWHERE ELSE, WE WILL RAISE OUR PRICES AND MATCH IT."

Sound crazy? Well, if that truly was the mind-set of everyone in your company, it would change your approach to the experience you provide. It would force us to deliver the ultimate experience. Personally, I would get upset if I found out that someone was charging more for something my business sells.

That doesn't mean I would just raise our prices. First, we would have to figure out what they are providing that we aren't. Is it quality, consistency, or an experience? Then we would need to improve our game—make it better than anyone else's. Once we do that, we would be able to charge the most and be proud of what we charged relative to the total experience we delivered.

***Related – Make Your Customer Experience So Good Price Becomes Irrelevant**

How To Get Out Ahead of The Customer Service Revolution

As a leader, you want to make sure your organization is not late to the Customer Service Revolution that is happening right now. The following are the 9 customer experience strategies you need to execute to become the brand customers can't live without and make price irrelevant.

1. Incorporate Service Aptitude Training

Great customer service skills are something all leaders want their current and next generation of employees to have. But when your employee disappoints your customer, whose fault is that? Typically, the blame is placed on the employee for using poor judgment or being indifferent to the customer. However, ninety-nine percent of the time blame should be placed on the company or supervisor for putting someone in a position they were not qualified to handle. Most companies have their new employees go through technical training only, and when they end up delivering poor customer service, management gets frustrated with that employee's decision-making. It is not their fault!

What Most CEOs Get Wrong About Customer Experience

Most would agree that the hospitality side (how our customers are treated and cared for) is just as important as the technical/operational side of what the customer receives. It is an enormous factor in creating customer loyalty. However, most company training contradicts this. We would never think of having an accountant, lawyer, nurse, doctor, hairdresser, or technician perform work without the proper technical training, certification, and licensing. Yet most companies have little to zero customer experience certification. To my knowledge, there is no college major in customer experience that prepares the next generation of the workforce on how to have strong customer service skills and provide the most positive customer experience.



Companies don't engage emotionally with their customers—their employees do. If you want to create a memorable company, you must fill your company with memorable people. The quality of your customer service, and the level of your organization's customer experience, comes down to one thing and one thing only: The service aptitude of every employee you have. From the CEO to the account executive, call center, receptionist, corporate office support team, to every front-line employee—it's all about service aptitude!!! The most critical component in building a world-class customer experience culture and the most effective customer experience strategy is the service aptitude of every individual employee in your organization.

Service Aptitude: A person's ability to recognize opportunities to meet, and exceed Customers' expectations, regardless of the circumstances.

No one is born with it; it is not innate. Most of the workforce has extremely low service aptitude, especially when they are entering the workforce after finishing school, regardless of whether that is high school, college, graduate school, or a trade school. As a result of poor training and paranoid management, many employees, including management, don't have a high Service Aptitude even after years of working. And sadly, a high percentage of senior-level executives continue to have low Service Aptitude during their careers. Why? Why is high Service Aptitude so rare? What dictates it, and what impacts it?



There are three things that shape everyone's service aptitude:

1. Life experiences
2. Past work experiences
3. Current work experiences

Life experiences are a significant factor in people's Service Aptitude level, especially in the younger workforce. Think about your home environment, groups of friends, and life experiences growing up. Front-line employees' standard of living typically does not afford them the opportunity to fly first class, stay at five-star resorts, drive a luxury automobile, and enjoy other higher-end experiences. Yet we, as managers, expect those same employees to be able to deliver world-class service to clients, guests, patients, or whomever we call our customers, who may be accustomed to these types of experiences. It doesn't make any sense.

Previous work experiences have a major impact on a person's service aptitude. Think about how small is the percentage of organizations that are truly world-class at customer service. It is a good bet that most of your front-line employees have previously worked for an average or less-than-average customer service company, which means that not only were they not trained on what excellent service looks like, but they were brainwashed by a policy-driven, iron-fisted manager who taught them that customers are out to take advantage of businesses.

Current work experiences dictate the current state of an employee's service aptitude. Nearly every company proclaims, on paper, plaques, and its website, that it has a customer-first philosophy, but how many back that up? New employees typically get initial training on a company's operational processes—product knowledge, how to do the fundamentals of the job, and so on—but very little if any customer service or soft-skill training is invested upfront. Actions speak louder than words.

A Great Way to Test Your New Employee's Service Aptitude

One of the best tools for measuring if an employee's service aptitude is high enough to start interacting with a company's customer is the Employee Service Aptitude Test (E-SAT), created by The Dijulius Group. The E-SAT is a customized test that asks approximately 25-50 multiple-choice questions about common situations that may arise between the employee and their customer, ranging from nonnegotiable standards, service recovery, and above-and-beyond opportunities, to uncomfortable and awkward situations that are not uncommon. Beyond a simple job skills test or emotional intelligence test, the E-SAT is a fantastic tool for testing new employee service aptitude and a much more accurate predictor of an employee's success in their customer service role.

