

6 Best Practices for Delivering a Great Customer Experience

December 27, 2010

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by Eric Britten, Bob Etherington, Keith Fiveson, Lynn Hunsaker, James Phelps, Angel Tuccy, Jim Watson

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Executive Summary

Organizations with complex products or services and many customer touch-points are always challenged to deliver a consistent and positive customer experience. But, along with the many potential pain points and pitfalls, comes the chance to satisfy customers and promote brand loyalty. In this guide, Focus Experts Eric Britten, Bob Etherington, Keith Fiveson, Lynn Hunsaker, James Phelps Angel Tuccy and Jim Watson share their top 6 best practices for delivering a customer experience that makes your company stand out from the competition.

After reading this guide, be sure to check out the entire discussion and join the conversation:

<http://www.focus.com/questions/customer-service/best-practices-customer-experience/>.

Best Practices Checklist

1. Respond to problems quickly and decisively.
2. Keep your commitments.
3. Personalize your service.
4. Train your staff for challenging customers.
5. Involve every employee in improving the customer experience.
6. Know your customer.

6 Best Practices for Delivering a Great Customer Experience

Best Practices

1. Respond to problems quickly and decisively.

"When a customer has a problem, a question, or a need, we need to respond quickly and decisively. And the customer needs to know that you're responding. You often won't be able to get results immediately, but you need to keep the customer apprised of the status of his or her request. They'll assume that nothing is happening if you don't tell them otherwise." (Phelps)

"Fix problems quickly and efficiently. Research shows that a customer who has had a problem that you have fixed is more loyal than a customer who has never had a problem." (Etherington)

2. Keep your commitments.

"We must do what we say we'll do. If you don't know if something is possible, tell the customer you'll get back to them with a commitment. Once you make a commitment, keep it! Yes, commitments to you are often broken. We have to make the best of those situations and let the customer know why it was not possible to keep the commitment. And, let them know immediately if something is going awry." (Phelps)

"Keep your word, even if it costs you every penny of your commission/profit." (Etherington)

"Deliver on your promise not just once, but consistently over time. Failing on your brand promise deteriorates customer trust and brand image." (Fiveson)

3. Personalize your service.

"Customers want to be treated as individuals. They want you to engage with them on their terms, about what's relevant to them. This means segmenting your customer and prospect list using criteria that will define their differences based on their needs, not your solutions. Then approach each segment with specific, high-value content, according to their different needs. Great customer experiences begin with personalized and highly relevant communication." (Watson)

4. Train your staff for challenging customers.

"Most employees offer mediocre customer service when the deal goes smoothly, and offers apathetic or even awful customer service the moment a customer questions or challenges. This is not the time to wing it. Train your employees to 'take care of the customer' and 'use your best judgment.' Then, don't berate them for making the customer happy. Happy customers are loyal customers. Unhappy customers share your story on YouTube." (Tuccy)

5. Involve every employee in improving the customer experience.

“We created survey reports so that every organization had their own cut of the data. As soon as the customer feedback reports were available, we conducted a cross-functional workshop within each of the organizations, to establish a common interpretation of the results at a local level, and to develop three to five action plans for the most urgent issues. To build ownership at the local level, we trained-the-trainer on market research results interpretation and the workshop methodology, so each organization's presenter was from within.” (Hunsaker)

“The stage is set. Does everyone know their lines, part and contribution along the journey, at each touch point; employees, customers and even those in the supply-chain? It's a top-down effort that spans the organization to make the brand promise a part of everyone's job. In the new age of Social CRM, everyone is your brand manager.” (Fiveson)

6. Know your customer.

“The key is simple: Know your customer. Know who your customer is, know what your customer wants, and deliver what your customer needs. Do not assume you know any of these things. The answers only come from your customers. Gather customer wants and expectations through surveys, focus groups, interviews, trade shows, hot lines and other customer interactive activities.” (Britten)

“While it's important to design your business processes around the customer, it's equally important to seek feedback from the customer. Survey your customers regularly, engage them through social media, review the feedback, and act on it by continually refining your processes and improving execution. Finally, tell your customers what you've done as a result of their feedback.” (Watson)

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About this Report

Focus Best Practices Reports are designed to help professionals understand business and technology best practices in particular topic areas. The best practices included in each report are sourced from Focus Experts who have exhibited expertise in the particular topic. Best Practices Reports are designed to be practical, easy to consume, and actionable.