

Moments of Truth

Products alone can no longer sustain a business as a market leader, nor can products alone be depended upon to build a small business. Companies across all industries must treat customer service as their primary product - one that can be constantly improved.

Providing quality service does not simply provide a competitive edge; it is the Critical Element. Some experts like to call them Moments of Truth. A high quality service encounter raises expectations for all future encounters.

Jan Carlzon, former President of Scandinavian Airline System (SAS) called "Moments of Truth" - opportunities. He says, "A Moment of Truth is an episode in which the customer comes into contact with any aspect of the company, however remote, and thereby has an opportunity to form an impression." Each customer contact is a unique, unrepeatable opportunity for a company to differentiate itself from the competition. Every decision should be made with the customer in mind and viewed as another opportunity to make a favourable impression. Unfortunately, failure to satisfy a customer on any Moment of Truth will quickly destroy the customer's memory of good service. On the other hand, getting it right can erase all the wrongs that the customer previously experienced.

The two crucial components of the critical element include: results and process. To focus and manage our customer's Moment of Truth, we can use a simple five-step process:

1. Identify and prioritize each customer episode or contact. This means thinking about every time you come in contact with an internal or external customer either in person, by phone or email, or through your company process or system. You should then determine which of these customer contacts would have the most impact on customer satisfaction.
2. Develop alternative customer responses. Think of some alternative ways you could improve your response in each of these customer contact opportunities.
3. Decide which responses will delight your customer. Choose the response that will most likely pleasantly surprise your customer and thereby not just meet, but exceeds their expectations. "Delight" Moments of Truth provide unexpected, thoughtful, delightful experiences for the customer. Knowing your customers likes and dislikes makes this easier.
4. Create a service standard to ensure basic customer satisfaction. When a response delights your customer, think about writing it down and using it for all of your customers. That's when it becomes a standard. Be careful, after a customer has become accustomed to this "delightful" Moment of Truth, they may begin to expect the experience and this becomes a "basic" Moment of Truth. Exceeding expectations requires a continual desire to improve. You will need to remain creative to continue to delight the customer.
5. Measure customer satisfaction on each Moment of Truth. Find a way to continually check to see if it's time to improve or change your standard response. Strive to provide breakthrough quality service on specific Moments of Truth by using the personal thoughts and creativity of everyone in your organization.

Reflect on what the competition does to set their customer service bar high. Ask your customers what they expect. Ask your teammates what works for them. If you work to merely satisfy your customers and fall short, you will have an angry or dissatisfied customer. Working to delight customers means going beyond meeting basic expectations.

Exercise

Identify a memorable moment of truth that you knew impacted on the customer.

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Great Ideas From Others

Record other people's ideas that you can incorporate into your business.

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- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7

