



GO THE EXTRA MILE

CUSTOMER SERVICE V CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

DO YOU KNOW THE DIFFERENCE?

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Customer service is a term we are all familiar with; it is the level of assistance you provide to your customer – great customer service is about going the “extra mile”. With an ever-growing demand for instant access to information and services, have you considered all the interactions a customer has with your business and how each step of their journey could be perceived? This article aims to help you understand how to do this.

What is the customer experience?

The “customer experience” is your customer’s perception of you and the company, which is gained throughout the whole process or transaction.

The full experience starts when your customer learns that your company exists and continues through to the support they receive once the report has been produced. It is about how they feel at every touchpoint in-between, including ease of access to information and the way in which it is presented and received. You may assume these areas fall under customer service, but the customer experience may not always involve a person, which makes it different to traditional ‘customer service’.

The launch of the new Home Survey Standard in December 2020 highlights the importance of understanding customer needs further. The standards

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As a tech-focused business within the surveying industry, Survey Booker have identified a few areas that could be streamlined and upgraded for the benefit of both customer and surveyor and improve the experience for all.

As in our last article on boosting leads and conversion rates (see technical bulletin 32) we ask you to read this article from two perspectives: yours and your customers'. This is because the tips included are not just for your benefit – the customer is kept at the centre of the conversation because if you do not look after your (prospective) customer, someone else will. By focusing on service and experience, we will assist you in breaking down and reviewing every stage of the sales process, helping you to eradicate hours of tedious administrative work. Now is the time to become proactive, not reactive and offer a great customer experience for all.

1.Customer service



The **reactive** element of the customer experience is all about answering the customer’s questions. I am sure we have all endured the frustrating experience of phoning call centres and sitting on hold, so the obvious point to consider is how timely you are in responding to customer queries throughout the process.

Customers can find it frustrating waiting for answers, especially when their dream house is in the balance, but the statistics make it starker. **Studies have found that companies who respond to sales leads in the first minute have a 391% higher sales conversion and that 78% of people buy from the first responder** (source: Lead Connect).

Why? When your customer makes an enquiry, they have prepared themselves to discuss the topic. If they have submitted a quote or a contact form, they are a hot lead.

They are in a frame of mind to get their survey (or survey questions) sorted in that moment as they may be dealing with other things an hour later. If you’re the first to respond, you are in the unique position to offer advice before anyone else and provide reassurances about how the process works.

If you are the fourth to respond, it will be difficult to offer anything unique and add any value. Therefore, it is no surprise that you’re likely to lose a lead if you take too long to respond. Your speed at the offset can also be taken as a sign of how efficient you may be later in the process.

Tone and attention to detail are also very important. Taking the time to understand what the customer wants to learn, what service they need or whether you can provide the right answers will make all the difference between providing an okay service or a five star one. Remember, this is a requirement in the Home Survey Standard too.

Summary

Responding in a timely manner and making sure you really understand what the customer is asking can help you score well. This is the most direct contact the customer has with you so make the most of it. You should not consider this as job done or the trump card in getting great reviews though, as customer service is just one element in the process and the one that can most easily drop in quality when the workload ramps up.



2. Technology and the customer experience

You may consider technology to be quite impersonal and not an important part of the experience. However, technology can be a huge support tool if it is implemented correctly and designed with the customer in mind. Royal Mail’s tracking service is a good example to consider: when you are able to instantly track your parcel online it puts your mind at ease and you don’t even have the hassle of calling them.

Let us consider how technology relates to your customer’s experience. Assume somebody has found your listing on the first page of Google and they have clicked on your website. Your customer now wants to find out three things:

- What service they need.
- What you will provide them as part of that service.
- How much you will charge them for it.

Does your website answer these questions simply and if so, are the answers easy to find?

Customers judge a website within 10 seconds. If your site is full of jargon or not immediately clear on where to navigate for the right information, it is unlikely they will go any further. Customers should not struggle to understand what you do – it is your job to make that clear to them (after all, they can look elsewhere in just a couple of clicks). A muddled website could also be a sub-conscious red flag about what the rest of the process might be like. So, invest time in making your website clear or you may lose hard-earned web traffic before you even have a chance to show them how good your customer service is.

If you owned a shop and saw customers walk in, then immediately walk out, you would review what you could do to make them want to stay; so, think of your website as your digital shop front.

You may be thinking you get plenty of calls or emails during the day and your website just isn't that important, but there are two factors to consider here.

Firstly, were the queries about something the customer could have found the answer to online? If so, it is likely there are others who just did not bother to call.

Secondly, remember that internet rush hour (peak web traffic) is between 7pm and 11pm, which is outside of normal work hours, perhaps because people aren't distracted or have more time. This makes your website a valuable touch point when you are not available.

You only get out of your website what you put into it, so keep it up to date and easy to navigate to offer stress-free value to your customers.

