

Second- Mile Service as the Standard:

HOLISTIC CONCEPTS FOR A
CUSTOMER-CENTRIC CULTURE

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There's a reason adages like "The customer is always right" and "The customer is king" exist. Without happy customers, our companies wouldn't exist! The rise in "serial switchers," customers willing to switch from one company to a competitor because of a poor service experience, is a cue to every business to examine closely the quality and effectiveness of its current customer service.¹

In 2018, companies with poor customer service put an estimated \$75 billion into the pockets of their competitors.

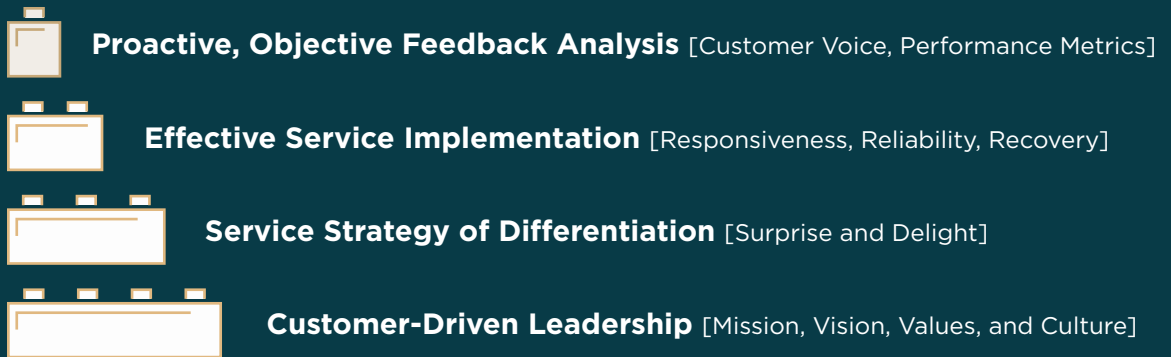
Regardless of what products or services we deliver to our customers, an attribute that we should all esteem, particularly as Christian-led companies, is how well we deliver them.

To provide an experience that retains customers and produces positive referrals, customer service can't be treated as the responsibility of a single role or department. Instead we must understand that *composite experience* of our customers' interactions with *all our people and processes* shapes the

¹New Voice Media, "Serial Switchers Swayed by Sentiment: How Bad Emotive Customer Experiences Are Costing Brands Billions," 2018.

Creating a customer-centric culture begins with a mission and vision that clearly communicate our desired customer experience, embodied by the leaders of the organization. With a clear vision reinforced by core values and culture, a team can develop and execute a strategic plan that differentiates a company, optimizes every step in the customer life cycle, and continuously incorporates customer feedback.

Building Blocks of Excellent Customer Service



START HERE

They say the customer is always right... The Bible says service is always right.

“...doing the will of God from the heart, rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man, knowing that whatever good anyone does, this he will receive back from the Lord.” — Eph. 6:6-8

reputation we bring to market.

Leveraging Our Online Brands

News travels faster now than ever before. In the past, there hasn't been a need for most B2B companies to focus heavily on customer service, but that reality is shifting as technology rapidly evolves and people become more connected. The urgency of customer satisfaction has heightened since online reviews have become a fast-growing factor in ranking businesses.²

No longer reserved for consumer products and restaurants, hundreds of review sites are now available for professional services and brick- and-mortar businesses.³ Our online reputation precedes us and has the ability to influence buyers as they look to inform their purchasing decisions by what others say about us. As customers continue to find their voice, companies must pay attention to customer needs and their feedback, regardless of product or service.⁴



HOW CUSTOMERS ARE ENGAGING WITH ONLINE REVIEWS:

- 93%** read local reviews to make a shopping decision.
- 68%** are more likely to use a local business based on positive reviews.
- 57%** won't use a business that has fewer than 4 stars.
- 40%** care only about reviews submitted within the past two weeks.
- 89%** read local businesses' responses to reviews.⁵

² *The Age of the Customer: Prepare for the Moment of Relevance*, by Jim Blasingame (2014), is a great study on understanding this shift to customer-driven evaluation.

