

What if delivering WOW customer service is all wrong for your business?

When thinking about customer loyalty in your business, ask yourself the following question:

How often do you and your team find ways to smooth/ease the way your customers are looked after, when your products or services fail to meet customer expectations?

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STOP believing that WOW-focused customer care really works

START by making your customer care as effort-free as possible

1. The one 'BREAKTHROUGH' question you must ask to make sure you and your team tap into the maximum customer loyalty from your customer service process

How often do you and your team find ways to smooth/ease the way your customers are looked after, when your products or services fail to meet customer expectations?

Where is the value in this question?

Because customer expectations are always changing (getting more demanding) you and your business can't afford to be complacent. If you don't regularly upgrade the way you deal with disappointed customers, you run the risk of bad word-of-mouth hitting the social-media-soapbox and impacting on your revenues and profits negatively.

The value in this question prompts you to challenge your current customer service approach and do what you can to make it easier for your customers to resolve their issues about your business, your products and your services.

The question is challenging you to plan a 'time-out' so that you can start a process of smoothing your customer care processes, systems, scripts and customer responses.

Below you'll find exercises and insights to share with your team, so that you too can tap into the power of 'effortless customer service'. Then you'll be pro-actively working on the future success of your business not just getting today's work done and dusted.

IMPORTANT: This question prompts you to set a day and time for working on building customer loyalty through effortless customer service. The loyalty gained from this could well give you and your business a competitive advantage as so few businesses take this seriously enough.

It's just so easy to get side-tracked by the customer delight stories the press are always happy to share. But the hard research points to making issue resolution easy – effortless – it's where the big business gains are to be had. Businesses that cracked the 'effortless' code were 31% more successful when it comes to repurchase rates and positive word of mouth.

2. Customer perception matters more (65.4%) than customer effort (34.6%)...

It's how your customers feel during their customer service interaction that matters more than the actual effort they put in.

It's their subjective impression of how your customer service team make customers feel that matters most. 'Effort' is 1-third, 'Feel' is 2-thirds.

To have the biggest impact on customer loyalty change the words your team use with your customers.

Two quotes from Matthew Dixon's book 'The Effortless Experience' show the way:

"We see our best [customer service] reps really taking control of the conversation – they anticipate moments when the customer is likely to have a negative reaction, and do their best to get ahead of it."

"There are lots of times when we can't give the customer exactly what they want. But our best reps guide customers to a point where they feel pretty good about an outcome that most likely wasn't their first choice."

What these customer service reps are doing is managing or engineering a conversation using carefully chosen words and phrases to improve the way a customer interprets what they're being told.

The skills needed to 'engineer' these customer conversations have a number of components:

- Advocacy – taking the customer's side when investigating options/solutions
- Positive Language – avoiding "no, can't, won't, never"
- Anchoring expectations – so that customers can compare a worse outcome to the one on offer
- Actively guiding the customer – rather than responding or reacting to what they say
- Anticipating emotional responses – recognising they are managing emotions and acknowledging these
- Pre-emptively offering solutions (rather than reacting to customer responses) to find mutually beneficial resolution
- Avoid explaining why they can't have what they want



Effortless Customer Service

Support tools and resources

In chapters 4 and 5 of Dixon's book you'll find a huge amount of insight, explanation and language solutions to help you further.

And if you want more learning on the specific skills and the best people for customer service check out these two resources from the Harvard Business Review:

Webinar – <https://hbr.org/webinar/2016/12/how-to-fix-customer-service>

A promotional graphic for a Harvard Business Review webinar. At the top left is the Harvard Business Review logo. To the right, the word 'WEBINARS' is written in a large, light blue, sans-serif font. Below this, the title 'How to Fix Customer Service' is displayed in a bold, black, sans-serif font. To the left of the title is a small square portrait of Matthew Dixon, a man with glasses and a dark suit. To the right of the portrait, the text 'TODAY'S SPEAKER' is written in a small, black, sans-serif font, followed by 'Matthew Dixon' in a slightly larger, black, sans-serif font. At the bottom left, the date 'DECEMBER 14, 2016' is written in a small, red, sans-serif font. At the bottom right, the text 'Sponsored by' is written in a small, black, sans-serif font, followed by the LogMeIn logo.

Article - <https://hbr.org/2017/01/kick-ass-customer-service>

3. “No” is a complete no-no!

