

What Customers Want

An Article by Derek Hendrikz © 2006

URL: www.derekhendrikz.com
E-mail: hello@derekhendrikz.com
(T) +27 82 781 4049



How do we deliver an excellent service to our customers? Moreover how do we become a customer driven organisation? The question that each employee has to answer is, 'what do our customers want?' Here's the catch – what customers want changes as the world evolves.

Customer service probably started out during the agricultural age, where humans started to organise food by planting crops and breeding cattle. It was no longer necessary to kill your own food. Farming emerged and creatures that we today know by the name of customers were born. A few hundred years later the industrial age emerged, we have moved past the point of organising food, and now started to organise people. As years went by we moved into the information age, where internet, cell phones, and satellite television keep us constantly informed. We've moved past that. We are now in a world where microbiology and microscopic machinery reigns. We have entered the nanotech age, and your customer has become what we call the nanotech customer. These creatures will be the ones that eventually have to sponsor your existence. They are fussy and particular people who are not satisfied with anything but the best.

The customer of the future wants customisation; they are not satisfied with standardisation. They want things that satisfy their very specific needs. Have you noticed how hard Microsoft is working to customise your software whilst you are working on it? Although I must say that this sometimes becomes awfully irritating. 'It seems like you are writing a suicide note, click here for assistance' or 'You have performed an illegal operation, your computer will explode in 30 seconds'.

Customers want speed. We live in a world where time is always against us. I don't want to wait for my hamburger, I don't want to stand at a queue in the bank, and I don't want you to get back to me later. I want service and I want it now.

The future customer wants to trust you; they want to know that they can rely on you. As your customer I don't only buy your products, I also buy your values. Most of you have seen BMW and Mercedes Benz advertisements. Next time look closely, these companies do not sell their cars by giving you specs on the engines, they sell you values such as reliability, safety and quality. Insurance companies do not sell policies they sell peace of mind.

The future customer wants convenience. Buying bread, milk and cigarettes is not the most important event of my day, and the retailer is certainly not doing me a favour by selling it to me. Time is important to me and I want to get hold of these items 24-hours a day, one block away from home. I don't care whether my retailer smiles at me and greets me in a friendly manner, what I want is my stuff, and I want it fast. The other day I phoned a land line telephone company, whose name I will keep anonymous. What amazed me most was when the person on the other end of the line answered by saying 'good day sir,

how can I provide you with an excellent service' and then went on to give me the worst possible service that you could imagine. The thing is that I don't care about your nonsense on how important I am to you. Show me by making our interaction fast and convenient. You see, I have other things to do besides wasting time at your company, standing in long queues and filling in incomprehensible forms.

Lastly the future customer wants things dirt cheap. We live in a world where there are many things to buy. Make it affordable. If you want to turn your customers into raving fans, then start customising for them, do what you do with speed, be reliable, give your customers convenience, and make it affordable. You cannot decide to become customer driven because your customers are the reason of your existence, therefore you are customer driven, whether you like it or not.

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