



Walking in your customers' shoes

Our guide
to **Simply**
brilliant
Customer
service



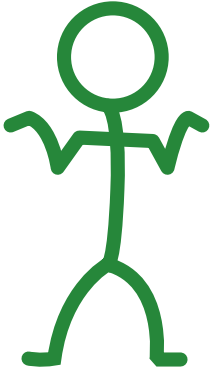
www.simplycustomer.co.uk

Customer service or experience?

Although many people talk about customer service and customer experience, sometimes it is hard to see a difference between them.

We believe that customer experience is the overall customer strategy, which includes products, brand, marketing, distribution channels and service. It sets out a framework to enable great customer service, but doesn't guarantee it will be delivered. Customer service is a critical element, making sure that customer expectations are met or exceeded and putting things right when something goes wrong.

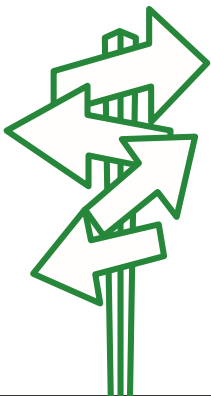
In this booklet, we talk about how to deliver great customer service. There are also elements of customer experience included such as setting expectations but we don't talk about products, branding or marketing as they are individual to each company.



First - decide who your customers are


Deciding who your customers are is key to giving them the service they want. Many businesses have a clear idea of the type of customer they want to do business with, often segmenting them by what products or services they would use, what distribution channels they prefer, how much they would spend and how frequently.

That type of segmentation is important when deciding how to market your business and when creating a business plan, but less so in understanding what brilliant service looks like.



"People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel." - Maya Angelou





Delivering brilliant service isn't about understanding what your customers look like, it's about understanding how they want to do business with you – what their needs and expectations are. There are some key principles behind great customer service, and their relative importance varies between 4 customer groups.

The 4 customer groups are - potential, existing, former, and most importantly, staff. The next section explains what the key principles are and which are most important to each group.

The principles of great customer service

We've worked with many organisations, often analysing customer comments and feedback to understand what matters most to their customers. Our experience has shown that, for any business, there are 6 key principles behind great customer service:

Set my expectations

The highest priority for a potential customer or an existing customer renewing or buying additional products or services, when it means give me the information I need about your product or service – what it will do for me, what it won't do, how much it costs, how I can get it, what will I have to do, what support do you give, how long will it take.

The key is open, honest communication that doesn't offer something you can't deliver. It is an important principle throughout the customer journey, especially when anything changes or the customer has a query.

Make it easy

The single most important principle for all customers, especially important for existing customers and staff. For each, it's about making sure they have the right

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information and tools they need when they need them so they have to make as little effort as possible to achieve what they need to.

For a customer it may mean being able to do what they want to do on the distribution channel they want to use, being able to contact you quickly if they need to, or getting proactive communication from you so they don't need to chase you.

For staff it's about having the tools and training to deliver great service to customers – making it easy for them also means they can be much more productive

Keep your promises

All successful relationships are based on trust. Customers need to believe that you will do what you say. When you set their expectations, you are making a number of promises – if you don't deliver, you break your promise and lose their trust.



Keep me informed

This principle is about giving customers the right information when and how they need it. It doesn't mean bombarding them with communications or giving them lots of information they just don't need.

Very important for staff, where it means making sure they are able to answer customer queries and understand why customers may start calling. It's also important for new customers, keeping them up to date with the progress of an order, or for existing customers informing them of changes to a product or service or when they need to do something.

Treat me as an individual

Your relationship with a customer is like any other relationship – they want to feel that you know and understand them, will listen to them and are interested in them. Try to have enough flexibility in your

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processes so you can tailor them to an individual customer's needs.

Sending a mass mailing which starts "Dear customer" has much less impact than one which is addressed to them personally. Make sure you only send them information that is relevant to them and keep records so you can talk to them about how they have used your products or services in the past. Find out how they want to be communicated with and use that channel whenever you can.

Don't forget to "**Wow**" customers sometimes - an unexpected surprise such as a thank you call or letter or a small gift can go a long way to building loyalty.

Put it right if it goes wrong

Dealing properly with complaints is an easy and simple way to build customer loyalty and turn detractors into promoters - if you handle them well. Simple things such as apologising that they have had to complain, giving them a single point of contact, getting to the root cause

of the problem and offering a solution quickly are all that customers are looking for.

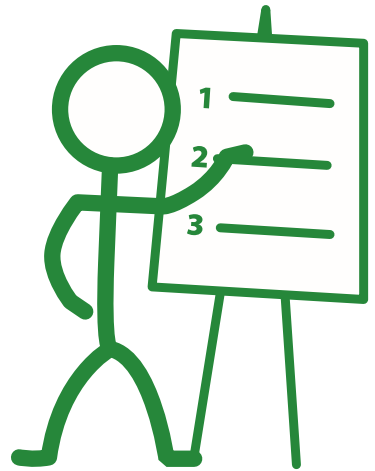
Make sure that, if something does go wrong, the customer has not been disadvantaged. Sometimes that may mean paying compensation, more often it means going the extra mile to resolve an issue.

Make sure any staff who speak to customers have the knowledge and authority to resolve the most common complaints – customers hate being passed between departments, having to repeat their story, and make sure the customer is contacted to ensure they are happy their complaint has been sorted out.