³ Bright Local, "[300+ Niche Review Sites for 30+ Industries, Updated for 2018!](#)"

⁴ Micah Solomon, "[The Rackspace Method: 'Fanatical' Customer Service And Customer Support In The B2B Cloud.](#)" Bright Local, February 18, 2015.

⁵ Bright Local, "[Local Consumer Review Survey 2018.](#)"

There is power and danger in what people say about us. To our benefit, pleasing customers inspires a steady stream of positive reviews and attracts new business. To our pitfall, unsatisfied customers, even when their experience was out of our control, can share negative reviews and deter business. Amid inevitable blunders, online brand management actually offers a contemporary recovery opportunity. By going beyond just monitoring reviews and actively responding to customers, we can repair relationships, rectify mistakes, provide readers with context, and demonstrate our company's unique character in a public way we couldn't before.

03 Defining the Vision

Leaders must equip employees to perform effective online reputation management. In fact, we should equip all employees for every kind of interaction with our customers, because every role in an organization contributes to delivering the full customer experience.

Employees represent us. In order for them to truly represent who we are, who we want to be, and how we want to serve customers, a leader must define a company through its mission, vision, and core values. Leaders who reinforce the vision and exemplify those values inspire motivated, servant-minded teams and give their work a higher purpose.

As Jesus commands in Matthew 5:41, we should go the extra mile to serve others beyond what they expect us to do. If this applies to how we treat our adversaries, how much more does it apply to how we treat customers who are paying us! Dan Cathy, CEO of Chick-fil-A, has referred to this Scripture to explain the level of service he expects from employees. Chick-fil-A is ranked as one of the top fast food franchises in the country, despite being closed on Sundays, and is distinguished for its second-mile service hospitality model.⁶

A DAILY ENVIRONMENT

As CEO of H2insight, C12 member Vince Kudla, helps organizations in many industries strengthen and expand their customer relationships. His strategies proactively engage customers to overcome the common misuse of customer satisfaction information.



VINCE KUDLA

“ We often hear ‘What gets measured, gets improved.’ While this can be true, it’s a deficient mantra. More often, it’s true that ‘What gets measured, discussed, and reinforced (and what we’re ultimately held accountable to) gets improved.’ Where you spend your money and time reflects what is important to you. How much time and effort is

⁶ Matthew McCreary, [“Chick-fil-A Makes More Per Restaurant Than McDonald’s, Starbucks and Subway Combined ... and It’s Closed on Sundays.”](#) *Entrepreneur*, September 25, 2018.

the leader devoting to talking about the customer experience and how to improve it and deliver it? That's how we communicate to our employees what is important to us, and that's how you build a customer-centric culture. Companies performing at the top of the customer experience and service food chain have this discipline in common: they talk about the customer experience constantly. ”

According to H2insight, the best practices for leaders to build a great customer service culture include these actions:

- Identify the right fit and hire to it.
- Model servanthood and teach it.
- Reinforce what success looks like and measure it.
- Recognize good performance and reward it.

Walt Bettinger, CEO of Charles Schwab, asks targeted interview questions that help reveal whether an applicant is aligned with the company's core values. One of his unconventional strategies is to meet candidates for breakfast and pre-arrange for the restaurant to mess up the candidate's order. Observing how the candidate reacts is an opportunity to screen for his desired character. ⁷

⁷ Jacquelyn Smith, "[Charles Schwab's CEO takes job candidates to breakfast and asks the restaurant to mess up their order — here's why.](#)" *Business Insider*, February 18, 2016.

04 Creating a Customer-Driven Team

Ephesians 6:6-7 instructs us to do “the will of God from the heart, rendering service with a good will.” How well we obey this command has the potential to make or break our companies. We likely all have the desire to serve our customers well, but we may not be cultivating our teams to achieve our vision for customer service.

Five practices contribute to team development that will deliver our desired customer experience.