We do NOT recommend using an E-SAT as an interview tool or pre-employment test, for several reasons. The first reason is that certain questions can lead to discrimination or biased hiring practices, either intentionally or unintentionally. Prohibiting these questions helps ensure fairness in the hiring process, promotes diversity, and upholds equal employment opportunity principles. The E-SAT should be used with current employees rather than job candidates. The second reason is a significant number of potential employees would probably score poorly since most people's service aptitude is extremely low.



The Best Time for the E-SAT

The best way to use the E-SAT is to give it right before and right after the new customer support agent goes through their initial training, to monitor how their service aptitude has increased.

It can be obvious to the new employee which of the multiple-choice answers is the correct one. Often, however, that new employee would not have even considered selecting that answer prior to taking the test. When an employee does answer a question incorrectly and we ask why they didn't choose the answer we wanted them to choose, many times they will say, "At my last job, I would have gotten in trouble if I did that." These are great training and learning opportunities. We get to establish our service culture and explain, "At our company, we want you to trust our wide range of customers and give them the benefit of the doubt. You will rarely get in trouble for something you do; instead, it would be for something you didn't do."

Creating an E-SAT for Your Unique Organization

Creating an E-SAT is easy. Just brainstorm with other leaders about common scenarios that come up in your customer service consultants' interactions with your customers. You only need a few, and the floodgates will open.

Once you get started, and have a dozen questions, each week something will come up with a customer, and you will think, "That would be a great question to add to our E-SAT." These evolving conversations will provide a huge boost to your customer relations experience training, resulting in a team well-versed in delivering on your brand's product and service guarantee.



2. Train Your Employees on People Skills

Not one single person is born with strong people skills. It must be taught and nurtured. Not everyone is inclined to be outgoing or eagerly engaging to people they don't know. The environment one grows up in plays a big part in how they act. If you had extremely outgoing parents, chances are you will grow up to behave similarly. However, even if you were not exposed to an outgoing environment in your early years, people skills can certainly be developed and mastered. The more you can find these people skills in your interview process the better. However, they can be trained and developed. Here is how:

Incredible Empathy

One of our strongest human talents is the ability to empathize with another person's situation. Seeing and understanding someone's experience from their perspective, walking in their shoes, is key. Empathy is especially effective when paired with compassion. Compassion is the desire to help another person. Together empathy and compassion are the two most powerful soft skills employees can have. When you genuinely serve with compassion and empathy, your customer service rises to a completely different level. The challenge for most companies is how to teach these skills. How do you make them more than just buzzwords and platitudes? The answer is by having your employees constantly putting themselves in the shoes of the customer. When your employees really understand the customer's plight, what they're going through, the importance of each and every interaction becomes crystal clear.

***Related – Soft Skills Training for the Best Customer Experience**

A Day in The Life of a Customer

World-class service organizations teach their employees to view things from the Customer's perspective. Remember, many employees have never been their own Customer, have never needed the services and products their company provides, cannot comprehend what the Customer's mind-set is. Therefore, they do not relate well and find it difficult to empathize, be compassionate, and anticipate Customer needs.

Today, the first place The Dijulius Group starts with our consulting clients is by helping them create a day in the life of a customer video. The objective of the video is for every employee to understand the critical part that both they and your business's services or products play in their customers' daily lives. More importantly, it's about how we handle each interaction. So, every person in the organization, top to bottom, must understand that it is not merely about a transaction, order accuracy, our expertise, average ticket, or number of transactions.

Rather, it is about being present with every customer and truly understanding the impact we can have on their day, personally and professionally.

The following is a (2 minute) [video of a Day in the Life of The DiJulius Group client](#). I bet you can relate to many of the circumstances our clients are going through personally and professionally.

Kindness

Think about the last time you made someone's day. It could have been something so simple, but it was clearly a surprising "wow" moment for the other person, leaving a positive impression on them. Yet, at the end of such a day, who feels the best? The day-maker does. And that is exactly what the top world-class customer experience brands do. They build, encourage, recognize, and give the resources that create the types of employees who constantly go above and beyond. This is why these brands consistently have the highest employee engagement. Building an above and beyond culture will drive your employee engagement.

The Day-Maker Dopamine



I like to call it the "day-maker dopamine", which refers to a phenomenon often discussed in psychology and neuroscience. When we engage in acts of kindness or altruism, it can lead to a release of dopamine, a neurotransmitter associated with pleasure and reward. And it absolutely has a place in the modern workplace.

