

Why excellent customer service is an internal journey

By  Leonie Stanley

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Across sectors, the competition to win customers and gain their loyalty has arguably never been so fierce. Consumer and business confidence levels are low amidst the national lockdown, and customers are willing to look around if they feel they can get better prices - and better customer service - elsewhere. In their search for speed and efficiency, many customers will pay more to get professional and personalised service (and avoid the time and frustration of poor, disorganised service).



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This scenario is placing even more emphasis on the role of customer service teams within companies, and the customer experience that these teams create and oversee. Perhaps unsurprisingly, research reveals that businesses that offer better experiences to their customers [earn between 4% and 8% above their competitors](#), while as much as [70% of buying experiences](#) are based on how consumers feel they are being treated.

With this in mind, many companies are looking to technology and features such as bots and automated chat functions to improve service levels and reduce churn rates. Yet although investment into better technology can make a difference, the first area of focus should be on one's teams and processes – and making sure that each team is aligned (and equipped) to provide context, speed and accuracy at every customer touchpoint.

Let's break this down a little more...

One of the most important aspects to understand about customer service today is that success is no longer reliant upon isolated or single engagements with customers. Instead, success (and business longevity) has become about consistently providing an excellent customer experience – so that each customer goes on a journey with the business in which they feel heard, valued, and ultimately get the outcome they initially wanted (or a better one!). When the experience or journey is consistently poor or unsatisfactory, this is when businesses will experience high churn rates, and lose customers to more efficient and equipped competitors.

So, with this in mind, how does a business ensure that its customer experience is world-class?

The first and most important step here is to focus on your people and teams: your people are your greatest and most critical resource when it comes to enhancing customer experience.



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When recruiting and managing your customer experience teams, the emphasis here should be on upskilling and helping each team to work together more effectively (as opposed to sitting in isolated silos or departments). The more established and confident these team members are, the more likely they will work together to deliver excellent customer service and have confidence in their individual roles. (In essence, a high churn rate amongst your customer experience teams will inhibit the company's efforts, so protecting and growing your own teams is imperative!).

Getting closer to your customers

As with any relationship, getting closer to your customers (in order to better serve them) requires gaining insight and understanding. This requires empathy, and a very human ability to listen and have sympathy for the frustrations a customer may be feeling – while also knowing which questions to ask to really understand the issue from a technical perspective.

Again, this is where training and upskilling your teams becomes critical – so that each team member is able to capture and understand the context of an inquiry, and action it in such a way that both speed and accuracy is achieved from a technical and resolution perspective. While technology plays an important role here, it is your team members and their ability to demonstrate empathy and understanding that ultimately becomes the cornerstone for providing an excellent customer experience.



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Once this cornerstone has been built (and is actively nurtured), then employees become empowered to harness technology to have quality conversations with customers – and gain detailed insight into their context by capturing and sharing key data across teams. Technology thus becomes the vehicle through which skilled teams can ensure that context, speed and accuracy is achieved at every customer touchpoint.

Within any business or sector, sustainability comes down to strong customer relationships, which in turn are shaped by your own people and customer-facing teams. This is why it's vital to build a culture of trust and empathy from within while always looking to upskill and retain your employees for the long term, and empowering them with world-class technology tools.

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