

Catalyst

Newsletter from
Custommerce Service Excellence Foundation

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Custommerce Service Excellence Foundation is a not-for-profit organization striving to create a customer experience driven, globally competitive Indian economy.

Conceived and Incubated by Servion Global Solutions Ltd.

Patron Member : **TITAN Industries Ltd.**

Chairman's Message



The last month has been one of good activity for Custommerce. We ran the Second Workshop on Service Excellence in Bangalore. As in the previous programme in Chennai, we had a very good participation from a wide cross section of companies. More details of the programme are available in this issue of Catalyst.

I am delighted to welcome Titan Industries on board as a Patron-Member of Custommerce. Titan needs no introduction to any person in India. Over the years, Titan has consistently rated high on service delivery and customer experience. For us at Custommerce it is indeed a privilege to have this widely admired company as a Patron-Member. This is also a reaffirmation of Custommerce and the role we will play in driving India to be a globally competitive economy through service delivery.

I would also like to acknowledge the role of our first Patron-Member Servion Global Solutions. In fact Servion incubated Custommerce for the first few years before spawning it off as an independent organization. Our membership list is growing and we hope that in the near future we will have a good group of members who will set the pace for service delivery and customer experience in the country.

Our annual event is slated for 15 and 16 September - this issue contains more details. We have an interesting panel of speakers and with a workshop format, the event promises to offer a lot for the participants.

Best wishes,

Ramesh Venkateswaran
Chairman

Custommerce Service Excellence Foundation

Training @ Bangalore

Custommerce conducted its second one-day workshop on "Service Excellence - the Competitive Edge: Hi-Tech or Hi-Touch?" on 27th July, 2011 at Hotel LaLit Ashok, Bangalore. The program, conducted by Mr. Ramesh Venkateswaran, Chairman - Custommerce was designed to sensitize participants on customer expectations and customer interaction. The different dimensions of service delivery were discussed in depth and a framework for service excellence was developed.

Thirty eight participants from diverse industries participated in the program. There were participants from companies like TOYOTA Kirloskar, Dhanlaxmi Bank, ORACLE, TNT, TITAN, Klueber Lubrication, Micromatic Machine Tools, RIETER, Kurlon, Feedback Consulting, TVS Automobile Solutions, etc. This facilitated interesting exchange of thoughts and ideas. Most of the participants rated the program as excellent or very good in the feedback form. They appreciated the content and delivery as also the examples and audio-visuals. At Custommerce, we are impressed with the interest and dedication from the professionals who care about customers.



The participants

People - the 5th “P” in Customer Service

My friend, Ramesh, talked about this experience he had recently when he went to a hotel in the city to meet someone. His meeting got delayed and he needed some reading material to help take care of this delay. After some waving he managed to get the attention of a passing bellboy and asked him for a copy of the day's newspaper. The bellboy grunted and came back a few minutes later with a carelessly folded paper he signaled for Ramesh's attention, deposited ("almost threw it, yaar!" is the way Ramesh described it) the paper on the table in front of Ramesh and sauntered off.

Sounds familiar? Many of us have had similar experiences and it'll be interesting to talk about what these do to us and, more importantly, to the brand which the employees concerned work for.

Here's another. Kumar walked into a big upscale bookshop, one which encourages visitors to browse, have a cup of tea, feel at home. He needed a book on SAT papers for his daughter who was preparing for this exam in anticipation of going to the US for higher studies. His daughter had given him a title and an author and despite much browsing, Kumar was unable to locate this. So he asked a passing employee for help. She was pleasant enough, listened to what he wanted and asked him if he'd checked the shelf "over there" for it. He said he had, to which she responded "I'm sorry sir, if you've not been able to find it then we've run out of copies. Maybe you could try again next week?"

Kumar was walking out when another store employee (let us call him Venky) stopped him, told him that he'd noticed his interest in SAT type books and was there anything he could do to help? Kumar explained his requirement and followed Venky to the relevant book stack. After a quick check on his computer, Venky pulled out the book Kumar needed and then proceeded to ask him which university/program his daughter was interested in. Once he'd understood this he suggested other books which may better fit the bill. Kumar checked with his daughter who agreed with Venky's recommendations. In the process Venky found that Kumar was leaving shortly for a vacation to Scotland and suggested a guidebook he may find useful. End result? Kumar walked out of the book store with three books worth a collective Rs 4200 (after a 20% discount) feeling good about the whole experience.

