

Satisfied customers leave, but raving fans stay...

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ABSTRACT

In today's world of fierce competition, your ability to deliver extraordinary customer service will be key to setting your business apart from your competitors. It is no longer enough to "merely" satisfy your customers. "Merely satisfied" customers will eventually leave, and take their business elsewhere. To stay ahead of the game, you must turn your "merely satisfied" customers into "raving fans". Your "raving fans" will be the life-line of your business. Your "raving fans" will ultimately be your loyal customer base, and will stay with you, regardless of one poor experience, or better options, or a couple of business mistakes. It is vital that the primary focus of your business be on customer loyalty, and not just satisfaction.

This paper will explain how to turn your "merely satisfied" customers into "raving fans". It will also show the positive impact your "raving fans" will have on the ultimate success of your business in today's competitive world.

INTRODUCTION

This paper has been inspired by the book "Raving Fans: A Revolutionary approach to customer service" by Kenneth Blanchard and Sheldon Bowles.

Customer service is somewhat similar to an online consumer auction, such as eBay. In an eBay auction, the seller sets a minimum price of the product. If there are not many bids to buy the item, then the seller is satisfied with a bid above the minimum price set. Once you bid above the minimum price, you cannot assume that you won the bid. The seller will gladly take the product to someone who will provide a better price.

Similarly, in the customer service industry, the customer sets a minimum expectation of the service expected. If there is not much competition, then the customer is satisfied with the basic expectation set. If you are making a customer satisfied based on the minimum expectation set, then you cannot assume that you have a long-lasting partnership with the customer. The customer will gladly take their business to someone who will provide a better service.

CREATING A RAVING FAN CULTURE

Align with customers' vision

First, you must create a vision for your business, and actively pursue it. Your employees must believe in it and work together to make it happen. Next, be sure your vision is consistently in-line with that of your customers. It is crucial that you are aware of the changing needs and expectations of your customers, and that you adapt to those changes accordingly.

Customer feedback is a must in determining whether your vision is aligned with that of your customers. Gathering consistent customer feedback will be essential in gaining valuable insights into how your customers view your products and services, customer support, and business as a whole. In return, you will have the information you need to make smart decisions, and to plot the future course of your business products and services. Below are some examples of positive customer feedback from customers:

“Thank you for your hard work. This output is exactly what we requested, and it was delivered much quicker than expected!”

“It has been a pleasure to collaborate on this project with you, and we really enjoyed working with you. You possess the expertise, knowledge and collaboration skills needed in tackling complex work. We welcome future opportunities to work with you again.”

“Thank you again for your speedy, effective and friendly help today!”

“I heard that you are on the west coast. Despite the time difference, you still managed to make this urgent delivery in a timely manner! This accentuates your dedication and commitment to this project.”

“Even though you had a pre-planned vacation scheduled for today, you graciously offered to cancel your plans so as to ensure the project delivery date was met. We appreciate your sacrifice. We feel privileged to have the opportunity to work with you in the future.”

“Thank you so much for the quick turnaround on these! Our team continues to be impressed by the speed and quality with which our stats group can deliver results.”

“Tom took on this task with his usual enthusiasm and vigor, and it is a pleasure working with him.”
“The reports were due by the end of the day on Friday, but you delivered the work by morning, and even asked if I needed more help. I am very impressed with your dedication, proactive attitude and consistency.”

Deliver more than promised (stay consistent; then add more value)

Consistency and flexibility create credibility in the eyes of your customer. You should be innovative and creative in meeting their needs and expectations. Your business should continually seek out ways to enhance the experience of your customers. Going above and beyond will ensure long lasting business relationships. To create, maintain, and attract raving fans, it is as simple as showing them genuine interest, anticipating their needs, expressing empathy, communicating with them clearly, and most of all, making them feel and be special.

Diversify your workforce; create positive employee engagement

It is important to create a diversified workforce in your business. A diversified culture encompasses age, cultural background, physical abilities and disabilities, race, religion, gender, and sexual orientation. By creating and embracing a diversified culture, your business will benefit in countless ways. These benefits include better customer representation, quicker and more complete problem solving, improved innovation and creativity.

Employee engagement is vital. If your employee engagement is strong, then it will be reflected in how your customer service is delivered. Below are a few guidelines to improve employee engagement:

- Strengthen your relationship with your employees
- Clearly communicate expectations and goals
- Provide resources to achieve the results
- Encourage employee development
- Recognize top performers
- Perform frequent team building exercises

Ask them what they want

It is important to continually listen to what your employees and customers are communicating. Conducting a survey is one of several tools that will provide you with valuable employee and customer feedback.

Reward your employees and best customers

Acknowledge and reward employees that go above and beyond, such as those with outstanding customer feedback. If you recognize your employees, they will continue to work hard for you and your customers, and will remain motivated and encouraged. For example:

“Did anyone else assist in this project? I want to ensure all those involved in this project receive credit when this is presented at the leadership meeting.”

Your best customers should also be recognized. They are your true raving fans, and their loyalty to your products and services is priceless.

Here are some of the recognition programs which we have for employees/customers:

- Spotlight recognition (Employees)
- Quarterly internal newsletters (Employees)
- Monthly team meeting recognitions (Employees)
- Work anniversary celebrations (Employees)
- Partnership engagement award (Customer)

CONCLUSION

Every business has the ability to turn a “merely satisfied” customer into a “raving fan” customer. It will be your “raving fans” that ultimately keep you competitive in today’s business world. It all begins with a vision. A vision that is consistently aligned with that of your customers.

REFERENCES

Book - Raving Fans: A Revolutionary approach to customer service by Kenneth Blanchard and Sheldon Bowles.

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