3 simple ways to listen to customers

1. Ask your staff what customers are saying – they are the people who talk to customers all the time. Asking them what customers are happy and unhappy about not only gives you an up to the minute view but also motivates your staff as they feel involved and valued.
2. Ask your customers – this can be a simple e-mail survey, asking such questions as what do we do well? And what can we improve? Or simply pick up the phone or go and see them and ask the same questions.
3. Review any complaints or comments – don't just look at those your business gets directly, but check out social media such as Twitter to see what people are saying about your business.



What to do with the feedback you get


When you do find something that can be improved, improve it (it's surprising how few companies do actually make changes). You can involve staff and customers when designing the change – even if you choose not to, it's important to tell them that a change has been made. This shows that you have been listening and that you value their opinions.

Measuring customer satisfaction

The most practical way to measure customer satisfaction is to regularly review the number of complaints you get as a percentage of the number of

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customers you have, repeat sales, average purchase value per customer and the percentage of customers who leave you – these are the measures that directly impact the profitability of your business and are good indicators of whether customers are happy or not.

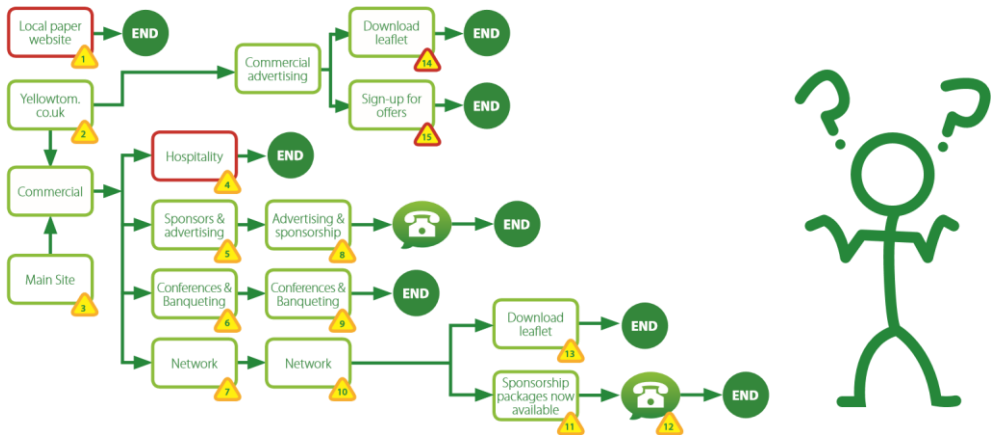
There are other ways to measure customer satisfaction, such as calculating your Net Promoter Score, but these are best used when you want to understand what changes you need to make and what the impact of any change has been.

Walking in your customers' shoes

Always look at your business from a customer point of view – don't assume they know as much about your business as you do. What is obvious to you may not be obvious to a customer! – Customer journey mapping is a great way to do this as it shows very clearly the times when a customer interacts with your business and what issues they and you may have. It's also a great

way to understand what improvements need to be made.

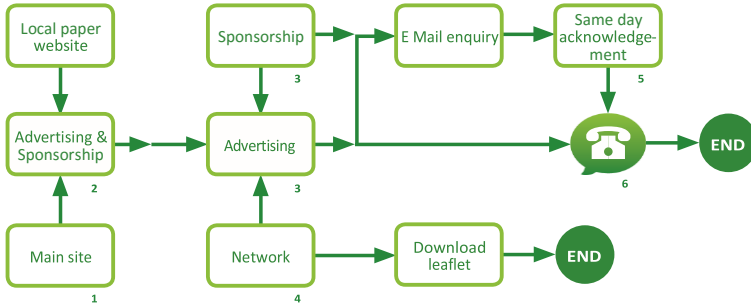
For example, here is a map showing the journey a business had to take to find out about advertising with a firm and using its conference facilities:



The warning triangles show the issues that the business faced - lots of dead ends, a minimum of 4 pages to navigate then to have to phone to get the information they needed.

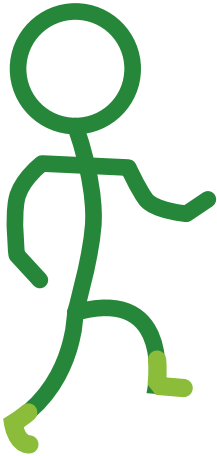
And this is the journey once we had redesigned it:





A much simpler, easier journey with no issues, maximum 2 pages to get the information they needed plus the option of phone or e-mail enquiry.

For help with mapping your customer journeys, e-mail info@simplycustomer.co.uk or call us on 0113 892 1213



And finally - avoid the biggest mistake most companies make:

Don't forget to change even the smallest issue - it tends to be the little things that annoy customers the most - such as:

- The phone number that rings, no-one answers and there is no voicemail
- The letter that only gives you part of the information you need
- Being transferred from one person to another and having to repeat yourself
- The website where it's really hard to find out what you want to know

We could go on, but you can probably think of many examples yourself!

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Simply Customer Limited,
The Hayloft,
Lane Head Farm,
Huddersfield,
HD8 8NP



t: 0113 892 1213

e: info@simpleycustomer.co.uk
w: www.simpleycustomer.co.uk