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Customer Experience Measurement

The difference between your company and your competitors is contracting quickly if it hasn't entirely vanished already. How are you going to catch the attention of new customers? How are you going to keep your current customers coming back? The habits that will make your organization successful in this new world of business relationships will not be driven by metrics alone. A small change in the percentage of your customer turnover can have a striking effect on your bottom line. How can you increase your customer allegiance? Product and price don't have the influence they once had because customers can surf dozens of websites with the click of a mouse for the best price. How do you get them to come to you first? How do you make them continue to want to do business with you?



The answer is to start listening to them. Feel their pain and understand what they experience when they touch your people in your call center or any other part of your organization. Numbers alone can't help you qualify that. They will help you tune up the systems and optimize your representatives but they won't tell you what your customer thought of the experience. The numbers are the equivalent of feeding the starving people in Somalia. It is a band-aid that provides short-term relief but in order to solve the underlying issues of famine, you need to teach the population how to produce their own food effectively. In your call center you need tools that allow you to fully understand the customer's entire experience.

Customer experience measurement is a tactic that allows for the consolidation and analysis of all of your contact call center information, including the actual representative-to-customer conversation. Mining this data can provide a better understanding of how your customers perceive your organization. This knowledge can then be used to organize your systems and people around customer expectations.

The challenge is in integrating all of the information generated by the different call center mediums and systems. This can become a tremendous assignment and as call centers become multi-media centers the task becomes even more difficult. Each system has its own format and purpose. In order to understand the experience of the customer, call center leaders have to be able to make sense of this mass of information. If you have several call centers, the challenges increase exponentially as companies often find themselves dealing with different platforms, different processes, different levels of technology, and so forth.

In an earlier examination of strategy we took a look at Southwest Airlines. Let's take another look at that organization for an example of customer experience management. Southwest offers low fares, many older airports, and a much lower level of services than other airlines. In spite of this they consistently top the list of best airlines for customer service, and as a result, that airline is growing fast and is profitable. How is this? Their metrics are good, but more importantly they do it with an attitude, with style and confidence, and they understand that it's not about the assigned seating or the wonderful airline food. With them, it's about the experience. They make it memorable. Their employees have personalities. They interview for that quality because it's that important to them. It's also something that can't be measured by a metric. I'm a frequent flyer at Southwest and am a big fan of the airline just because of that experience. I don't have a clue how to put a number on it though. It's there though and as a result, Southwest owns their loyal customers in a way that any company would envy.

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Now I'm going to ask you to take a deep breath, close your eyes, put down your reports and numbers, and think about your call center from your customer's frame of mind. What do they think of you? Are you world-class? Are you where you feel you need to be? Are you able to see the value in going beyond your metrics and looking at the customer's experience?

In another earlier article we looked at efficient versus responsive supply chains. The same principles are at play here. Are you looking for an efficient or responsive call center? Consultants will show you several ways to gain efficiency. The only problem is they won't be there when your customers experience the drop in responsiveness. They won't be there when your newly found efficiency begins to turn customers away. This is a tradeoff you need to examine and understand before you set out on a search for customer experience measurement. It's going to involve some serious breaking with tradition and rethinking how you evaluate the success and true costs of your call center. Are you saving thousands in staffing costs yet losing millions in sales?

At the end of the day, a successful call center will be one that provides the best customer experience and as such, it cannot be driven by numerical measurements alone. Our auditing process can get you started but you can use the concept of experience and captured skills sets as the means to recognize the hard-to-quantify realities surrounding the human interactions between your representatives and your customers. To own your customer at a different level than in the past you need new tools and ideas on which to base your concept of call center effectiveness and efficiency.

So what does good look like in a world-class contact center? It's hard to say because they all have their own different business challenges. That being said though, seasoned and experienced people will know one when they see one.



Our staff development and organization development work in this area is focused on this very different concept. Please contact us if you would like to learn more. It's hard work and a different approach than most have seen in the past.....but it works.