This effect has been referred to as a "helper's high" and has been studied in the context of why people feel good when they help others. The idea is that engaging in altruistic behavior activates the reward centers in the brain, leading to the release of dopamine, which in turn creates a feeling of pleasure or satisfaction. As it turns out, it is a key driver of both employee satisfaction and best-in-class customer experience.

***Related – Day-Maker Dopamine**

Today It Is Cool to Be Kind

The ability to go above and beyond—for customers and co-workers alike—allows your employees to put their unique fingerprint on the experience. This fosters creative autonomy, allowing them to come up with their own ideas and exercise their brains in a way that they hadn't been before, giving them a sense of ownership in the experiences they provide. Beyond a basic sense of responsibility, employees are more connected to the experience they are providing when they feel they have a hand in creating it. For strong company cultures and the strongest impact on employee engagement, leaders need to make employees feel safe in always doing the right thing.

Best of all, when your employees perform an act of kindness they experience an increase in oxytocin, the chemical that makes us feel warm and fuzzy. We even get it when hearing a story of generosity or when witnessing one. This releases oxytocin. It makes us want to be more generous.

That is why storytelling and sharing all the great things your team members do for customers, and each other, is so important.

Organizations achieve greatness when employees are allowed to do unexpected things, show initiative and creative thinking, and can step outside the norm. That is when delightful, interesting, and amazing results occur.

Insatiable Curiosity

Those who are the strongest at relationship building are extremely curious. They are dying to learn about others and their experiences. They are curious not only about subjects that interest them but also about unfamiliar subjects. They become investigative reporters, wanting to learn as much as possible about other people's lives and passions. They truly enjoy learning; they explore what makes human beings tick.

***Related – The Power of Insatiable Curiosity / How to Have a Good Conversation on Divisive Topics**



TED LASSO:
"BE CURIOUS,
NOT JUDGMENTAL"



My all-time favorite TV series is “Ted Lasso”. If you haven’t ever seen it, go watch it today! In contrast to all the negative, doom and gloom shows out there, Ted Lasso is inspiring, funny, and entertaining. Most of all, he makes you want to be a better person. One of my favorite clips from the show is where Ted sandbags the villainous, arrogant, billionaire soccer team owner in a game of darts, and he quotes Walt Whitman: “Be curious, not judgmental.” Check out the short clip.

The best relationship builders appear like detectives in their conversations, looking for clues to finding out what makes the other person unique and memorable. They’re after things you won’t find on their Facebook page or LinkedIn profile.

Such curiosity leads to empathy expanding quite naturally during interactions with those outside our usual crowd, people who tend to view the world at least somewhat differently than we do.

Great Listening

There is a lot more to being a good listener than just letting the other person talk. You need to be attentive, patient, make good eye contact, not interrupt, ask probing questions, and finally pause to process what you heard before responding.

Fierce attention means, that if you ask a question and don’t ask two to three follow-up (clarifying) questions, odds are you weren’t listening, or you just asked the question to be polite, e.g., “How was your weekend?” or you were dying to answer it yourself. When talking to others, we should aim for a 4:1 ratio of questions asked vs. answered.

***Related – Conversation Nevers & Always**

"Listening to understand is often the only way of showing people they are special and that you care for them," says Rich Simmonds in his blog [The Art of Listening](#).

He adds, "If you are unable to connect with people to the point that they can trust you, they will not follow you as a leader or give you the opportunity to serve them as a leader (or as a salesperson, for that matter). These are the basics of a relationship, and trust will only be sustainable in the safety of a relationship."

Without listening with the goal of understanding, we don't learn about others' insecurities or, for that matter, our own. And insecurities are something we all have in common. As Simmonds also points out, "It is our task to show people we care, not so that we can blatantly manipulate them into using our product or service, but rather by listening and trying to understand them where they are." Empathetic listening will help us determine what people really need so we can provide it in a way that is tailored specifically for them, resulting in a situation where everyone wins.

How can you perfect the art of listening? Ask fascinating, probing questions, follow-up questions, and even more questions. Then be silent and let the person speak their piece. You learn valuable insights not from asking one question, but through an unstructured back-and-forth dialogue. As Tom Peters notes in his book *The Excellence Dividend*, "If you ask a question and don't ask two or three follow-up questions, odds are you weren't listening to the answer. A good listener becomes INVISIBLE; makes the respondent the centerpiece."

Peters dedicates an entire chapter to listening in which he writes, "Attention is one thing. FIERCE attention resides on a different planet." He believes fierce attention is of such a high degree that the person responding to you feels totally engrossed and as if the focus is completely on them. And rather than merely listening or improving your listening skills, Peters believes in making fierce listening your number one strategic goal, the primary trait differentiating you from everyone else.

