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Improve Customer Experiences by Borrowing Ideas

by Lynn Hunsaker

Creativity is essential in our highly competitive business environment. As technology and options expand, customers' expectations for higher value are always rising. Companies that use creativity to understand, anticipate, and exceed customer expectations are the companies that grow, keep jobs, and thrive.



To win higher share-of-wallet from customers, avoid the temptation to simply charge them for things that used to be free. And avoid the temptation to copy your competitors' desperate moves. We see this rampantly in the airline industry. Not only is it a nuisance for customers, but it also saps out whatever fun there used to be in doing business with those companies.

Borrowing ideas from other industries and disciplines is one of the best ways to make breakthrough improvements. I recently participated in a panel discussion for a medical center that wants to improve customer experience and profitability. Some ideas we considered included:

- Texting customers, to reduce waiting time: Some airlines are calling or texting passengers whenever a gate change or similar modification in plans occurs — this reduces uncertainty, anxiety, and wasted effort and time for customers. For a medical center, patients could wait in their car or be productive instead of sitting in a (perceived) germ-filled waiting area.
- Providing kiosks, to process arrivals and payments: Some stores, libraries, hotels and airlines use kiosks for self-service processing of check-out or check-in. For a medical center, patients could swipe their membership card to alert the doctor they've arrived at the appointment, avoiding the need to wait in line for the receptionist.
- Valet parking, for easy in-and-out: Restaurants and hotels make it easy for customers to get down to business (or pleasure, rather) by bypassing the process of finding a parking space and walking. For a medical center, patients could better manage their on-time arrival and reduce sometimes painful walking, and parking congestion for other patients is reduced.

These are just a few examples. But what if your company — and the airlines — begins to look around with an open mind at what's working well for other industries and disciplines? You may very well find lucrative paths to differentiate your customer experience in ways that delight customers. And you may also find some creative ways to add revenue streams that customers will gladly pay for, because of the additional value you're providing.

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