What happens when a father says “NO” to a toddler in a supermarket wanting the toy or the sweets on display at the cash till?

Three options are available to the toddler:

- a. Accept the response and move on!
- b. Go ask mum
- c. Kick and scream their displeasure hoping to turn “no” into “yes”

In a customer service interaction using “no” is likely to create variations on the toddler’s option 3:

- a. An emotional argument with your team
- b. Hang up and try again later (hoping for a better response from someone else)
- c. Ask to speak with a manager
- d. Threaten to never do business with you ever again

All four options are less than desirable and will undoubtedly generate disloyalty and a possible stream of negative social media coverage.



For a visceral but entertaining insight into the use of the word “no” in a hostage negotiation check out this 2-minute clip from the excellent movie ‘The Negotiator’. At the very least you’ll want to avoid saying “no” to your customers!

WARNING: This video contains offensive language right from the outset!

Your customers aren’t likely to be as frightening as Samuel L. Jackson, but the message is crystal clear:

*“Eliminate no from your vocabulary, Farley. **Never use no, don’t, won’t, or can’t. It eliminates options...**”*

Responding positively is the key, without sounding patronising or misleading.

Instead of Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– “we don’t have the item in stock”– “we will have the stock available in just 5 days time”
Instead of Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– “we can’t get an engineer out to you today”– “we can get an engineer out to you tomorrow, which is more convenient for you, morning or afternoon?”
Instead of Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– “you can’t transfer funds from your online account because it isn’t authorised”– “It looks like we need to get that account authorised for you, then we’ll be able to transfer the funds”
Instead of Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– “I don’t have authority to talk about price”– “Please let me get our sales department to help you on price, is it convenient for you now or should I have someone call you back?”
Instead of Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– “Your order won’t be ready until next week”– “We can get your order ready as early as next week”
Instead of Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– “you didn’t get your order in on time”– “to allow timely delivery please submit your order before 4pm”

Saying “no” is such a high perceived ‘effort’ trigger so it pays to avoid it at all costs. Again check out Dixon’s book for much more detail on the use of language engineering. It’s a skill that can be learned.

4. Case studies from famous names...

Ask people who they will never deal with again and they'll easily list all the businesses that have upset them. Ask them to list the businesses that have totally wowed them and most people will struggle listing these – unless from a recent experience.

It's all a dark art...

When it comes to customer service we can recall the good stuff, but there is nothing like the human brain for remembering the worst of the worst customer service we receive. What can be “just a mistake” or bad service by a company, can lose you a customer. But mistake after mistake after mistake can lose you a customer for life and turn your social media into a social nightmare!

Let's talk about our relationship with British Telecom, let's face it, they are masters of the sales pitch about how much money you will save with them but it's like mastering the dark arts when it turns sour and you try to leave them.

Here is some sound advice, buyers should always remember when it comes to telecommunications, “breaking up is hard to do”. The angelic smiles and wonderful promises of the sales people make it sound like the perfect relationship. But within weeks the bills started rolling in at double what we had expected, our “perfect partner” was costing way too much but leaving them was impossible due to the commitment of a contract that was flashed like a shiny engagement ring when we threatened to leave.

Plagued by slow internet speeds, high costs, being billed for an extra line we didn't have, being cut off by mistake when they closed down the wrong line... it was truly a turbulent relationship for our business. But I will say it again, breaking up is hard to do!

Our chance at escape finally came in the form of the sales team, as our contract came up for renewal. The options of remaining in the relationship were outlined to us. But not being happy, we decided to look around for someone new, someone more reliable, not as expensive each month. Yes, we were entering into the dark place of “breaking up with BT”.

We told them it was over, told them we had found someone new, told them “It's not us, it's you” and politely listened to the numerous calls promising they would change if only we gave them another chance. But we were steadfast, we were leaving.

The new supplier took on the job of the change over and our new equipment arrived, the old equipment returned. Our one month period of notice became three from BT. But “breaking up is hard to do” and we let it go to be nice (and truthfully trying to resolve why our one month notice was now three months was just too much effort!). Our new supplier was indeed more reliable, much cheaper and we loved the new equipment. But BT hadn't given up and gone away as we had thought. On checking the bank statements, BT were still clinging on and sending us bills for a service we were no longer using.

