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Inventing Great Customer Experiences

by Lynn Hunsaker

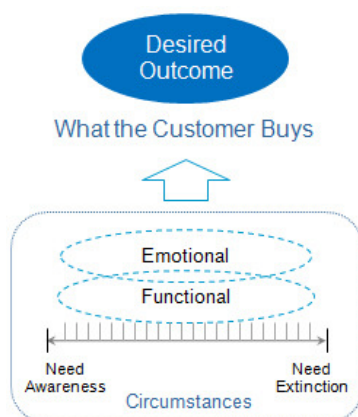
Every person in an organization is needed for customer experience innovation. That's because customer expectations and competitive offerings are always on the rise. Your processes, policies, skills, and motivations have a lot to do with keeping customers coming back — and even more to do with customers deciding not to come back.



Think of your own situation as a customer — whenever you've decided not to go back to a certain product or service or place, it was usually because you were turned off by a process, policy, skill, or motivation, right?

For example, at Procter & Gamble — the company that makes Tide, Duracell, Cover Girl, Pampers, Pringles, and much more — every one of their 100,000-plus employees is expected to continually innovate customer experience. Those employees work in a manufacturing company, not stores. So how do they innovate great customer experiences? They do it by developing new product ideas, cutting cycle time and costs, improving skills, creating new ways for customers to access value, and making processes and policies more customer-friendly.

How do you invent great customer experiences?



1) Find out what *outcomes* customers expect. This is different from product or service features. Those are just means-to-an-end. The outcome is what the customer really buys.

2) Find out how customers make *value judgments* of each outcome. This is different from satisfaction levels. They want outcome A to be minimized, or outcome B to be increased — get the customers' wording for this, and maintain that wording to measure your performance.

3) Find out #1 and #2 for the *whole customer experience* — from the point when the customer becomes aware of a need through the point when the customer no longer perceives that need.

4) Think about your role in helping the company succeed on #1 and #2 and #3 above. You do play a role in customer experience. Discuss it with your peers. Make good things happen.

5) Track the customer's value quotient: the ratio of desired outcomes to undesired outcomes. This gives you an idea of how much value versus hassle the customer sees. Customer behavior follows this automatic benefit-cost analysis.

6) Monitor your motives. If your primary reason for any decision or behavior truly has the customer's best interest (see #1 and #2 above) at heart, then you're on-track. On the other hand, if your own gain is the primary reason, with customer's gain as a secondary reason, then you're on the wrong track.

7) Borrow ideas from others. Not just competitors, or you'll only be a me-too company. Be curious and open-minded about how other industries and cultures do things. Learn from them, adapt and experiment, and use what works.

8 Be creative. "There's this common perception that some people are creative and most aren't. That's just not true. As a leader, you want everyone in your organization producing novel and useful ideas. The fact is, all the research in this field shows that anyone with normal intelligence is capable of doing some degree of creative work."¹

9) Love complaints. When a customer takes the time to share suggestions or vent frustrations, you can bet they're representative of a larger number of customers that share that sentiment — or soon will, unless an improvement occurs. Better for you to hear it and make the change before your competitors take that revenue stream.



10) Make quarterly — or more frequent — assessments of your policies, processes, skills, motivations, products and services. Assess them from the customer's viewpoint. Always keep on the lookout for ways to invent great customer experiences.

¹Teresa Amabile, head of Entrepreneurial Management at Harvard Business School.

These tips come from the e-handbook, *Innovating Superior Customer Experience*. See the webcast and sample book pages at clearaction.biz/innovation. Your 20% discount code is "ology".

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