The 5Cs—

1. Characterize
2. Clone
3. Cultivate
4. Celebrate
5. Care

1. CHARACTERIZE

Identify top performers who exemplify the ideal service mindset. Thinking about their skills, competencies, and character, profile what success looks like for customer-facing positions. Identify how these positions interact with clients and the key metrics involved. Adapt to key success levers in your company’s unique environment. For example, your environment or roles might require articulation, perception, resilience, persistence, empathy, focus in a noisy environment, a desire to build long-term loyalty

through cultivating relationships, etc. Pre-hire assessments—DiSC, MBTI, Caliper, SIMA, etc.—help uncover certain traits that fit specific roles.

2. CLONE

The ideal candidate profile is an evaluation tool to use in the screening process. Its characteristics apply in some fashion to every role in the organization. Focus on attitude and demonstrated character at least as much on technical qualifications. Attitudes and relationships reveal how well people interact with others. Ask applicants to elaborate on previous activities or positions in which they gained experience and demonstrated serving others well.

3. CULTIVATE

Designate experienced mentors to help assimilate new hires to the business and culture. Develop high-performing teams through continuing education, mentorships, and professional development plans. Empower employees with challenging yet meaningful work. Demonstrate to teams how their roles are connected to the mission of the organization. Provide training opportunities that will enhance their skills and abilities to fulfill the desired customer service experience.

4. CELEBRATE

An empowering work environment breeds excitement and a sense of ownership. Regularly celebrate performance that achieves the company's vision and purpose. Share customer testimonials and success stories. Congratulate the employees involved, reinforce the value of this capability, and encourage them to build further on this strength in growing the business. It's a small effort to share positive survey feedback with our

organization, but it yields big rewards in morale, employees' experience, and ultimately our customers' experience.

5. CARE

Think of and treat employees like customers. As we encourage a culture that centers on service excellence, we must caution against burning out our teams. Caring for our employees is critical so that their well-being is not compromised in the process. Develop a workplace culture that focuses on internal customer service by listening to sentiments, discussing differences, troubleshooting issues, and fostering team unity. Genuinely caring for our people empowers them to care for others and enables better customer service. Intentionally encourage worthy goals, vigilance against unhealthy influences, fair yet encouraging evaluations, and opportunities for meaningful contribution.

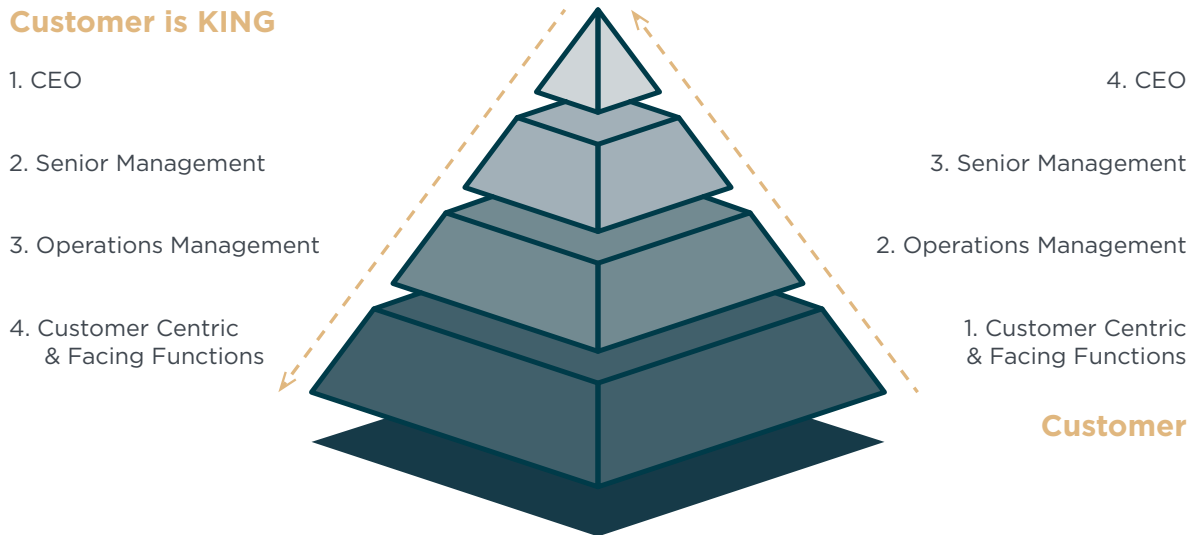
05 Modeling the Vision

Vision truly takes root and is manifested in our employees when leaders model it for the organization. The history of business is one of top-down management stemming from military roots. Usually, employees are conditioned to be concerned with serving and pleasing their bosses. The military appoints the general at the top of the pyramid, with colonels underneath, followed by majors, captains, lieutenants, and sergeants. The frontline troops are at the bottom of the pyramid. If our vision