Let's step back and think about what these three separate encounters mean to you, the customer:

- In the first, Ramesh was mad with the bellboy and, while looking around he thought he saw similar instances of indifference to customers from other front office staff. The first question he asked his business friend when he landed up was "Are you a regular at this hotel? I don't think the service is good at all here!". The bellboy had succeeded in destroying Ramesh's satisfaction and had, in the process, hurt the hotel brand.



C.K. Sharma
Director, Customer Service Excellence Foundation

C.K. Sharma was with The Gallup Organization, Singapore as a Strategic Consultant. He was the Managing Director of Gallup's joint venture in India.

- In the encounter with the saleswoman at the book store, Kumar experienced relative politeness without any interest in helping him. If Venky had not met him, Kumar would have walked out faintly disappointed and relatively neutral in his view about the bookstore.
- Venky was helpful and understanding. He won Kumar's trust and generated good business for the bookstore as a result. He created satisfaction for Kumar and for the bookstore.
- Think about the money implications. If 50 people have the same experience, each day, as Kumar did with the first salesperson business for the bookstore from them is nil. On the other hand, if all 50 have the experience Venky was able to deliver, the potential revenue implication for the bookstore is (assuming a much lower average of Rs 1500 per customer) 0.75 lakhs per day, i.e., close to 2.5 Crores a year!

These encounters are not exaggerated or fanciful people I know actually had them. And you, gentle reader, experience them every day when you deal with your bank, your mobile service provider, your grocer, your airline and your cinema house.

Critical to the experience the customer has is the person with whom the interaction takes place. If the sales person is reasonably sensitive, wants to help the customer and feels good about doing this the interaction is likely to end up positively. But if these conditions are not met there could be disastrous micro-level consequences with one customer at a time getting turned off and potentially becoming a negative feedback source on the brand in question.

It's a sobering thought that in each organization, among the thousands of customer interactions every day, there are some where customer loyalty is actually being destroyed, others where it is being created and many others where the opportunity to build positive linkages is lost through disinterest.

Let's step back and think about some other examples. Just suppose if Milkha Singh had told his son "No way you're going to play this new-fangled, expensive game of golf - I want you to be an athlete, same as me. From today, all your training and emphasis will be on becoming a world class athlete".

Or if Sachin Tendulkar's parents had the dream that their son should end up a world class swimmer and had made him go through 3-4 hours at the pool each day instead of spending time with the bat, on the ground and at the nets.

"These are exaggerations - don't get carried away!" is what I hear you thinking. Let's look at some other examples...

- I need a good, smart young man to sell my company's products. Get me someone with a decent background and education and I'll make him into a good salesperson. (BUT what happens if the person in question is shy, doesn't like meeting people, is terrified of opening a conversation and cannot bear rejection? Or if the person is so full of himself that he loves to lecture, thinks disagreement with his views is a sign of stupidity?)
- I need a manager to look after my team of phone executives. She should be able to control them, get them to keep regular hours, to track phone calls and to use the CRM system efficiently. (BUT what happens if her emphasis on discipline and process ends up demoralizing the team and her constant presence has them feeling worried and insecure about their jobs?)

The underlying point is that it's not enough to use hard information about background and knowledge to match

a person and a job. Chances are that even after intensive training the person will end up doing an average job in most cases. Yes, there is also a (small) chance that she could be great at the job - but to counter this, there's also the chance that she could be terrible at it!

To make matters worse, the supervisor or manager has a big role to play - in determining whether the frontline person is secure, happy and motivated. Let's face it, someone who is discontented with the job is hardly likely to be able to deliver satisfactory or great customer experiences.

Those people who are in touch with an organization's customers can help in brand differentiation. They are a marketing resource. These are important thoughts which an organization needs to buy into and engender, these are thoughts which can impact its profitability and sustainability.

In service delivery, People end up being as important, if not more so, than Product, Price, Place and Promotion. People represent the fifth "P" in marketing. And unfortunately, many organizations end up treating this very important "P" with less attention than it deserves.

