

# CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

# 12 WAYS TO IMPROVE THE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE



# **THE CUSTOMER MAY NOT ALWAYS BE RIGHT, BUT THE CUSTOMER IS ALWAYS THE CUSTOMER**

These guides are in place to support your learning and help you improve your knowledge and enhance your business performance.

Enjoy the read and good luck, do let us know of your successes and use our other guides to expand your continuous personal development.

# SUGGESTION 1 - THE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE SHOULD BE CREATED WITH THE CUSTOMER IN MIND

Too often businesses build the customer experience around systems that they have or based upon historical trends, "This is the way that it has always been done". The customer experience is one that should deliver an experience that your customers value, so, the first stage is to ask customers, what they think about the current service that you provide.

Any Feedback is useful, and this can be obtained in a number of ways:

## Point of Experience Feedback – Instant Feedback

One of our very own tools which enables you to obtain feedback from every customer at the point of handover at either Sales or Service. This is a great way to ensure that you get the views of a wide range of your customers.



## Customer Satisfaction Surveys

The majority of vehicle manufacturers will undertake Customer Satisfaction Surveys and this data can be invaluable for identifying areas where customers feel the service does not hit the mark.

## Bespoke surveys

It is quite easy to develop your own customer survey which you can email/text or mail to your customers. Try to keep the number of questions to less than 10 and this will increase the response rate.

## Customer complaints

Customer complaints tell you a lot. Each and every customer believes that they are right when they make a complaint. These complaints tell you where the customers feel that the service that you have provided has not met their expectations.

All feedback is valuable and an important first step towards improvement.

# SUGGESTION 2 - CONSULT ENOUGH CUSTOMERS TO GET A TRUE MEASURE

It is important to make sure that you get the views of a large number of customers across different areas of your business. Customers may be happy with the Car Sales experience for new vehicles but not so happy when it comes to used cars.

In the Service department, make sure that you get views from a range of customers to include those who, wait for their vehicle to be serviced or repaired, use your collection and delivery service and don't forget those customers who use your courtesy cars.

In your research make sure that you get the customers views on each part of the process, from the Initial Booking, Customer Arrival, Communications with the customer, Collection and Handover, not forgetting customer follow up communications.

The same rule applies to New and Used vehicle sales. Make sure that you measure the initial contact made by all methods including email enquiries. What do customers feel about the greeting, range of vehicles and the quality of the test drive? I am sure that you get the idea.



## **SUGGESTION 3 - ASK YOUR BEST CUSTOMERS WHY THEY BUY**

Your regular customers are a great source of information. These customers use you for their own reasons, they value key parts of your customer service and are often willing to help you understand the key reasons why they buy from you.

Why not invite some of these customers to a customer clinic and have an open discussion with them about the service that you provide and which aspects they value most. A customer clinic is a great way to explore the detail of what you do well and where you could make improvements.

You could seek the help of an independent consultant should you not feel confident in running the session yourself.



## **SUGGESTION 4 - MAKE SURE THAT YOU GET FEEDBACK FROM THOSE WHO DON'T BUY**

Don't forget there are a number of customers who choose not to buy and the views of these customers can be vital if improvements are to be made. Following up on lost sales is quite simple and can provide you with an honest and true view of those customers who choose to buy elsewhere.

The follow-up process should include some key measures on the key moments of truth within your business (these are the times when the customer comes into contact with someone within your business). This may be the initial telephone booking, the greeting by the salesman in the used car lot or the presentation of the new car in the showroom. These touch points are what gives the personality to your customer experience.

# SUGGESTION 5 - PEOPLE AND PROCESS = CUSTOMERS FOR LIFE

Once you have your customers views on your Service level you need to take steps to make improvements, but how. It is very important that you look at both People – those who have to deliver the customer experience and Process which should help deliver the consistency that you require to give a great service to every customer every time.

It is the combination of both People and Process which will help improve the customer experience and help deliver improved customer satisfaction and retention.

**Process** – This must be detailed and specific to your business. The old adage of “If you cannot Measure it, then you cannot Manage it” plays an important role here. It is not enough to say that all customer should be contacted the day before arrival in the Service department but the detail of how the customer should be contacted, what should be discussed and what happens if the customer cannot be contacted needs to be confirmed.

**People** – These make your service come to life, how your staff work with the process is of vital importance. It is important however to make sure that everyone is included in the detail of the process. E.g. the Salesman may conduct the vehicle handover but, the Sales Administrator may prepare the documents, Workshop Controller allocates the work at the correct time, Technician completes the PDI check and Car Cleaner prepares the vehicle for handover.