is for a culture focused on serving others, our language and behavior must give employees permission to shift their gaze away from us and toward our customers.

PYRAMID STYLE OF MANAGEMENT PARADIGM⁸

Customer is KING



The inverted paradigm also instructs leaders to focus on serving employees. Jesus said, “Whoever wants to be a leader ... must be [a] servant.”⁹ He modeled servant leadership as the greatest leader while also being the greatest servant. The downstream benefit of emulating Jesus’s example is that employees who are well served and cared for are more likely to have a natural inclination to care for customers.

⁸ James C. Hunter, *The Servant: A Simple Story About the True Essence of Leadership* (New York: Currency, 1998).

⁹ Matt. 20:26.

06 Case Study



C12 member Lilian Radke owns and leads Unic Pro Inc., a commercial cleaning company in Massachusetts. Struck by the inverted pyramid paradigm, in 2015, she reshaped the leadership culture of her company: “I now intentionally serve my managers, they serve our supervisors, our supervisors serve our cleaners, and ultimately, our cleaners serve our customers.”

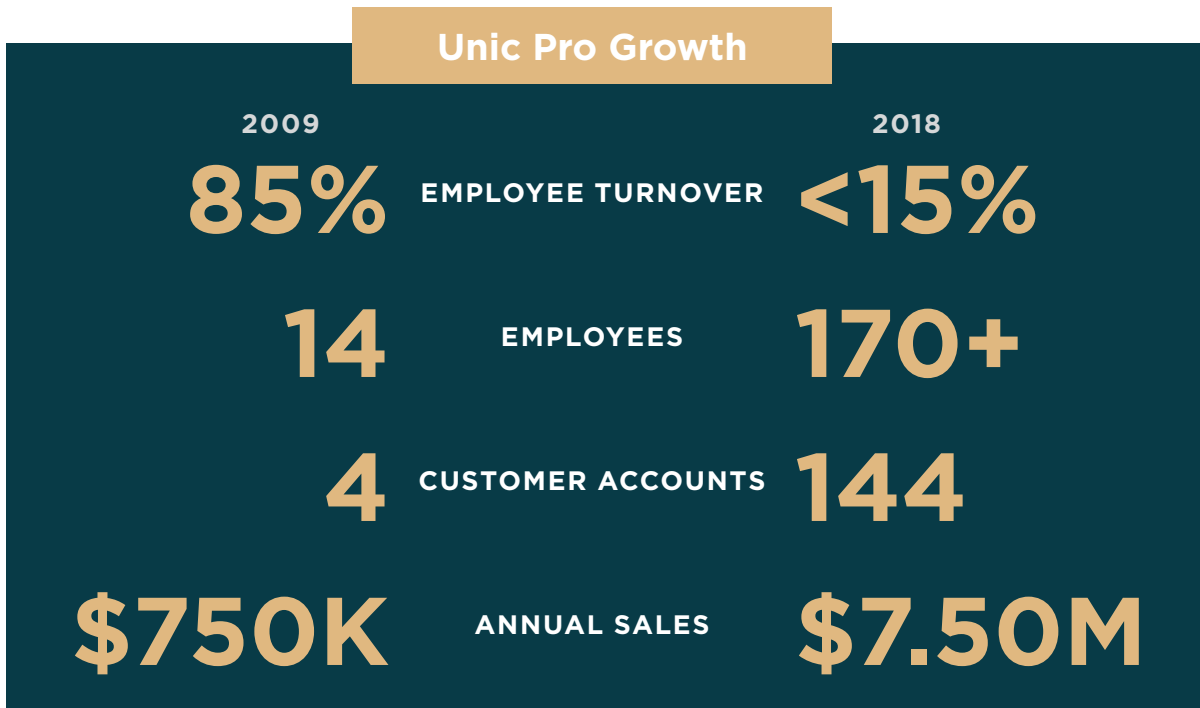
Instead of worrying about how employees can serve her, she wants her team to always feel appreciated by her. Whether it’s with training, technology, equipment, or support, Lilian asks her managers what they need to enjoy their jobs and do them more effectively, and then she helps them get it.