In short, organizations need to strive to recruit the right type of person for their various jobs - the background, education and skills are important; so is attitude and the kind of personality each individual has. This sensitivity needs to be extended to managerial and supervisory levels as well. Because these are the people who can help individuals enjoy the work they are doing and continue to be part of their setup; or they can move their people to hate the work they are doing and be on the lookout for avenues of escape.

Silo Busting

How to Execute on the Promise of Customer Focus
by Ranjay Gulati

Harvard Business Review May 2007

The Four Cs of Customer-Focused Solutions
Coordination. Establishing structural mechanisms and processes that allow employees to improve their focus on the customer by harmonizing information and activities across units.

Cooperation. Encouraging people in all parts of the company through cultural means, incentives, and the allocation of power to work together in the interest of customer needs.

Capability development. Ensuring that enough people in the organization have the skills to deliver customer-focused solutions and defining a clear career path for employees with those skills.

Connection. Developing relationships with external partners to increase the value of solutions cost effectively.

For the full article, visit:

<http://www.customerlifecycle.us/pdfs/whitepapers/Silo%20Busting%20-%20How%20to%20Execute%20on%20the%20Promise%20of%20Customer%20Focus.pdf>

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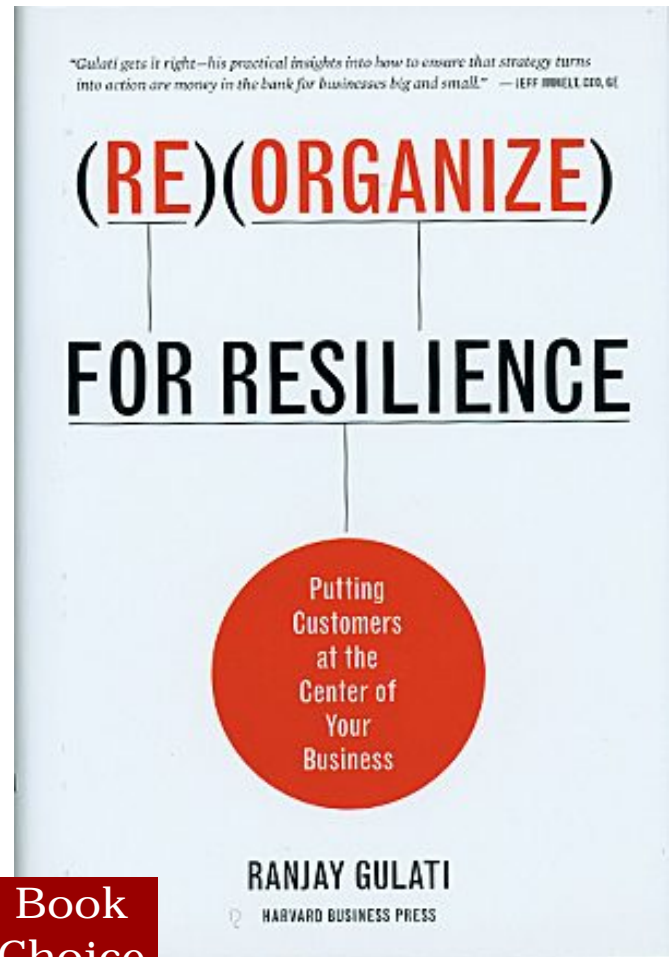
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Catalyst for Service Excellence

What is Customer-Centricity?

- Is it calling back when you promised the customer that you will call back?
- Is it noting down the delivery time promised to the customer?
- Is it playing the customer's preference of music in your taxi?
- Is it giving the balance change and not leaving the last 50 paise?
- Is it giving the same importance for after-sales-service as sales?
- Is it offering the chair to the customer who is paying lakhs of Rupees for land registration?
- Is it stopping the bus in a hotel with toilets and not near a bush?
- Is it building toilets every 50 kms and maintaining it on highways, especially on toll roads?
- Is it being polite when enquiring what the customer wants?
- Is it acknowledging a customer when he is standing in front of a counter though you are busy?



THE WISE ONES CALL IT
"THE SECRET OF ETERNAL
CUSTOMER HAPPINESS"

THE CUSTOMMERCE NATIONAL CONVENTION 2011
15TH AND 16TH SEPTEMBER, HYATT REGENCY, CHENNAI

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