

Ventura Insight: Making sense of customer interaction

Today's uncertain economy isn't going to last forever. But the strength of relationships that a company builds with its customers now will endure. A personalised intelligent service will affirm, improve and increase the value of the customer relationship. The long term impact of good customer service is powerful and shouldn't be taken lightly.

Call Centre Clinic recently reported that 35% of call centre customers have changed supplier because of a negative experience. With seven out of 10 customers saying they would tell someone else about a negative experience contact centres need to provide a great experience for their customers or risk losing their business. That means developing a customer orientated service strategy that recognises them as individuals.

It was also reported by Call Centre Clinic that service provided by call centres is a key component in driving customer acquisition and repeat purchasing: product and price alone are not enough. Friendly agents are seen as key by 53% of consumers. This quality was seen as much more important than having problems resolved in a single call, being told their position in a queue and agents having to access account history.

Taking the time to find out what your customer wants, what their interests and motivations are and what their interest is in you can significantly increase satisfaction.

See the customer, hear the customer, speak to the customer

Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) is a system that can drastically improve interactions with

customers. Effective communication will increase satisfaction and loyalty and give individual positive experiences. NLP uses the language of the mind to consistently achieve specific and desired outcomes.

'Unconditional positive regard' is what NLP practitioners would call 'uptime'. This means giving your customers undivided attention for every single interaction with your company. It is a way of interacting in which all your senses are focused on your customer.

Excellent customer service goes much deeper than just saying the right things. Most perceptions of a situation are made up of our senses and a general feeling of how the situation is. By tapping into a customer's perception it is possible to improve general feelings about your company or product significantly. Words or linguistics only make up 7% of communication, the rest is made up of tonality or how the voice sounds (38%) and physiology or body language (55%). It's important to utilise every aspect. It's especially important to carefully select words and tone if you are interacting with customers over the phone.

Communication through physiology can enhance connections. Physical and postural mirroring can be used to match the general way a person is sitting or standing or by leaning your head in the same direction.



Making sense of customer interaction (continued)

Words favoured by each representational system

Visual	Auditory	Kinaesthetic	Audiodigital
See	Hear	Feel	Think
Look	Listen	Touch	Understand
Appear	Tune in/out	Grasp	Learn
Focused	Be all ears	Make contact	Sense
Picture	Sound	Cool/calm/collected	Consider
In light of	Be heard	Solid	Process
Clear	Resonate	Get hold of	Know

Some people are more aware of what they are seeing, what they are hearing, or what they are physically sensing or feeling, smelling, or tasting. Words and phrases which suggest the activity of seeing, hearing, etc. such as 'I **see** what you mean', 'keep in **touch**' or '**sounds** good to me' provides important information about how customers are currently thinking and to which of their five senses they are giving greatest attention.

A person who says 'I can't imagine it' may need to be provided with more or better quality information so that they 'can' imagine it – so they are able to visualise it.

If you are selling something and the consumer says 'I can't quite grasp this' take this as a clue that they need to be physically engaged in the description in order to be convinced. Aim to get them involved in a hands-on manner or offering them a week's free trial.

If the person responds with 'that doesn't add up' this could be a clue that they are evaluating it through inner self talk and, perhaps, through verbally listing the pros and cons. Their comment suggests that they need more factual data that does add up and less emotional hype.

Great minds...

Usefulness of representational systems is that it lets you 'speak the same language' as your customer. You can then be 'in touch' 'see eye to eye'. No matter what the customer interaction, if the

customer feels they are understood and the agent is 'on the same level' as them they will no doubt leave the experience feeling much more satisfied. It makes what you are saying more appealing. It shows you implicitly understand their needs.

The key is to be alert and flexible. Speaking the customer's language is both a gift to them and a valuable influencing tool for you. This technique is widely used in sales and advertising as it is highly effective in communicating messages about how good a product is and why people should buy it.

The closer the match between people, the greater sense of rapport and connection. Your customer should know from your congruent behaviour you are there for them and you will do whatever is possible to help them.

Speech can vary in each person by tempo, loudness, speed, rhythm, accenting and breathiness. Match one of these characteristics to establish subtle rapport. Take care not to mirror or match too exactly. If a customer speaks loudly try increasing the sound of your normal voice.

Customers want you to listen and understand what they want. Offering an intelligent and tailored service enables you to do just that – you are able to fully meet their needs giving you the competitive edge. Enhanced communication and better understanding with the people that keep your business alive definitely *makes sense*.

To get the most from every single interaction with your customers, contact the experts at Ventura.

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