This management style is in effect at every level of the organization. For example, it would be easier and less costly to maintain a single-model fleet of equipment. With servant leadership in mind, however, Unic Pro’s supervisors chose to honor the female cleaners with lighter-weight vacuums. Lilian believes:

“ If our cleaners feel heard and are treated well, they are happier and motivated to do their job, and our clients are the ultimate beneficiary. ”

In the cleaning industry, companies perform their work in the clients' off-hours, affording little opportunity for personal interaction and feedback. Unic Pro differentiates themselves by regularly meeting with clients in person. While managers are conducting walk-throughs, clients are invited to express satisfaction or designate areas needing improvement.

In just the nine years since Lilian was appointed CEO, Unic Pro has experienced significant growth:



JAMES C. PENNEY

“ It is the service we are not obliged to give that people value most. ”

07. MAKING EVERY MOMENT MEANINGFUL

07 Making Every Moment Meaningful

Employees who don't have direct engagement with customers don't always see how their specific role impacts the total customer experience. As we set out to shape a customer-centric culture, we can reinforce those efforts through intentional processes that demonstrate how every activity in the business provides the opportunity to impress or disappoint our customers.

A helpful exercise is for organizations to build, collectively as a team, a process map that examines the customer's journey, specifically with service in mind. The map can be used as a tool to ensure a consistent, seamless experience. From the first impression through order fulfillment and post-sale follow-up, the journey will look different for different companies. While the emphasis and metrics differ from one market or business type to the next, the philosophy applies to all organizations.

The map below is an example that can be adapted based on a company's specific offerings and processes.¹⁰



Tips for Building a Custom Customer Journey Map:

- Take on the lens of the customer.
- Include representatives and thought leaders from each department.
- Formalize the handoff of information and relationships from one step to the next.
- Measure and track results for regular optimization.

¹⁰ Dave Blake, "[5 Best Practices to Build a Customer Success Journey Map.](#)" ClientSuccess.

SURPRISE AND DELIGHT

John Ruhlin (C12 member, CEO of Ruhlin Group, and author of *Giftology*¹¹), suggests five principles setting yourself apart through strategic gifting to customers. These same principles can be considered when examining how to surprise and delight customers in unique ways at each step in the customer's journey:



for

1. Practicality – Provide what customers really want or would love to have but would never buy for themselves.

2. Inner Circle – Be loved and adored by spouses, family members, and those who most influence your customers.

3. Personalization – Engrave with customers' quotes, monogram with their logos, or customize with their preferences, instead of your own.

4. Timing – Give when it is least expected.

5. Continuity – Make multiple impressions as part of a series.

¹¹ John Ruhlin, *Giftology: The Art and Science of Using Gifts to Cut Through the Noise, Increase Referrals, and Strengthen Retention* (Austin: LionCrest Publishing, 2016).

Taking on the lens of our customers can expose our most vulnerable blindspots. See Appendix B for a simple, interactive tool that can be used with your team to identify gaps in your customers' journeys and stimulate conversations to spark improvements.

08

Listening Matters Only When There's a Response

When service gaps are exposed and need addressing, we often can determine the antidote by simply listening and responding to our customers. We can learn about their needs and preferences through surveys, focus groups, expert user panels, and one-on-one interviews.

