

Dear Client,

Welcome to our monthly newswire. We hope you enjoy reading this newsletter and find it useful.

Best wishes

John & David

MAPPING THE CUSTOMER JOURNEY

Customers of a business go on a journey that turns an initial enquiry into a sale. The best businesses really understand the journey they take their customers on. Some businesses call it Customer Experience Mapping, others call it Customer Journey Mapping and some even refer to Customer Touchpoints. The thing to understand is that the companies that use these practices recognise higher levels of customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. The reason for this is relatively simple: it adds structure and encourages the adoption of customer service standards across your business.

Mapping the ideal customer experience sets a clear expectation and consistency for customer interactions with your firm. During the mapping process, many companies also find holes in their systems, outdated or irrelevant processes, or policies that make doing business more difficult, rather than easier, for the customer. This is the perfect opportunity to address those issues or shortcomings, eliminate, improve, or enhance them, and create an even better experience for the customer. The companies that take the time to do this understand that while we all might have a great idea in our heads on what we'd like the customer to experience when they choose to do business with us, unless you have it well planned out, it's unlikely to happen.

Customer Journey Mapping should be done to identify, as closely as possible, the ideal experience that you would like to be able to deliver to your clients. Consider the journey of the customer through your company as they do business with you. Each time the customer interacts with a person or department, this is a "Waypoint" on your map. Briefly describe (3 or 4 bullet points) the ideal experience at each waypoint. Now keep going through each step of the process until you finish at the point of sale. Then keep going for another 2 or 3 waypoints - we can't forget about after sale follow-up...

The great customer experiences that people refer to when they talk about companies like Apple, Disney or BMW don't just "happen". These experiences are created. They are mapped out step by step and then clearly communicated across the business. Just because your business is smaller than these international giants, doesn't mean you can't learn from them. Great customer experiences create great reputations. Great reputations build great businesses.

HIRE LIKE GOOGLE

Company hiring processes are often ineffective because they focus on outdated criteria for evaluating a candidate's capability. One such criteria is academic success; long held as a key indicator for potential job performance, many successful companies (such as Google) have learned that there are better ways to judge a candidate's potential. By examining how these companies evaluate candidates, hiring managers and human resource departments can revolutionise the way they fill vacancies.

High grades and academic achievements may look good on a CV, but they have no direct relation to actual work performance. The skills required to succeed in a job are often completely different from those required to succeed in school or at University. This is why Google decided to stop using high GPAs and degrees as a criteria for new employees.

Unsurprisingly, University graduates who demonstrate high levels of success tend to perform better in the actual workplace initially. However, once these young professionals have been in the working world for three to four years, their academic achievements become less relevant. The key, as Google has found, is to hire people with good experience, who have learned a lot "on the job" and can therefore be more productive thanks to their industry experience.

In order to really determine if a candidate has what it takes to succeed, Google and other similarly progressive businesses have moved to a structured assessment and interviewing process. Their questions don't revolve around past performance or knowledge assessment as much as they do personality and intelligence. It's important that they hire someone who will fit in with their staff, and personality plays a big role in that. In any workplace situation, we all know that the right personality fit is very important. Yet many firms still don't consider this when assessing potential candidates.

Google looks for the ability to step back and embrace other people's ideas when they are better than their own. They call this "intellectual humility". Without humility, people are unable to learn. Successful bright people rarely experience failure, and so they don't necessarily have the experience to understand how to learn from failure when it happens.

In addition, research has shown that predictability is one of the best personality traits for those in leadership roles. Thus, testing for predictability is performed for all high-level positions at Google. Companies can implement this model by carefully evaluating the soft-skills required for success in their company and use these skills as a hiring qualifier.

However, that doesn't mean only hiring people like you. Proper evaluation may require the help of outside consultants who can give an unbiased assessment. For example, both Google founders hold Masters Degrees from well-known Universities, but they did not set this as a hiring standard for their company. In fact, a high(ish) percentage of their workforce don't hold a degree at all.

