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Double-Check Assumptions & Motives to Improve Customer Experience

by Lynn Hunsaker

When a customer asks you a question, do you double-check your assumptions about their intended outcome? So often we take customer inquiries at face value, or simply assume we know what is meant. No matter what your job, you have customers, and clarifying your customers' intended outcome is smart business.



Examining Customer's Intended Outcomes

An intended outcome may be quite different from the words a person chooses to make a request or to give you feedback. Different personality types shape our phrasing as well as our hearing. Have you ever played Boggle? It's a letter-scramble game that challenges players to identify as many words as possible, and typically, it's quite surprising to see that another player has a completely different point of view and hence, a unique list of words. Similarly, every interaction we have with a customer poses the possibility of mis-matched speaking and hearing.

Furthermore, the big picture may be unclear initially. It's like the story of the blind men who touch an elephant and describe it ... one touches the tail and says the elephant is a rope, another touches the trunk and says it is a snake, another touches the ear and calls the elephant a fan. By asking a few questions about the customer's statement, you can discover the context of the customer's perspective. This allows you to respond more accurately and satisfactorily from all parties' perspectives. Effective customer listening boils down to sincere curiosity about the customer's viewpoint.

Examining Your Own Intended Outcomes

On the other hand, when you interact with customers, are your own intended outcomes clear in your mind? Do you have the customers' best interests at the forefront of your intended outcomes? If not, your true priorities will become apparent, and the customer's trust in you will erode. With all our emphasis on customer relationship management, surely we want to carefully hone trust-building. A conscious effort is typically necessary to assure our own customer-focused intended outcomes are not overshadowed by our other needs.

What about the intended outcomes of your promotions and customer programs? For long-lasting customer profitability, make sure your initiatives and campaigns put the customers' interests first, and the company's interests second. This applies to customer surveys, customer care financial incentives, loyalty perks, experiential marketing events, CRM, touch-point management, and basic marketing and business policies. Customers are savvy, not naive. Customers are informed, not ignorant. Or at least,

they can quickly become savvy and informed. And customers are vocal. Make sure your customer care approach contributes to the long-term value of your brand and your customer relationships.

Customer Experience Equation

Satisfaction with the customer experience can be summarized as a simple equation: reality must be better than or equal to expectations, from the customer's viewpoint. Communication plays a massive role in customer experience satisfaction, as it helps define both expectations and reality. To improve customer experience, make sure you accurately understand customers' intended outcomes (expectations), and ensure that you accurately deliver intended outcomes (reality), as judged by your customer in every interaction.

Find out how to customize these tips to your situation; contact the author lynn.hunsaker@clearaction.biz.