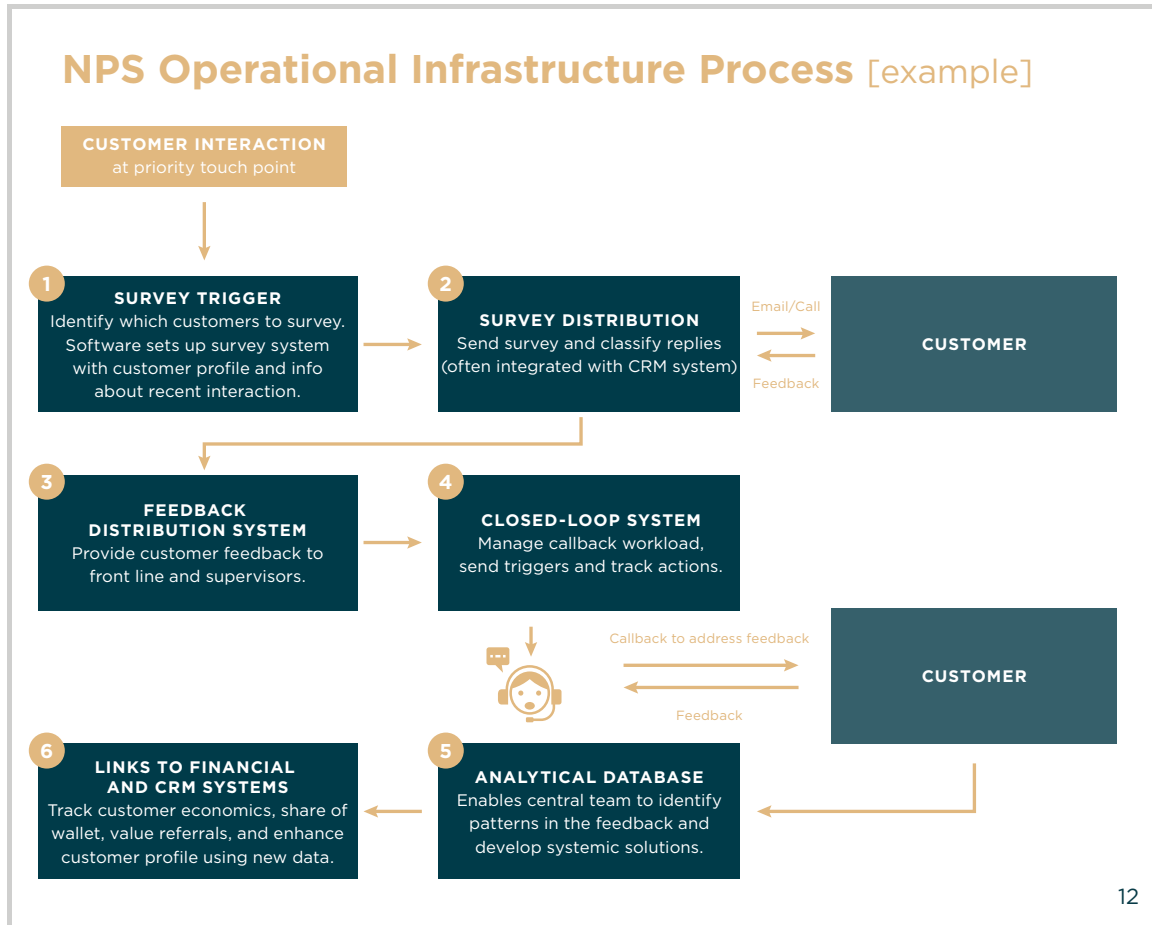


TIMING

The time at which this customer feedback and data are collected is an important consideration. If we have enjoyed a long relationship with someone but happen to query him or her right after one poor experience, the whole relationship measurement could be skewed.

The Net Promoter System (NPS) is one methodology for measuring how well organizations serve customers and generate relationships worthy of loyalty. NPS, which tracks *promoters*,

detractors, and passives and captures open-ended feedback, can be coupled with other satisfaction measures to create a bigger picture.



Measuring satisfaction throughout the customer’s journey can prevent misrepresentations, but satisfaction data by itself is not enough. We must have methods in place to analyze and respond to what we measure.

