

# Impress for success

“ If scientists ever find out where the center of the universe is, some people will be disappointed that they’re not it ”

Customers are opinion multipliers, both in a positive and a negative sense. They pass on positive and negative perceptions to others by word of mouth. When negative, it can be destructive. When positive, it is preciously constructive and the lowest-cost manner of promoting a service or business.

Customers want to be impressed. After all, that is what they are paying for. Acquiring new customers is more difficult and costly than keeping existing ones. Losing an existing customer is twice as expensive: for one, it is a loss for the company, and two, a replacement customer needs to be found.

Customer orientation requires acting the way the customer likes it and wants it! It is not only the offered service that determines success; equally important is the way that customers are treated. Customer friendliness says, “We are happy that you are a customer!” Keep an ideal customer experience in mind and then try to offer that ideal experience. Exceed your customers’ expectations and make them feel great.

If scientists ever find out where the center of the universe is, some people will be disappointed that they’re not it. You may not want to call your business ‘Center-of-the-Universe’ either. But, how about placing a sign at the entrance to remind your customers: ‘Caution! By entering this facility you are becoming the center of our attention’?

Salvador Dali granted Perpignan railway station in France an entry in the history of art when he named it the ‘Center of the Universe’ after having experienced there, in his words, “a sort of cosmic ecstasy, stronger than all those I had before. I experienced a precise vision of the construction of the universe.” There is nothing wrong with giving customers the feeling that they are the center of the universe, without going as far as Dali’s cosmic ecstasy.

The personal performance of any individual involved in a company, from the CEO to the person who cleans the lavatory, contributes to

the combined image of the operation. Anyone who has the slightest contact with a customer is part of the image, even if the cleaning person only says ‘good morning’ with a smile when the customer walks by.

Third-party service providers that offer a complementing service are also part of that total image: operator and catering; FBO and fuel service; airport and security. An FBO can be the beginning or the end of a flight by an operator. The reception of a charter operator’s customer by an FBO employee reflects on the image of the operator. Therefore it is important that operators in general, regardless of where they are based, look for good understanding and cooperation with FBOs and airports and vice versa. A chain is only as strong as its weakest link.

Aunt Emma already knew it years ago. Aunt Emma? ‘Tante Emma Laden’ is the German equivalent of the mom-and-pop store. Can you imagine Tante Emma running her little general store in the village years ago? Pure nostalgia! She knew all her customers by name. She could carry on pleasant chit-chat. She gave the little kids a candy. She knew exactly about the shopping habits of her customers and tried to offer the right range of products. She could even give a cooking recipe or advice on how to remove fat stains.

Shopping at Tante Emma’s store always gave you a good feeling, even if the prices were higher than at the supermarket. Tante Emma exercised customer relations management without having software or a computer. The human contact on offer was special: time to listen, the exchange of whole sentences. The store owner sells a bit of their personality along with the product and service. Isn’t that what is sometimes missing from customer relations? ☺

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