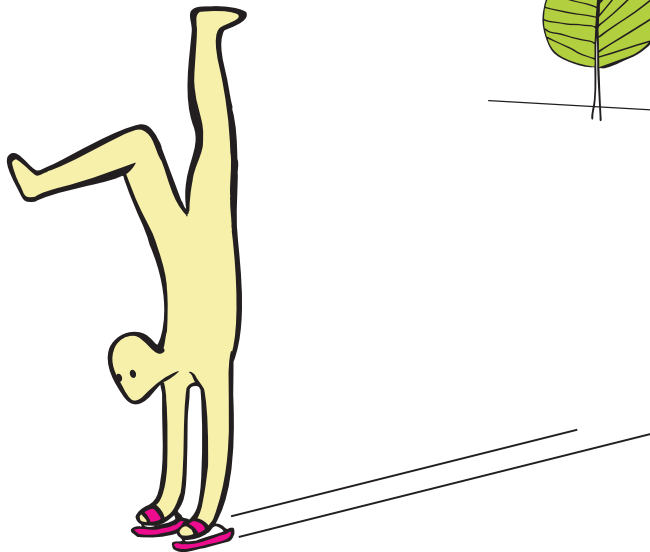


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# Go on - delight your customers

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It's no longer enough to just give good customer service. To guarantee customer satisfaction, increase customer retention and loyalty, you need to exceed expectations and provide 'customer delight'.

Customers are more informed and knowledgeable than ever before. Good customer service is the baseline and expectations are increasing all the time. To meet these requirements businesses need to evolve the way they interact with their customers.

Over the past decade technology has transformed customer service communications. This has led to a consensus that for CRM to produce the desired results, the customer needs a consistent experience regardless of the communication channel used.

Customers need to have the same access to information and services available online as via the phone or by walking into a business location.

Customers expect no-hassle access to product and service information and to be able to act upon it easily. Online, it doesn't matter how flashy an interface is, if a customer can't find information or take action as they wish then the customer relationship will be damaged or at worst, lost.

"Customers expect no-hassle access to product and service information"

Historically, businesses have concentrated too heavily on having a website that looks good without considering the holistic customer experience. In a report published by the Institute of Customer Service called '*Trusting the Internet: developing an e-service Strategy*', Professor Chris Voss of the London Business School identifies a three tier approach for developing an effective strategy.

### **Level One: The expected - a foundation**

As a baseline level of e-service delivery a website should be responsive and easy to navigate, effectively meeting the needs of users and fulfillment.

**Responsiveness:** if a form is submitted then an auto-response should be generated to the customer, if an email is sent then it should be dealt with promptly and professionally.

**Ease of navigation:** the development of an intuitive user interface is based upon how you present the information: develop intuitive ways of navigating, develop a scheme of classification for

web pages, allow bookmarking at appropriate levels, have a consistent approach across all parts of the business and ensure the site is structured and hosted to allow rapid download of content.

**Effectiveness:** Task performance measured by the time it takes the average user to perform the average task on a site, subjective satisfaction with the site and quality of the outcome for the user.

**Fulfillment:** Web customers, given that everything else operates rapidly, expect faster delivery of service.

## **Level Two: Differentiation - having a customer centered service**

To stand above your competitors you need to gain customer trust, provide information and status and offer configuration and customisation features.

**Trust:** Creating trust is one of the major challenges facing brands. It's difficult to gain but easy to lose. The publication of a privacy policy is a must as is the use of a secure certificate for sensitive transactions.

**Information and status:** If you provide relationship data to your customers in a secure manner that

compliments your offline activities your users will find it compelling.

**Configuration and customisation:** Sophisticated online customers expect personally tailored services, from selection of options through to the pricing plan. Behind this, offering businesses need to ensure that their structure is flexible to meet the customer needs and that what they require is feasible.

## **Level Three: Delighting your customers through value added services**

To 'delight' your customers with your online service you need to go beyond customer expectations and provide both proactive service and value-added service.

**Proactive Service:** The ability to analyse customer behaviour provides a number of ways that businesses can provide proactive customer service. A good example is at Amazon.co.uk where the site logs your preferences and presents information on what others with similar tastes are reading.

**Value Added:** There are many examples of how the web provides value added service.

- Businesses providing web-based infrastructures to support service delivery. Video conferencing is a good example.
- Businesses aggregating data from related sources to provide a one-stop information resource. For example Anglian Water developed an online service for developers, including providing maps online, online application for site visits etc.
- A new value-added role is 'dynamic brokering'. For example a customer specifies his/her requirements and this is automatically sent to all the service providers in an automated tender request. The tenders are then automatically offered, amended and considered, all without further input from the customer.

## In conclusion

Businesses need to regard a customer's visit to their web site not just in terms of the successful completion of a transaction, but as an experience that they will enjoy and will encourage them to return. For management, the implications are that if online customer service is to be delivered effectively they need to identify the nature of the service they are providing and to deliver it efficiently and to the highest quality levels. Additionally, they must look towards new ways of delivering service by exploiting

their information resources to provide reporting, customisation, and proactive services that will ultimately go to provide a value-added service.

None of this is possible however, without building the foundation. At its entry level, e-service delivery needs to be robust, efficient, responsive and performance measured against a range of metrics. If this basic level is not achieved then customers will exit your business to seek a competitor who offers the required levels - and frankly, who can blame them!

“Creating trust is a major challenge facing brands. It's difficult to gain but easy to lose”

**This is what we do...**



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