



## **SEE THE WORLD THROUGH YOUR CUSTOMER'S EYES™**

There is a competitive nature to business today, which often causes companies to sing the praises of their own product, service, or technology, as though it were the single answer to all of the world's problems.

But as we have learned, one size does not fit all. And one Seller's product, service, or technology does not solve all problems across the board. In fact, most Buyers feel that their problems, their industries, and their businesses are unique, and Sellers run the risk of insulting them by implying otherwise.

Too often, Sellers are presumptuous, acting like the cavalry riding in to save the day. Why do they do this? Certainly, they want to help. And naturally, they want the work. But we feel that this is a shortsighted way of establishing one's business as a solution to another business's problems.

More so now than ever, business relationships are built on trust, and frankly, trust is in short supply these days. In order to gain that precious trust from your customers and prospects, you must learn to view the world through their eyes. This seemingly simple idea has a number of not-so-simple applications, in the realms of marketing, sales, and customer service.

### **Marketing Through Your Customers' Eyes**

This is frequently where the business relationship begins. Regardless of whether you're talking about direct mail copy, email newsletters, advertisements, product & service sheets, or tradeshow propaganda, your marketing materials are how you introduce your business to a large audience. Many businesses make the mistake of having these pieces be all about their product, service, or technology.

Have you ever been to a party, and you meet someone for the first time, and all they do is talk about themselves? They name-drop, and location-drop, and achievement-

drop. Why do they do this? Maybe because they are egotistical, but more than likely, it is because they are insecure, and all this chest-thumping is designed to somehow get people to like them, or be impressed with them. But it rarely works out that way. Most people are not engaged by the self-centered.

The same rings true for business. If your company's introduction to prospects is a chronicle of your great products and services, and all the big-name customers you've served, the prospects may not see the particular relevance for their business. After all, if their business is not in the same league as your big-name customers, why would they think that big-name solutions would fit them? Chances are, they would keep looking for a solution provider that can address *their* needs, specifically.

How is that done? Marketing-wise, it is simply a matter of taking the focus off of the products or services you can deliver, and focusing on the customer issues that these products or services can address. Build trust by proving that you understand the importance of the customer's problems; you've dealt with similar problems before, and you know that they require special handling. You have some ideas that may be of help to the customer, but you'd like to know more about their business. This opens the door for your salespeople to show that they, too, view the world through the customers' eyes.

### **Sales Through Your Customers' Eyes**

This is often a complicated area for salespeople. By definition, their job is to bring in new business, the more of it, the better. And sooner, rather than later. They need to know what their company's products and services can do, and be confident in the solutions that they provide. All of this trust and relationship stuff sounds good on paper, but in reality, the wheels of commerce need to *move*.

Nonetheless, the most persuasive salesperson does himself or his company no favors by selling someone something that they don't need. What they may gain in the short term will be lost long term. For this reason, it is imperative for salespeople to take the time to learn about their customer's or prospect's business and industry, to ensure that the solutions they suggest are relevant and helpful.

This is done simply by asking questions, hearing the answers, and asking follow-up questions, and hearing those answers. Again, it's about taking the focus off of your own products or services, and spotlighting the customer's issues. What is their pain? They may not always be able to articulate that right away; sometimes the symptoms have to be explained before the cause of the problem can be revealed.

Taking the time to work through a prospect's symptoms to the real cause of their problem does not always guarantee a sale. Indeed, sometimes after going through the exercise of digging beneath the surface problems, you find that the real issue is industry-driven, or personnel-driven. And maybe there's not much that your company's product or service can do about that. But within the big picture, what you have done is helped the prospect identify something they maybe hadn't seen before. And if you didn't earn a sale or commission this time around, maybe you did earn the reputation as a trusted colleague and problem-identifier. That's a reputation that you can live with, and one that will serve you well throughout the course of your career.

### **Service Through Your Customers' Eyes**

In a lot of ways, this is the most intuitive aspect of the business of seeing the world through your customers' eyes. This is because we have *all* been customers, and continue to be customers. We have all been victims of poor or indifferent service. We all know how it feels to give your hard-earned money to some business that could not seem to care less whether you got what you came for, had a positive experience, or resolved the problem you had. We all know that, in almost any business interaction, there are two or three things that the service provider could have done differently, to enhance the level of service and the value of the interaction.

Some of us have been fortunate enough to have experienced *great* service. Interactions where not only did we get what we came for, but the delivery or resolution was handled with courtesy and professionalism, designed with the customer's satisfaction in mind. This is usually a beautiful and memorable experience, and is often used by the recipient as a baseline for all other business interactions. Great service experiences often transcend cost and convenience of location. Great service experiences often earn forgiveness and second chances when a foul-up does occur. A great service experience is the business equivalent to a Hallmark® moment – it lets the customer know you care!

Think of every poor service interaction you've ever been on the receiving end of, and how they made you feel. Vow by all that you hold sacred *never* to allow anyone in your business to deliver that kind of service.

Now think of every positive service experience you've ever had, and how they made you feel. Strive *always* to bring that feeling to your customers in every interaction they have with your business.

You have probably noticed that most great service experiences did not come with a large amount of blood, sweat, toil and tears. In fact, when great service is at its best, it is delivered effortlessly, as if the service provider was actually enjoying it! And there is the key to delivering great service – set up an environment where you and your service personnel know what great service is, have the tools to deliver it, and are rewarded for delivering it. Make it fun, and make it the norm. Conversely, do not reward anything *but* great service delivery. Mediocrity begets mediocrity, and it spreads like wild fire.

Businesses that take the time to view the world through their customers' eyes are usually rewarded by repeat business, customer loyalty and evangelism, and a healthy bottom line.

It doesn't happen overnight, but remember, the farmer who plants his seeds in the spring does not reap his harvest until the autumn. And, the better the care he gives to his crops during the spring and summer, and the better environment he provides for them, the better his rewards at harvest. Similarly, by focusing your efforts on your customers' issues, and striving to create a positive environment for them, you will reap a bountiful harvest.

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