There was nothing for it, we had to call them and complain. Call after call, to department after department, minutes became hours and hours became days whilst trying to stop the bills. The angelic sales people shrugged off our requests for assistance. We were nothing but a number, passed around, cut off frequently, whilst on hold and unloved by any department. Except for the money, they still loved our money, that was still leaving our account each month. We turned to the online help facility, the problem was identified and a refund promised. But nothing happened and the money was still being taken. We turned to social media, surely this would help... but as a business customer they washed their hands of us quickly. The business team were our only redress. Emails went unanswered for months, calls were not returned. We were several hundred pounds out of pocket and no one would take ownership.

And that's when our patience finally broke. The hunted became the hunter. We searched for a different resolution. Then we found this:-

<https://www.thisismoney.co.uk/money/bills/article-1724511/How-to-complain-to-the-chief-executive.html>

A list of the CEO contact details for the companies that people most want to complain too. And there was the CEO of BT's personal email.

Simple?

You would think so, but not so much. This CEO does indeed deal with complaints, in fact he has a whole TEAM to deal with complaints escalated to him. They were polite, we finally had a NAME of someone to take ownership. Someone who acknowledged our suffering for the eight months this terrible breakup had taken so far. We were promised a refund. We were billed a further £300. We didn't give up, we wouldn't let go. We were promised a refund again. We were billed another £130. Yet again we refused to accept this and finally after over eight months and over a thousand pounds in wrong bills we finally got our money back.

A truly painful breakup. But we are finally free. But it's an experience that we won't be willing to experience again. Such a sour taste has this breakup left with us that BT won't be considered by any of us in the future.

Painful as this was, we wish BT all the happiness for the future, because that's what nice people always say after a breakup.

Amazon shows us the way!

I purchased some headphones from Amazon in February for my son's birthday. They were expensive, as headphones go. Not 'Beats' but certainly not the cheapest. He used them 3 or 4 times a week, just plugging them into his playing console or phone. He took care of them, even putting a hook up to put them on after use.



Effortless Customer Service

Support tools and resources

One day in October they just stopped working, he asked me to look at them and I noticed that the wire near the jack point had come loose and you could see the cables.

I took a photo of the affected area and sent this online with an explanation to Amazon.

The response came within 3 hours, with an apology, an offer of a full refund (including the postage) and a postage free label for me to return the item within 10 days. The refund was in my bank account the following day. I did not have the box they were supplied in, but they just wanted the item to be securely packaged.

I returned the item and within 3 days had an email to say the return had been acknowledged and the refund stood.

Could that be any simpler... effortless!

Next and British Gas change their customer service procedure

Nothing annoys a customer more than being on hold, we actually dread ringing some companies because of the length of time we know we are going to be waiting on the phone, time we will never get back, made even worse by the fact that we are often ringing to complain.

British Gas were one of the worst. Complaints about the length of time people waited were so bad that it was actually featured on the 'Watchdog' programme.

And using hold music or the line 'your call is important to us we know you are waiting, a member of our team will be with you shortly' can really make anybody's blood boil!

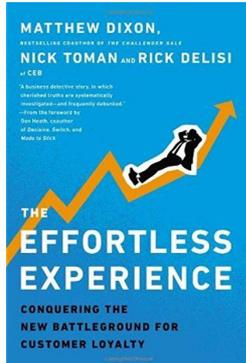
But... British Gas and Next have done something about this.

You call them, you are logged in a queue and then you are given the choice – you can continue to hold or you keep your place in the queue and they phone you back!

Next even tell you approximately how long it will be before this call is made, leaving you to carry on with whatever you were doing...

5. The book and resources to help you and your team better apply 'effortless customer service' to your business

Check out the book by Matthew Dixon and friends called 'The Effortless Experience – Conquering The New Battleground For Customer Loyalty' that has inspired this Business Breakthrough report and the supporting tools and resources.



Dan Heath, co-author of bestselling books 'SWITCH' and 'MADE TO STICK' writes about Dixon's book:

"What if the Holy Grail of service isn't customer delight but customer relief – the simple relaxing of the shoulders that comes from having your problem handled quickly and smoothly?"

"...what every business book should be like: stuffed with practical advice, well supported by research, and written to keep you eagerly flipping the pages."

You can find a copy of the book here – <https://amzn.to/2Gz7CaF>

Listen to the author share many insights about customer care in this video – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b2zhr3W5GhI>