***Related – Talking Less, Listening More: Can You Keep Quiet For Longer Than 18 Seconds?**

It is not about listening so you can decide when to chime in with your own opinion; it is about listening to understand. Asking these two questions can dramatically help anyone's ability to listen to understand: "Tell me more" and "Help me understand."

This was my favorite part of the HBR article: "While many of us have thought of being a good listener being like a sponge that accurately absorbs what the other person is saying, instead, what these findings show is that good listeners are like trampolines." You can bounce ideas off a truly good listener. In return, rather than merely taking your energy, they deliver energy and clarification back to your own thought process. They are active supporters, increasing your vertical movement and energy level for a metaphorical trampoline effect. It is a fantastic example of brilliance in the basics, because what could be more foundational to success than your customers feeling they've truly been heard?

When your employees learn and practice this style of higher-level communication, it will naturally lead to a superior customer service experience.

***Related – John's TED Talk Meet as Strangers Leave as Friends**

There is a difference between listening and waiting for your turn to speak.



3. Remove Personal Interpretation

What do the following phrases have in common?



"WE ARE A CUSTOMER-FIRST ORGANIZATION"
"TREAT CUSTOMERS THE WAY YOU WANT TO BE TREATED"
"EXCEED CUSTOMER'S EXPECTATIONS"
"GOING ABOVE AND BEYOND IS OUR STANDARD"
"WE DELIVER GENUINE HOSPITALITY"

Leaders love to throw around platitudes when it comes to customer experience, and all of these are great mantras. By themselves, they don't provide any direction. If you tell one hundred employees to exceed customer expectations or go above and beyond for your client, you will get one hundred personal interpretations. To deliver a world-class customer experience at every point along the customer journey, to potential customers and loyal customers alike, truly world-class CX organizations do this when training team members: they remove personal interpretations.

If you tell 50 employees to deliver genuine hospitality, you will get 50 interpretations based on their life and past work experiences. You need to remove personal interpretations in all aspects of your customer experience deliverables. For instance, clearly define what you mean.

***Related - How to turn your platitudes into Executable Actions**

Delivering Genuine Hospitality...How?

Another example is, don't just tell your customer service staff to be present or to provide genuine hospitality during their interactions with customers, without telling them how. Avoid generalities, offer real-world customer experiences examples. In other words, make it black and white and make it measurable. One of my favorite hospitality systems for making a customer connection is the "5 Es."

1. **Eye contact**
2. **Ear-to-ear smile**
3. **Enthusiastic greeting**
4. **Engage**
5. **Educate**



4. Reduce Employee Roulette



"YOU CAN SIGNIFICANTLY IMPROVE YOUR CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE, WITH YOUR EXISTING GROUP OF EMPLOYEES"

Is the level of experience your customers receive dependent on which employee, department, or location they encounter? Are there certain employees on your team you hope your best clients interact with? If so, then you have what is known as employee roulette. Employee roulette is a problem most organizations have.

***Related – 6 Ways to Remove Employee Roulette from your Brand's Customer Experience**

A signature experience is a distinct CX your customers can only get consistently from you. It must be realistically achievable, manageable, and affordable to be consistently delivered. In order to create a signature experience you need Non-Negotiable standards at every stage of your customer journey to ensure every team member is delivering your signature experience every time, no excuses.