All commitments to customers (e.g., delivery dates, progress reports, product performance specifications) and feedback should be communicated to our teams. Customers need to know that they have a voice—that their input matters and is being digested and relayed back into the organization to improve processes

¹² Rob Markey and Fred Reichheld, “[The Infrastructure Behind a Net Promoter System](#),” Bain & Company, May 28, 2013.

and interactions. They will then be more inclined to provide feedback and advocate on our behalf. Different measurement strategies exist to produce the same result. There is no perfect metric. Every methodology has its advantages and disadvantages, but we can't let the inadequacies of our measurement process dissuade us from measuring.

LIFETIME VALUE OF A CUSTOMER



Studies prove that increasing customer retention by just 5% increases profitability by 25-95%!¹³ While delighting customers breeds loyalty and referrals, we optimize our efforts when we invest in acquiring and retaining the highest-value customers.

To learn more about how to generate repeat business and customer advocates, download C12's e-book ***Converting Customer Loyalty to Exponential Growth***.¹⁴





09 Learning from Leaders

A leader's proximity to customers is pivotal to driving awareness and informing business decisions. Sometimes we

¹³ "E-Loyalty: Your Secret Weapon on the Web," *Harvard Business Review*, July-August 2000.

¹⁴ Available at C12's online [Resource Hub](#)

get so hyper-focused on one part of the business that we overlook some of the other simple expectations of every customer:

-  High-quality products or services
-  Timely delivery
-  Positive impressions and engagement
-  Effective support and problem resolution processes

Companies that delight their customers in unexpected ways build trust, a huge reservoir of goodwill, and positive word-of-mouth testimonials at very little expense. We would be remiss not to benchmark ourselves against the best-in-class companies.

LEARNING
FROM
LEADERS

The Zappos.com logo is displayed in white on a dark teal background. The word "Zappos" is in a large, bold, sans-serif font, with ".com" in a smaller font below it. To the right of the text is a stylized white shoe icon with a checkmark inside it, and a registered trademark symbol (®) is located at the bottom right of the shoe icon.

Consider the evolution of the brand promise of Zappos, a long-time leader in customer service:

- 1999 ▶ Largest Selection of Shoes
- 2003 ▶ Customer Service
- 2005 ▶ Culture and Core Values as Our Platform
- 2007 ▶ Personal Emotional Connection
- 2009 ▶ Delivering Happiness

In 2009, executives at Zappos asked themselves a question when faced with an acquisition decision: Do we believe that this will accelerate the growth of [our] brand and help us fulfill our mission?¹⁵ That same question can be an effective arbiter when evaluating the various dimensions of our customer service. In January 2010, Zappos moved up 8 slots and was ranked #15 in *Fortune* magazine’s annual “Best Companies to Work For” list, a list they remained on for many years after.¹⁶

LEARNING
FROM
LEADERS

The RackSpace logo is displayed in white, lowercase, italicized font with a registered trademark symbol (®) at the end. It is set against a dark teal background that is part of a larger graphic element.

RackSpace, one of the largest providers of cloud services, is renowned for its remarkable dedication to customer service. It is less widely known that at its inception in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the company followed the industry’s focus on “speed and feed”—a model that hosted space but barely made itself accessible to customers. The leaders soon realized their customers needed support and expertise and implemented over-the-top service, which is now coined “Fanatical Support.”¹⁷

Fanatical Support Promise: “We cannot promise that hardware won’t break, that software won’t fail, or that we will always be perfect. What we can promise is that if something goes wrong, we will rise to the occasion, take action, and help resolve the issue.”¹⁸

¹⁶ “100 Best Companies to Work For,” *Fortune*, 2010.

¹⁷ Samdizy, “RackSpace Founders: How We Built Cloud Castle,” Channel Futures, June 21, 2012.

¹⁸ Jason Griffing, “Want to Provide Great Service? Start by Making Promises You Can Keep,” Residential Systems, November 27, 2017.



“Return shipping is easy and flexible.” This is Amazon’s first statement on their returns webpage. Processes like this—that thoughtfully consider, accommodate, and exceed customer expectations—generate repeat business. Compare Amazon’s convenient process to that of a company whose website isn’t user-friendly, is available for support only by phone and only during business hours, and doesn’t provide a return label. It’s clear which company most customers will prefer to do business with in the future, regardless of price or savings.

