

The Ultimate Customer Experience

(Scott Deming is considered by many in the business world to be one of the most inspirational speakers in the USA today. He is giving a presentation at the SSA's Fall Conference & Trade Show in Las Vegas. Here are two recent excerpts from his Ultimate Success Programs Newsletter which can be found at www.scottdemingesp.com.)



Question: What is an experience? The reason I ask this question is because most people do not truly understand how to define it. And quite honestly, if we can't define what an experience is, how are we going to create the Ultimate Customer Experience?

The way I see it, an experience is a feeling. There are many different types of experiences, from good to bad, from traumatic to transformational. Some experiences are so insignificant we can't even remember them, while others are so powerful they stay with us forever and become part of our belief system. Behavioral change, lasting relationships, evangelical customers, loyal employees, emotional brand building, improved profitability and sustainable success can only occur when the experience is powerful, memorable and truly one of a kind.

I'm guessing whatever it is you sell, you're not the only company on the planet selling it. If that is in fact the case, then you are selling commodities. I don't mean to cheapen or minimize your products or services, but if there are others selling similar products and services, then you are selling commodities. Period. So then, how do you successfully compete if there are others selling the same stuff?

If you sell on price you'll devalue your offering and you'll soon be thought of as a discounter. Discounters don't last very long. If you sell on features and benefits, product details, policies and procedures, you are transactional selling. When you sell stuff in a robotic, transactional manner, there is no emotional connection between you and your customer. When you sell this way, you commoditize you and your company along with your stuff. *You* add nothing to the equation. *You* are not special. *You* are not memorable. *You* and your company are nothing more than a choice, a commodity, just like the stuff you sell.

How To Create the Ultimate Customer Experience

Remember this: If you can't change what you sell, you *must* change how you sell it. The key is connecting with your customers on a personal and emotional level and making the experience personal, meaningful, memorable and one of a kind. If you focus on the relationship rather than the stuff you're selling, something quite magical happens. Your

customers will talk about *you* and *your company* and not about the stuff you sell! When that happens, you've begun to create your emotional brand. When that happens you've turned a typical customer into a loyal evangelist for life! And when people evangelize on your behalf, your brand grows and your success sustains.

What Do You Sell?

First, please understand this very important point—whether you offer self storage, shoes, food, insurance, motorcycles, speaker services, meeting planning, financial services, healthcare, air conditioners, computers or computer software, tractors, fertilizer, telephones or telephone service, gasoline, oil, snacks, coffee or *whatever*—that's not the business you're in! What?! What did he just say? You heard it right.

Question: If you sell technology, such as phones, software, computers, or networking, are you in the "technology business" serving people? If you sell pharmaceuticals, are you in the "drug business" serving people? If you're a financial professional, are you in the "financial business" serving people? If you are a self storage professional selling "self storage services" are you in the "self storage business" serving people? The answer is *no*. You are not in the Stuff and Services business serving people. You're in the people business offering the most unique, friendly, one-of-a-kind "Whatever it is you do" solutions. Once you've finally grasped this concept, you'll better understand the Emotional Branding and Ultimate Customer Experience program, because your focus and your gaze will be on the customer and on the relationship, not on products, services, pricing, features and benefits.

Your Product or Service Here: Whatever goods or services you exchange for currency, these "things" these "commodities," are just some of the many things you have to offer. It's part of your inventory of stuff. Your company may be stocked with stuff, but believe it or not, this is not what you sell. You don't sell stuff, you sell solutions. You sell emotional connections and unique experiences. Your stuff is merely the bridge, the reason for starting the conversation and the relationship with the customer. This stuff tells people like me that you're another possible choice. I might just give you a try. But your stuff merely gets you in the game. I can get this stuff anywhere. In last month's news-

See Demming, page 76

letter we talked about commodities. I'm willing to bet that whatever it is you "sell" it's a commodity. There are plenty of others selling the same stuff, the same commodities. Therefore, you're simply a choice in a sea of choices. I don't need to come to your place to get this stuff. It's available at a lot of places. It's a "commodity." So why then would I choose to buy from you?

But, we promise to be friendly, fairly priced, quick, etc. Doesn't that separate us from our competitors?

The fact that you "hopefully" offer and promise:

- Friendly, courteous, knowledgeable service
- Quick responses
- Attention to detail
- A fair price
- A well trained, motivated staff

...is just the beginning. It's the foundation, the minimum you should be offering to your customers. I wouldn't come to you if you didn't at least offer these minimum buying

experience requirements. These promises get you in the game, along with the stuff you sell. You are still a choice and a commodity until I decide differently. And I won't decide differently until you begin to offer unique solutions—until you transform the moment and improve my life. You may make one sale and even get one or two repeat visits because of your price and list of promises, products and services. But these things alone cannot build customer loyalty and even begin to build your powerful, emotional and sustainable brand. These things alone will not separate you personally and professionally from your competitors. These things alone will not make you a better person. These things alone cannot make the Ultimate Sale.

The Ultimate Sale means you've sold that customer on *you* and only *you*—not on your stuff. And, the Ultimate Sale is what turns a typical customer into a raving, lunatic, loyal evangelist for life. And it is these loyal evangelists who will bring you more business and greater profits. Not just greater profits—Good Profits. ❖

Retail Sales Stink?

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