***Related – Customer Bill of Rights: You Want Customer Loyalty? Be Brilliant at The Basics**

How to Personalize Your Customer's Experience

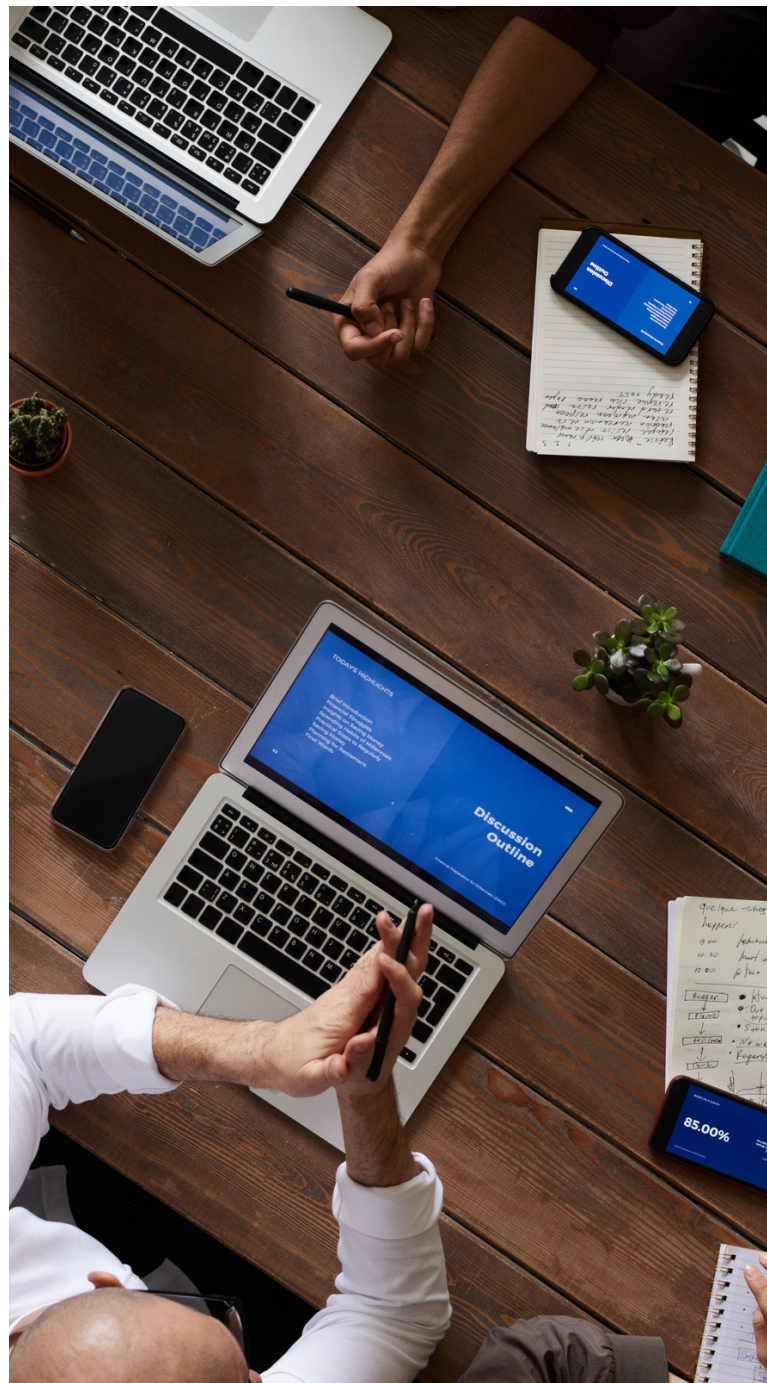
In my first business, John Robert's Spa, returning customers are draped in black capes for haircuts, and new Customers are draped in white capes. Every team member throughout the salon knows this fact and can address our guests accordingly. The color of the capes is the silent cue and visual trigger, making space for proactive customer service. It is foundational to our company culture.

***Related – The White Cape Secret Service System**

In some fine restaurants, everyone from the bus staff to the server knows that a customer with a red napkin has never been to the restaurant before. This ensures that new customers are greeted correctly, receive more details about the menu, learn about the chef's credentials, and benefit from any other service protocol for new customers. A black napkin means they are an old friend, and a gold napkin means they are one of the restaurant's top 50 guests. The server should be bringing them their favorite drink before they even ask. Such customer service goals are relationship builders, leading to the highest levels of customer happiness with corresponding customer retention rates and healthy market share.

5. Be in the Certainty Business

For most people uncertainty triggers high extremes of anxiety. As human beings, we like predictability in our lives. That is why so many people are resistant to change because doing the same thing, having habits, creating a pattern in our lives is predictable. I know, almost within 90 seconds, how long it will take to drive to work today if I take the same route every day. We like sameness, even when it is boring or not meeting our needs. We do the same workouts, go to the same restaurant, even stay in bad relationships because at least we know what we will get versus the unknown, the uncertainty.



#1 Cause of Anxiety is Uncertainty

People would rather know bad news than worry about what could happen. In fact, a study showed that people preferred the option of definitely getting an electric shock now versus the possibility of it happening later.

Uncertainty causes paralysis. Uncertainty causes people to be on edge, react irrationally, and struggle emotionally. Those people are our employees, customers, family members, and even ourselves.

The absolute first business strategy needs to reduce uncertainty and increase predictability in every touchpoint with your customers. For starters, you can still provide predictability. How is this possible when we are all dealing with uncertainty and with a lot of things, we don't even know the answers ourselves? Let me share how. The medical and financial industries are two of the highest stress experiences for consumers because of the stressful nature of dealing with our health and finances. For example, someone is waiting for a decision on a loan or a mortgage, or a patient is waiting to hear back about an important test result. As a business, in situations like these, you probably have no idea what their results will be. However, what you do know is how the process works and the typical turnaround time of when you should have an answer for them.

