

Do Your Customers Say, “Wow!” or “Whoa?” (673 words)

Everybody talks about delivering great customer service. But do we really deliver exceptional customer service? Keep in mind, our customers are not just comparing us to our competition, they're comparing us to everybody. When it comes to customer service, we either exceed the expectations of our customers, or we don't. There are several points of encounter where we can improve the customer's experience. These check questions will help us Identify opportunities.

If I was to ask you to give me a poor example of customer service, you could probably provide several examples of poor customer service experiences. The behaviors of poor customer service include; they didn't call back, they didn't show up, they didn't deliver when they said they would, and they weren't on time. This causes a tremendous amount of frustration and anger for our customers. When there has been a bad experience, customers start to look for other suppliers or people to do business.

If I was to ask you to share positive examples of great customer service, you might have a harder time thinking of any. It is often difficult to recall recent experiences when someone demonstrated great customer service. We can provide great customer service by calling back, by showing up, by doing what we said we were going to do, and by ending the conversation or transaction by providing a sincere “thank you.” If we focus on each point of encounter with our customers, we can provide a consistent world-class customer service experience.

There are several points of encounter where we can improve the customer's experience. The first customer encounter occurs when people become aware of what we do or hear about our organization. It might be a referral, some great marketing materials, or an internet search. Often, they visit our web site. Is our web site easy to navigate? Is it clear what we do and who we are?

Then they might contact us by phone. Are we professional? Are we friendly? What's the image that we are creating over the phone? Has every employee received effective telephone skills training?

Sometimes our customers get a chance to meet us in person. Do we meet that expectation? Do we look the part? Are we well-groomed? Do we seem to match the organization and our brand?

The next point of encounter is when people wait to be served. How long do they have to wait? What happens in the meantime? What do they hear? What do they smell? What do they see? We want to be careful to create an environment that supports our professional image.

Next our customers are introduced to our products and services. How well-scripted is the information? How professionally is it presented? Does the information precisely describe the benefits?

The next customer experience is when the customer actually gets a chance to try our products and services. Do we provide them enough information to be successful? Do they feel comfortable calling us if they have any questions?

Next, they experience our follow up. Do we connect with them over the next two to five days with an email, or a phone call, or even drop something in the mail, so they know we haven't forgotten?

Finally, they experience how we solve problems. Do we have a system, not just a smile? Do we have a process that seems to be flexible and fair? Are we empathetic when listening and thoughtful when making suggestions?

A minor adjustment in our customer encounters will have a major impact on our customer relationships. The goal is to become more effective in each one of these points of encounter and create exceptional experiences that will truly demonstrate world-class customer service. The bottom line is we either meet or exceed the customer's expectations or we don't. People either do business with us or they will do business with somebody else. So, do your customers say, "Wow" or "Whoa?"

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