

## FROM ORDINARY TO EXTRAORDINARY

**C**ommon sense or serious dollars? Customer service is both.

Aristotle said, "Excellence is not an act...it's a habit". Creating brand loyalty is about developing positive habits consistent with your values.

Business owners, managers and leaders determine the good habits that will drive the success of their organisation. Once the desired habits are identified, effective training and continual reinforcement are critical in making them a permanent part of your organisation's culture.

Plan for tomorrow's opportunities rather than focusing on today's problems and when you have your strategy in place, infuse it with emotion if you want to truly touch your customer.

Consumer habits have altered. We can't continue to do what we have always done if we wish to thrive in today's competitive market.

A new global survey reveals Australian consumers place a greater premium on service than most. Australia had the highest number of respondents (46 per cent) believing companies are "helpful but don't do anything extra to keep their business", 25 per cent of Australian respondents believe companies take their business for granted, 10 per cent think companies don't care about their business – double from a year ago – and only 2 per cent of Australian consumers believe companies "generally exceed their expectations".

By focusing on the experience your customer has with you, your business will profit.

### Here are some tips.

1. Identify your core values and those of the people working in your business. It's easier to deliver your brand vision if your values and behaviours are authentic. Most businesses

would say they have values however, if asked, how many can identify them immediately? Using those values, take the time to define your business culture - this is your brand, so everything you do and everyone who represents you represents this brand. Know it, feel it, share it, live it.

2. Have a clear vision. Be clear on where you want to be and the action needed to get there. If you don't know where your business is heading or what your desired customer experience is, you can't provide it consistently and importantly, you can't communicate it to your staff and customers.

Determine your guidelines. We all need to know what our guidelines are to know where we're struggling and where we're shining. Companies don't succeed, people do, so with staff being a huge cost in business ensure they're well trained, educating them about exactly what exceptional customer service involves. To attract and retain the best people, take care of them and find out what motivates them. What will assist them to do an even better job? Being an employer with staff who care about the business will mean your customers are well looked after and your business will benefit.

3. Define your touch points. These are the individual points in which your customer comes in contact with your business, leaving a lasting impression. Design the experience from the first point, through purchase and on to post sale or service. Make the experience fun, easier, have the WOW factor, something unexpected and unique. Go out of your way to solve your customer's problems.

Continue to evolve. If you keep ahead of relevant developments and opportunities, you'll benefit from being a leader in your industry.

4. Listen to and know your customers, consistently building trust and respect. Come to know their preferences so you can enhance their experience with your business.

Customers have information overload, now relying more on emotions to guide their decisions.

How easy it is to do business with you? How does doing business with you make them feel?

Do they compare you to your competition, or care about you?

Innovate by gathering ideas on how to improve your business. Ideas can come from customers, staff, competitors and suppliers.

5. Be clear on your message. This comes back to your values and vision. Ensure that whatever your customers see is congruent with your brand. Do you have an office, a storefront, a website, advertising, and do these visually align with your message? Does this message translate through to the staff interaction and experience your customer will have, providing an opportunity to create a connection, driving customer loyalty through brand engagement?

Don't assume your market or customers know everything about your products, services, or what it will be like doing business with you. Focus on serving your customers and serving each other - with a 100% total commitment, treating everyone the same whether customer, staff, colleague or supplier.

To say that you care is easy; to demonstrate you do is necessary.

Raising the temperature of water by just one extra degree takes it from simply hot, to something that generates enough power to run an engine. If we take the same approach with everything we do, raising our efforts by just one extra degree, we can move from ordinary to extraordinary. ■

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