Working with several financial service companies, The Dijulius Group has seen this situation play out repeatedly. Whenever a customer is told by a loan officer that they will be notified as soon as they, the loan officer, gets an answer, this can lead to problems and cause fear in the mind of the customer. The customer may start calling in daily to find out the status of their loan. They may start to panic, thinking the loan officer forgot about them, or the loan officer may have too many clients and is not giving their loan the attention it deserves. The customer may call the loan officer's supervisor to complain, and/or they may take their business elsewhere.

Former FBI hostage negotiator, Chris Voss says, "Make your world more predictable in tiny little ways. The people you're communicating with don't always know when you're going to have good news, but they shouldn't wonder when you are going to communicate with them. When you don't communicate, the people you lead will be left in uncertainty. Don't let people wonder when you're going to communicate with them. Be fearless about having nothing to say."

It is amazing how one simple, small change to this process can provide predictability and ease their anxiety. When the loan officer says something like; “Mr. Simmons, it appears you have provided me with all the information I need to process your mortgage today. From here, it will take our underwriting department two to three days before they notify me if your loan is approved. Which means, you will hear from me no later than end of day Thursday. In the meantime, if you have any questions, feel free to reach out to me.”

In our experience, the customer rarely ends up contacting the loan officer prior to the promised return call. The most important part to all of this is you need to contact the customer by end of day Thursday, whether you have an answer or not. That is predictability, that is where trust is built. Predictability eases anxiety. Never leave your customer in the dark about what will be happening next and when they will be hearing from you.

No Negative Surprises

Clients hate surprises, especially negative ones. Often things like out of stock, delays, more expensive than originally quoted, or quality control issues may be unavoidable. That is not the problem, it is the lack of communication that is. That is why it is important to “Go Ugly Early”.

If you have bad news to share, don't procrastinate, make small talk, or try to lessen the blow. You are doing a huge disservice to your customer. If you have bad news to share with your client, you need to go ugly early. That means if you have bad news, share it immediately and then be well prepared to discuss any possible solutions around it. Your client will respect you so much more.

How can you be in the certainty business?

6. Power of Purpose

In most businesses, the front-line employee typically gets the recognition and glory. They include Account Executives, IT Techs, Consultants, Doctors, Lawyers, and Accountants. They are also the ones who immediately see the impact they have on customers.

However, for those we refer to as invisible service providers, e.g., support teams, admins, receptionists, contact center, warehouse, and back office are rarely praised for the part they play in the customer experience. Yet for the highest levels of employee engagement and job satisfaction, it's crucial that business leaders inspire every team member to understand how their job impacts customers' lives.



"A RECEPTIONIST IS LIKE AN OFFENSIVE LINEMAN. THE ONLY TIME THEIR NAME GETS CALLED IN A GAME IS WHEN THEY'VE SCREWED UP. THE DOZENS OF TIMES THEY PLAYED THEIR POSITION EXCELLENTLY WENT UNNOTICED, WHILE EVERYONE ELSE RECEIVED THE RECOGNITION."

Regardless of their position, whether as a front-line employee or working behind the scenes, every human being wants to know their hard work is contributing towards something impactful that goes beyond business outcomes. Ignoring this is one of the biggest mistakes companies make.

All employees tend to thrive on meaningful feedback, sometimes even more than monetary rewards, and their dedication (or lack thereof) strongly impacts the overall quality of customer experience and company reputation. "People want to be part of something larger than themselves. They want to be part of something they are proud of, that they'll fight for, sacrifice for, that they trust," said Howard Schultz, former President and CEO of Starbucks. Clearly, the feeling of making a difference is a key part of a positive work culture.

***Related – How Team Members Can Be Inspired To Understand the Impact They Have On Customers**

What We Do Today Impacts Our Customers' Lives

In his book *Built to Serve*, Dan Sanders shared a great example of this. Medtronic is a leader in medical technology, manufacturing prosthetic valves for use in hearts. Shift workers spend long hours on assembly lines producing these valves. On the surface, this does not appear to be the most rewarding job, putting pieces and parts together into a box and shipping it off, nor does it seem directly related to providing excellent customer service. However, Medtronic employees did not see themselves as producing heart valves; rather, they genuinely believed they were helping save lives. Their approach to quality, metaphorically speaking, included putting their own hearts into their work.

Medtronic holds an annual event where employees can meet patients who are alive because of transplanted artificial hearts containing Medtronic technology. These emotional connections with the end user of their work, the patients, who share stories with Medtronic employees of how they were able to walk their daughter down the aisle at her wedding because of the attention to detail these employees had for their jobs. Talk about a boost in employee morale, not to mention customer service motivation! It is a remarkable illustration of a company applying emotional intelligence to its organizational goals, in a way that will directly impact customer care. Bringing customer support representatives and other employees face to face with the people who so greatly benefit from their efforts allows Medtronic to provide a context of higher purpose for its workforce. Such interactions with customers result in focused and fulfilled employees, as company values become team values.