TOP TIPS FOR BETTER COMMUNICATION

Business is all about people and relationships. No matter what industry you work in or what products or services you sell, it is all about people - customers, suppliers, staff, introducers, referrers etc. As such, communication is hugely important in any business.

With so much technology now available to us, there are times when we can miscommunicate. We assume that our emails were delivered, that our slides were attached, that the texts were received or that the answering machine works. Here are a few tips to help to improve your communication both inside your business and externally.

Ask questions

Asking for clarity is a sign of a great communicator. Never be afraid to ask questions to confirm that your understanding of the message being conveyed is correct. Asking questions also tells the other person that you are listening and that you are solidifying what you have heard.

Listen

Really listen. As you look at the other person, focus on what they are saying, not on your next meeting, to-do list or what you want to say next. Very often, people are so quick to talk that they forget to listen. Good communication involves both verbalising and active listening. In addition, when you are communicating with someone, let them know that you are listening with both your body language and responses such as, "Tell me more." Let others talk as they may answer your questions before you ask them.

Talk face-to-face

Much of our communication today is done without even seeing the person who works just a short walk away. Just a five-minute conversation can help us understand that person's perspective and clarify responsibilities. Equally, if you want to understand your customers - talk to them face to face.

Clear information

Before you pass information on to others, make sure that it is accurate and complete. This sounds very basic, but when we assume that the other person knows what project we are referring to, we provide an avenue for a problem. If we aren't clear, we create confusion and communication breaks down. Never make assumptions and always communicate clearly.

Confirm completion

Close the communication loop. When you are communicating with someone at work, make sure to go over each step clearly with them if it is something new. You can also ask for confirmation when the work is accomplished. People will often complete a task, but if you don't know it was completed, you still think about it, so ask that they close the loop with you by letting you know when it was finished. It's great to use technology to our advantage but sometimes we need to add a personal touch in order to achieve a better outcome.

EFFECTIVE EMAIL MARKETING

For many years now, businesses have used eNewsletters to stay in touch with customers and prospects. It's a proven method for building relationships, generating repeat business and winning referrals. But with technology ever-changing and the rise of social media and blogging, eNewsletters have also evolved. Here are a few tips to help with eNewsletters:

Include video

Most email marketing platforms allow for videos to be included. Depending on your business, videos can be educational, motivational or simply entertaining. Do keep them relevant to your target audience, however. Your video should, if possible, include a call to action. Tell your viewers what you want them to do using action verbs like Read More, Buy Now, Call Us For a Free Quote or Sign Up Today.

Social Media

Social media is here to stay. Therefore, you should embrace it. Include links to your company LinkedIn page, Twitter feed, etc in your eNewsletters. Include functionality which allows readers to repost links to your content on LinkedIn, Twitter or Facebook. You can allow your readers to 'like' or 'rate' your content. If your content is really good, some of your readers may do some marketing for you and your firm by reposting the things that they liked or found useful, which exposes their network of contacts to your brand and business.

Links

Your eNewsletters should include links to your firm's website, as this is where you want to drive potential customers. Often, the best way to do this is to include the heading and first paragraph of an article in your eNewsletter. If the reader wants to read the complete article, they click a link to the news page on your company website. Ensure that your company branding is prominent on the article page, and that the reader can easily click through to a "contact us" or "enquiry" page if they wish to do business with your firm.

Be brief

eNewsletters typically have multiple elements, from articles and case studies to promotions and announcements. Keep the content brief for easy scan-ability in order to build interest. Demonstrate your expertise and provide useful information that will help your target audience solve problems or improve something in their business. Mix education with promotional messages or special offers, but avoid a "hard sell". Give them something for free - some tips, content or interesting case studies. Illustrate your expertise so that the next time they need your products or services, they will think of you.

Please contact our office if you would like to discuss any of the issues raised.