What other technology can aid in the process?

- Lead generation forms can help you capture customer data from your website or your referrers. These forms mean less work for your customer compared to making a call or opening their emails. If the form offers a quote/estimate, it encourages more people to enquire. The added bonus is that, if set up correctly, the forms can send enquiries straight into a CRM, so you can easily track who you have contacted, who you still need to follow up with, and more.
- Responding to leads – technology exists that allows you to automatically respond to leads with personalised emails regardless of the time of day. Remembering that most customers buy from the first responder, technology that enables you to respond first with important information can be invaluable. Whilst an email alone may not win business, it does help to buy time and when you do phone, you can refer to the email you sent earlier and the helpful

information it offered.

- Online payment – this can be a quick and easy way for customers to pay (especially if card details are already saved in their phone or web browser) and it reduces the need to chase payments. It can also speed up your accounting by syncing sales data automatically to your accounting software.
- E-Sign terms – most printers sit unused for so long the cartridges dry up before they're needed again, so making customers print out terms, sign them, scan them, and send them back is an unneeded and off-putting process. Being able to sign terms from a phone, having just made an online payment, is far easier. E-signatures are legally binding, quick, and offer an 85% productivity improvement and 80% average error reduction – great for ensuring compliance (source: Forrester, esignlive).
- Updates – we all love getting progress updates to know if a parcel is getting closer and the statistics prove it. 68% of consumers say it increases their perception of a brand when companies send them proactive customer service notifications (source: Microsoft). So, do your customers have a portal where they can check on their survey progress whenever they get the urge?

Summary

Technology, if used well, can really help provide a simpler and more positive experience at every touch point. Removing the necessity for a customer to contact you at each stage not only offers a faster and smoother process, but it means the customer feels like their actual interactions with you have a lot more value. Services such as Survey Booker incorporate these technologies into one system, freeing up your time to focus on quality surveys and customer service when it counts most.



3. Design

Technology is only as good as it is deployed. It needs to be thoughtfully integrated into the process, simple to use, and work well. Design plays a huge part in the feelings you evoke for your customers.

a. Branding – you do not get a second chance to make a first impression. Your unique mark identifies you to customers, so they know who they are communicating with, and this shows trustworthiness and reliability. Big companies work hard on their brands and spend huge amounts of money updating them to look modern and sleek because an outdated, non-classic logo can make it seem like the company isn't doing so well. Keeping logos consistent across different platforms also shows attention to detail.

b. Reports – consider how well your reports are laid out. Are they visually appealing or very dense in a small font? The human brain processes visuals 60,000 times faster than text (source: University of Minnesota). Therefore, photographs, diagrams and layout make a huge difference when reading and understanding a detailed report, and an annotated photograph speaks a thousand words! Fonts like 'Dyslexie' are designed to make reading text easier for those with dyslexia and offering this option could help make their experience far better, and it certainly shows you care.

c. Website – keeping your site modern and secure will help ensure web traffic remains on your site and influences how willing a prospect is to submit their personal details. To get your website to that point, consider your user's experience. Is the information on the pages clear and is it obvious where to navigate next? A menu bar offers some help on where to look but clear buttons (often called a 'call to action') on each section of a webpage helps direct customers to further information or a quote enquiry.

Ask your friends and family to help test your site and pretend they are trying to arrange a survey to see how easy it is to navigate without any prompts. If they get confused or struggle to find where to go next, your customer will be struggling too. Remember, not everyone will be patient and a well-designed layout with call to action buttons will result in more enquiries.

Summary

Whilst not an obvious factor, investing time into the design of your customer journey, brand and company collateral can make a huge difference to enquiries, conversion rates and reviews. Having consistent, clear, and attractive visuals at each contact point will add an edge to their overall experience.

Conclusion

Hopefully, this article has helped show that customer experience is more than just a new buzzword. It is a proactive process that requires ongoing review as regulations and societal norms change. Good customer service is not enough to ensure the longevity of your business and is the first thing to suffer when workloads increase. The customer experience should be at the heart of everything you do and is something you can

proactively implement to make the customer experience much better. It can also benefit you, from reducing time wasted on admin tasks to increasing sales. Not only that, offering a premium experience is justification for charging a premium price.

If you would like more information about how you can improve your customer experience either on or offline, or would like to enquire further into what immediate changes the Survey Booker platform can offer, please feel free to get in touch with the team and we'll happily offer our suggestions and advice.

About Survey Booker

Survey Booker is the specialist CRM for residential surveyors helping you to grow sales, save time and generate insights.

Generate quotes (instant, estimate or bespoke), process payments, submit pre-filled e-terms and manage survey updates all at the click of a button. You can also automatically feed in leads from referrers or lead generation sites. Customers can track quotes and survey updates via an account helping you to offer a consistent customer experience every time.

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