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***Related – Do all your employees know who their customers really are?**

7. Be Zero Risk to Do Business With

One of the key characteristics of the top customer experience brands in the world is that they are “Zero Risk” to do business with. A Zero Risk business isn't one that never makes mistakes; every excellent customer service company drops the ball from time to time. The secret to what makes these top brands Zero Risk lies in their customer service training; specifically, how well they have trained their employees to make it right when things do go wrong. In other words, Zero Risk means peace of mind for the customer.



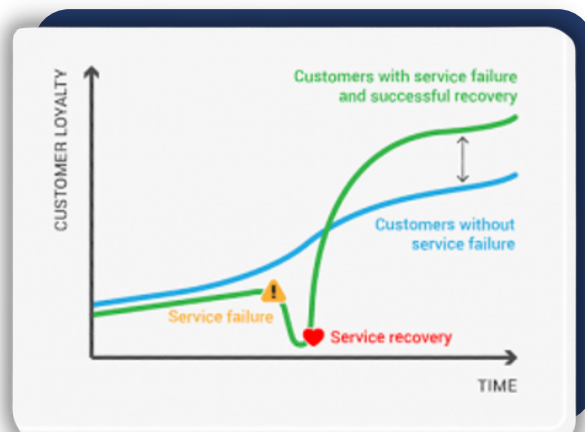
A lot of organizations force their customer-facing employees to hide behind company policy. Policy is a word that tends to create a negative experience. During customer interactions, customers hate hearing the words, “Our policy is...” They understand that policy was created to protect the organization from being taken advantage of by the customer.

Take an objective look at your rules of customer engagement and stop punishing 98% of customers for what only 2% do. Instead, train your employees to have charitable assumptions, which means giving customers the benefit of the doubt. In addition to being the right thing to do, it is a fantastic business strategy for building customer loyalty and enhancing customer lifetime value.

A Great Customer Loyalty Strategy: Screw Up First

When a problem arises with a customer, it gives us the opportunity to own that customer for life.

Brand loyalty often results from screw-ups, i.e., from how well a company handled a situation that initially went wrong. It is a fact that a high percentage of customers will do more business with a brand after a positive resolution was made to a problem. This is known as the Service Recovery Paradox, which is where the customer actually becomes more loyal to the brand than if the initial mistake had never occurred.



It may sound counterintuitive, but the handling of problems can and should be part of your customer retention strategy. An unhappy customer quickly moves on. A happy customer is a loyal customer. And with acquisition five times more costly than merely keeping customers around, a healthy customer retention rate is very good for your bottom line.

It's a proven fact that customers can often be more loyal to your business after they have experienced a service failure, than if it had never happened in the first place. The graph shows customer loyalty over time. When things go wrong, you can see that line taking a big dip as a problem occurs and that loyalty starts to disappear. If your business deals with it well, you can clearly see the effect of customer satisfaction on loyalty growth.



New research from Stella Connect supports this. It was discovered that 97% of consumers across the U.S. and U.K. say that if a brand turned a poor customer service experience into a positive one by solving their problems immediately, they would do business with that brand again.

***Related – How to Train your Employees to deal with Irrational Customer Rage**

Organizations can achieve greatness when their employees are allowed to do unexpected things—to show initiative and creativity, to step outside the scripted path. That is when the most delightful, interesting, and amazing results occur.

8. Everyone Spends Time on The Front Lines

More and more CEOs have decided to literally get on the front lines on a regular basis to better educate themselves on what it is really like to be their customer and customer-facing employees. They are walking through the customer journey just as their customers would. What about you? Are you spending enough time experiencing your own customer experience?

Uber CEO Dara Khosrowshahi and Lyft CEO David Risher are spending time shuttling passengers. New Starbucks CEO Laxman Narasimhan is working as a Barista each month. In 2022, DoorDash started requiring that every employee—from engineers to CEO—make food deliveries once a month. Khosrowshahi told the Wall Street Journal that his experience moonlighting as an Uber driver led him to “reevaluate every single assumption that we’ve made.” These leaders discovered that for the greatest understanding of customer expectations—as well as their own customer support teams—there is nothing like their own direct customer interaction.



The Best Customer Experience Strategy Includes Time in the Trenches

According to a Pew Research Center survey, low pay, few opportunities for advancement, and disrespect on the job were the top reasons workers cited for quitting. For these reasons alone it is critical that senior leaders as well as anyone who works at corporate headquarters, i.e., those who are removed from the day-to-day operations of the company, spend adequate time working alongside customer-facing employees.

