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## Customer Experience: Actions Speak Louder Than Words

by Lynn Hunsaker

Actions speak louder than words when it comes to most things in life. Britney Spears, Barry Bonds, Martha Stewart and plenty of others learned that the hard way. Customers feel the same. They hear plenty of promises in ads, on signs, and from sales and service people. Yet customers know you can't judge a book by its cover. It's the actual customer experience that really counts.



Most people trust companies less this year than they did last year, according to the 10th annual Edelman Trust Barometer. No wonder, with massive irresponsible decision-making that just came to light and caused the global economic crisis. Yes, actions speak louder than words!

We need to see it to believe it. Service quality and product quality outweigh any other efforts a business makes to convey trust. Here's what participants in the Edelman study said: what drives trust, from most to least impactful:

1. Service & product quality
2. Leadership can be trusted
3. Company treats its employees well
4. Provides value for the money
5. Stays within the spirit & letter of the law
6. Strong financial future
7. Frequent communication about the state of its business
8. Innovates new products, services or ideas
9. Creates & maintains local jobs
10. Gives time, money or resources to public good
11. Strong commitment to protect the environment

Surprising? Surely a large number of managers think public good and environment make the biggest impact. But the research shows it's all about the basics. Putting their money where their mouth is. Letting people really get what's promised in ads, signage, conversations with employees, and so forth. Keeping focused on great customer experience through excellent product and service quality.

Think back to times when you have decided to discontinue a product or service, or switch to a different brand. Maybe you got a better deal. Most likely, switching would be inconvenient or present an uncertain situation. Most of the time when you switched brands it was likely because somehow what

you were expecting wasn't lived up to. People take their business elsewhere not so much because of better offers, but due to hassles, disappointment, or annoyance.



When people become disillusioned due to poor service or product quality, they vent their frustration to lots of people — negative word-of-mouth. Think of how much advertising it takes to make up for a bad review or blog comment on the Internet. In some cases, no amount of advertising can make up for distrust.

It costs 5 times as much to get a new customer than to get an existing customer to buy again. If you work with customers — or if your organization has any type of customers (and all do, I think) — the most valuable thing you can keep in mind is that actions speak louder than words!

*Find out how to customize these tips to your situation; contact the author [lynn.hunsaker@clearaction.biz](mailto:lynn.hunsaker@clearaction.biz).*