Companies provide a distinct value add when they move from just “avoiding problems” to leveraging their service. These companies regularly survey customers and disseminate the scores and responses throughout their organizations. They follow up with unhappy customers and intentionally act on the feedback received.¹⁹

SURVEYS OF MORE THAN 4,000 CUSTOMERS HAS REVEALED A CUSTOMER SATISFACTION RATE OF 98%.



CEO and C12 member Steve McNary accredits Southwest Exterior’s success to their focus on two core values: love and excellence. These values shape how the leaders treat employees and how employees treat customers.

¹⁹ Fred Reichheld, [“The Value in Wowing Your Customers,”](#) *Harvard Business Review*, March 13, 2012.

By shifting from a transactional to relational approach, loving customers at Southwest Exteriors looks like acts of kindness, such as helping homeowners carry their groceries inside, and processes ensuring whatever is most important to the customer is known and achieved.

STEVE MCNARY

“ All of mankind is created in God’s image. We have an obligation to treat people with love and excellence and to respect and honor them at all times. It’s good for business, but also it’s just what we should do as Christ-followers. ”

10 Reaping the Harvest

A comprehensive approach to customer service requires the leader’s commitment to setting and exemplifying the culture through well-planned and well-executed processes. Voices outside of the boardroom—including the teams that work on the front lines, harvesters of small-data feedback, and even outsiders like family and friends—should be invited to evaluate our service performance and identify blind spots we might not recognize ourselves.

With a foundation of mission alignment, targeted processes, intentional listening, and ongoing reinforcement and celebration, we are more likely to withstand the inevitable storms of business. The reward of leading a service-minded business far outweighs the work required to build it.

Appendix A

Creating a Customer-Driven Team

There are five practices that contribute to building teams that will successfully deliver your desired customer experience. Assess your current process against these best practices by rating yourself on the five-star scale. Use the space provided below each description to capture opportunities to close any exposed gaps.

Five stars = World-Class

One star = Exposed Gap

1. CHARACTERIZE



Identify top performers who exemplify the ideal service mindset. Thinking about their skills, competencies, and character, profile what success looks like for customer-facing positions. Identify how these positions interact with clients and the key metrics involved. Adapt to key success levers in your company's unique environment. For example, your environment or roles might require articulation, perception, resilience, persistence, empathy, focus in a noisy environment, a desire to build long-term loyalty through cultivating relationships, etc. Personality tests (e.g., DiSC, MBTI, Caliper, SIMA, etc.) can help identify certain traits that fit specific roles.

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B Appendix B: Walk in Their Shoes

This table is a simple tool to stimulate conversation and identify gaps in our customers' journeys. Taking on the lens of a customer, select what you assume to be your customer's top three priorities. Then, indicate by checking the box whether you think your customer is surprised with either delight or disappointment at each of the steps listed.

A careful review will help simplify, standardize, streamline, and error-proof each step of our process. By identifying problems and characterizing the respective impact on customers, we can focus on implementing the highest-value improvements.

Service Step	Don't Know	Disappointed	Satisfied	Delighted
Brand Awareness (Marketing, Advertising, Reputation Management)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Initial Impression/Engage- ment (Physical, Phone)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Proposals/Quoting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ordering/Scheduling	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Service or Order Fulfillment/Delivery	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Invoicing/Payment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Use/Durability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Guarantee/ Warranty Process	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Support Services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Post-Sale Follow-up/ Referral Requests	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Discussion Questions:

1. What does a successful customer experience look like?
2. Where do our priorities seem to misalign with those of our customers?
3. Where do we have poor handoffs between steps, and how can we improve these handoffs?
4. What gaps did this exercise uncover between what we say and what we do?
5. How does this exercise change the way you view your impact on the customer?

Thousands of faith-driven, results-minded CEOs and executives meet in forums monthly to encourage and challenge one another to make better decisions, avoid costly mistakes, and create solid plans for business growth, all while striving to create eternal impact far beyond the bottom line.

**Be a part of a local C12 Forum,
visit joinC12.com**