Going this extra mile is the only way to gain the most thorough understanding of both sides of the user experience. It is an incredible learning tool for better understanding what a day in the life of both your customers and employees looks like, and seeing firsthand the frustration, pain points, and bottlenecks both customers and your employees are dealing with. It organically leads to quicker response times in resolving customer issues and ultimately, to higher customer satisfaction scores. A positive customer experience always begins with a positive experience for your customer service agents. But unless you have executive sponsorship (aka buy-in), nothing will change.



Having executives working on the frontlines very often leads to changes that improve both the customer and employee experience. And employees who feel fully supported are inspired to keep customers happy.

53% of Workers Believe Their Leaders Are Out of Touch with What Employees Want.

According to a survey from e-learning and HR publishing platform eLearningIndustries, the majority of employees feel their bosses are out of touch with what they need and want. Not a shock when you learn that CEOs spend only 6% of their time with frontline employees on average. Who knows better what customers want, a person who spends six percent of their time with the customer or an employee who spends one hundred percent of their time? This is where being close to the customer journey really counts. Spending time in a customer-facing roles as a senior leader is no longer a luxury. It is vital to improving your customer experience and reducing employee turnover.

When a CEO is present and willing to be in the trenches with their customer-facing employees, sleeves rolled up, elbow to elbow, it goes a long way with employee engagement and retention.

Airbnb's CEO Spent 6 Months Living in His Company's Rentals—and Found the Core Problem “To make a change, you have to touch the product, the policies, the service across all these different touch points,” says Brian Chesky, CEO of Airbnb. Chesky spent six months as a host and guest of his own business. “Last year, I started living in Airbnbs, and I stayed in like a dozen and a half over the course of six months,” Chesky told Fortune. He continued staying exclusively in Airbnb properties for a year as the “ultimate guest” and started noticing how much the quality of the homes and experiences varied.

“You always want to work on something new, but when you have a service like ours, and so many people use it, it's easy to forget what they actually want. You must have their permission to do new things,” Chesky says. “A good lesson is: Fall back in love with your core business.” His embracing of the “nitty-gritty” meant making improvements while doing the less glamorous work; in his words, “being a glorified customer support agent.”



9. Create an ROX Dashboard

The companies not making a monetary investment in customer experience are the ones whose leaders don't understand the financial impact CX can have. A Return on eXperience (ROX) dashboard helps you determine precisely what victory looks like over time and offers insight into customer churn rates. To build a Return on eXperience dashboard the executive team will love, it should contain three to four key performance indicators (KPIs) directly tied to the level of customer experience delivered by every customer-facing employee and department.

To know what victory looks like, you must have a ROX (Return on eXperience) dashboard. The ROX dashboard should have 3-4 Key Performance Indicators that are directly tied to the level of customer experience delivered from every customer facing employee & department, such as:

- Increasing customer retention/resign rates
- Increasing referrals & word of mouth
- Increasing average customer lifetime value
- Improving 1st time call resolution
- Reducing customer complaints, which also reduces call volume
- Reducing advertising expense

When you have KPI's like that, even your CFO gets on board with improving your customer experience. A ROX Dashboard holds everyone in the company accountable.

How One Company Increased Revenue by Millions by Improving Customer Experience

NewDay USA is a mortgage company serving veterans. Their biggest issue was 15% of their Veterans (potential customers) who were already approved, were opting out before their loan closing each month. They called this VOO – Veterans Opting Out. Every 1% of VOO was costing NewDay USA over \$400,000 in revenue per month. Obviously, a huge problem.

After finding out the primary cause for VOO to happen was a lack of consistent weekly communication and updates, we helped NewDay USA create systems that ensured every veteran was communicated with at least once a week, keeping them engaged, providing certainty and a reduction in anxiety.

NewDay USA's monthly VOO percentage went from 15% to 8% in a few months. That reduction of 7% meant an increase in over \$2 million dollars in revenue each month with no additional expense for advertising & marketing.

Now I ask you, is customer experience training an expense or an investment?

*Related – [Irrefutable Evidence: Great CX Brands Outperform Competitors & Stock Market Significantly, in Any Economy.](#)

YOU WILL NEVER OUT-SELL HIGH CUSTOMER ATTRITION

Watch how Jim Bennett at Worldwide Experience grew his company from zero to over \$120 million in revenue.

CONTACT US

If you want to make price irrelevant and become the brand your customers cannot live without, schedule a complimentary call with one of our advisors today. We love to talk service and would be happy to make customized recommendations based on your current needs and resources.

At the Dijulius Group, we believe that customer experience is the key differentiator in today's competitive marketplace. We help our clients understand their customers' needs and expectations and develop strategies to exceed them. Our approach is data-driven and results-oriented, and we have a proven track record of helping our clients achieve significant improvements in customer satisfaction and loyalty through Consulting, Keynotes, and Education.

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