People and process extends much further than the customer touchpoints.



# SUGGESTION 6 - REVIEW YOUR CURRENT PROCESS V CUSTOMER FEEDBACK

Mapping your current process against the customer feedback will help you confirm any gaps that need your attention. Be sure to include all of those points which are contributing to a great customer experience to make sure that you continue to do these. I like to call these the Golden Moments.

Some large flipchart sheets and post-it notes are a great way to make this visible. It is also a good idea to involve the team in defining the current process and confirming the gaps.

You then need to make an assessment of the reason for the Gaps – was it due to lack of process? Or People not understanding or following the process fully? Either way, the opportunity to improve is there, but how?



## **SUGGESTION 7 - THOSE CLOSEST TO THE PROCESS ARE BEST PLACED TO IMPROVE IT**

I very much believe that most people when they go to work want to do a good job. Secondly, those who are doing the job day-in day-out have the best understanding of which part of the process is or is not being followed. Many times, I have helped Dealers improve their customer experience and many times those who are closest to the process are not even consulted on what improvements could be made.

My view is that “Those closest to the process are best placed to improve it”. If you have a problem with your collection and delivery service, then your Collection and Delivery Driver must be included in the improvement process. A problem with waiting customers cannot be solved by the Service Manager making a change. Involvement of the booking team, Workshop Controller and the Service Advisors and you have a far better chance of making a fix that will stick.

I believe that the consultative approach of including these team members pay huge dividends and helps make sure that the new process is applied by all that touch it.



## **SUGGESTION 8 - ENSURE EVERYONE INVOLVED IN THE PROCESS, UNDERSTANDS IT**

Once you have redefined your process you need to make sure that everyone has a full understanding of the new process, the desired outcome and their role in making sure that the process is delivered each and every time. As previously stated this should extend to all staff who potentially impact upon the process and not just those in customer-facing roles.



## **SUGGESTION 9 - PEOPLE MAKE THE DIFFERENCE**

I am sure that you all have good and bad stories of where an individual within a business has taken that extra step forward to make sure that the customer's needs and wants are met. The actions taken by staff that care are very visible for the customer. Whilst a clear defined process will help, it is your staff that deliver the process which makes the difference. The Moments of Truth are the customer touchpoints, and these are the things that the customer remembers.

This is much more than smiling when a customer arrives at your business (whilst this is very important) it is your staff's ability to recognise when something extra is required and take action to provide it.

If you are in search of what this means, then the simple actions stated by **The FISH! Philosophy is a great place to start.** Great customer service is more than a "technique". It comes from the heart. When you have the right mindset, you see opportunities to make the customer's day you never saw before. You find solutions to situations that scripts can't anticipate. Customers love being served by "real" people who care.

## **SUGGESTION 10 - WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE**

Processes are much easier to define and follow however, it is the soft skills displayed by your staff which delivers the service that delights the customer. There are countless examples on the internet which can give you a great place to start to help compile your list of good examples of customer service, however, how these are applied to your business by your staff is critical.

Staff need to have a detailed understanding of what "Good looks like" in their workplace, and with your customers. This can be achieved by taking a positive approach to coaching your staff and constantly practising and reviewing their application of the new way.

# SUGGESTION 11 - CONSULT WITH YOUR STAFF TO HELP MAKE THE CHANGE

Managing change for many has been a constant challenge however if approached in the right way change can occur.

- Staff need to understand why there is a need to change
- Create a clear, compelling vision that shows people how their lives will be better
- Go for true performance results and create early wins
- Communicate, communicate, communicate and communicate again
- Demonstrate that ALL senior Managers are committed to the change



Above all, people do not resist their own ideas, so involve your staff in making the change.

# SUGGESTION 12 - ASK CUSTOMERS WHAT THEY THINK ABOUT THE NEW EXPERIENCE

So, you have reached this stage and are feeling quite pleased with yourself, however, you need to be confident that the changes made are having the desired impact. Time to go back to step 1 and ask your customers what they now think. You need to be confident that the changes made are likely to stick. Reviewing, changing and revising may be necessary to make sure that your good gets better and your better becomes best. Good Luck.



# NEED HELP TO IMPROVE YOUR CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE CONTACT **FOURMATIVE TODAY**

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A difference that helps solve issues, educate staff and managers alike, enhance both your business and individual performance.

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