



Building Blocks – Who, What and How

BY MICHELLE PASCOE, international trainer and speaker

How often do you reflect on the fundamental “building blocks” that help us achieve our ultimate quest for business, success and a happy, happening workplace?

It’s all about knowing your customers and their basic needs. But who are our customers? What do they want? And how do we provide that?

For a start you have to re-engage with your customers’ ‘turn-ons’ or ‘turn-offs’. What we expect as customers and in particular our bad experiences is a litmus test for customer service standards and pursuit of customer service excellence.

There are eight basic customer service building blocks in the pursuit of customer service excellence.

Acknowledgement

Customers like to be acknowledged from a warm welcome that says to them: ‘Yes I am important, I am an individual’. I might be part of the masses coming through the door – but it is important that I am acknowledged as an individual of importance.

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A customer needs to be acknowledged even if he or she is not immediately attended to. A simple "be with you in a moment" or even the bare minimum - a nod of the head - is sufficient as I wait at the counter.

Yes, I have been acknowledged and this gives me a positive vibe.

Positive attitude

Your service attitude is your badge of office. As a customer, I do not wish to overhear constant negative conversations between staff about customers, management or their lot in life.

Perhaps I am a friend of that supervisor being demeaned and am offended? Perhaps I have worked a 10-day shift straight - don't remind me of the strain you're under - you think you've got it tough? I am here to have a pleasant experience and I do not need to feast on negative energy."

I have a concern - what I want is to be confronted with an understanding attendant

with a 'can do' attitude. Someone who can initially empathise with me and look for options or solutions.

Friendliness

Closely linked with a positive attitude or demeanour is friendliness. It is the most basic of all customer needs and it is usually associated with being greeted in a polite and courteous manner.

It breaks the ice, invariably gets us in a good frame of mind and subconsciously creates a mindset for the experience yet to be had.

Friendliness is a quality that potentially is the only distinguishing factor between competitors in your industry.

Understanding and empathy

Customers need to feel that they are understood and that their circumstances are appreciated.

I am a customer of this establishment and have a request or a problem. As unique or mundane as it may be I need you to appreciate my problem without criticism or judgement.

Fairness

I need to be treated fairly or at least I need to feel that I am being treated fairly. Fairness is high up on the customers list of needs.

While I am waiting in an orderly manner at the bar, a man queue-jumps in front of me. Observing the action the bar attendant politely asks the man to step back and wait his turn, indicating that I had been patiently waiting before his arrival.

By standing up for what was fair the bar attendant impressed everyone (the pushy man excluded) and fulfilled my need of being treated fairly as a customer.

Information

As a customer I need information. I need to be educated and informed in a sensitive learning environment. Don't lecture me on the merits of long term membership, give me the information and lead me to the logical conclusion.

Don't oversell the three-course lunch option, give me the information in such a way that the average informed mind can make a logical decision.

Options and alternatives

As a customer I need options. I need to feel that there are other avenues available to get what I want accomplished. Don't just give me the one-solution-fits-all circumstance. Give me a choice.

'Yes' syndrome

Don't be lured by the 'yes syndrome'. The folklore that if you give customers what they ask for by saying yes - then you end up with satisfied customers - is just folklore. It is false in many instances.

Customers do ask for what they want, but they usually don't ask for the basic needs.

When did you last enter a pizza bar and ask for a pepperoni pizza and a side order of understanding, friendliness and fairness?

The customer doesn't ask for these needs but misses them when they are not provided.

To provide customer service excellence you need to move beyond the yes folklore and focus on fulfilling all your customers needs.

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