

inside-out

HARD AND FAST: What can we learn about how to interpret and build customer satisfaction through delivering emotional experiences? **2**

TOOLBOX EXERCISE: Define and deliver your brand's personality through the way you write. **2**

OFF-BRAND SERVICE RECOVERY: Coca-Cola is the world's most valuable brand. This experience shows that every opportunity to interact counts. **3**

WHO SAID WHAT?: Comments and feedback from those in the know... **4**

KNOW HOW—CAN DO: More products, more tools, and more opportunities to equip you and your company with the capability and resources you need to become an on-brand organization. **4**

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Get past the logic —it's the emotion that counts!



Emotionally connected customers will buy much more, according to a recent article in Harvard Business Review.

off-brand

Researchers Fleming, Coffman, and Hartner (HBR—July/August 2005) examined indicators of customer behavior—such as attrition, frequency of use, total revenue, and total spending—and provide further evidence that “emotionally satisfied” customers contribute far more value than customers who are only “rationally satisfied.” In fact, their studies suggest that the purchasing behaviors of “rationally satisfied” customers were virtually no different than “dissatisfied” customers.

The nature of the interactions created by customer-interfacing employees is a key determinant of emotional satisfaction. But consistently delivering distinctively authentic customer service is a huge challenge for most service based brands.

Against this back-drop Leah Fisher recently entered a home appliance store—“New Zealand’s No.1 Choice.” Leah says shopping isn’t really her bag. Yeah right! However, she did need to return a faulty coffee maker and it seemed like a convenient time to replace the dishwasher and electric blanket.

Yes, the service Leah received at “New Zealand’s No. 1 Choice” was “rationally” satisfying. The staff seemed reasonably well equipped to operate logically and they were fairly adept at managing the transactions. But everywhere Leah looked, the opportunities for emotional connection were passing by.

Take the young couple purchasing a new stereo. How exciting! That wonderful feeling of buying something you’ve wanted for ages and the prospect of setting it all up and testing out some of your favorite tunes. However, it seems that the sales assistant did not share these dreamy thoughts. When the woman asked “do you have a box for this?”

(interpret her plea as—“I’d like my precious new stereo to be properly packaged”), the reply was a simple “no” as he proceeded to plonk the metal speakers into a plastic bag.

Leah wondered what the couple were feeling at that moment? Quite possibly a mixture of customer emotions that Michael Edwardson (University of Victoria, Australia) says most readily destroy loyalty within a retail environment: Irritated, Annoyed, Embarrassed, Frustrated, Disappointed, Indignant, and Impatient.

By now Leah was feeling some of these emotions as well. Having been nestled in the queue for ten minutes, another customer joined Leah and exchanged knowing glances. She commented that “if you thought this service is lacking, you should try down the road which is even worse”—news travels fast!

Maybe that comment was overheard, because then one of the staff loudly asked “Do you have a return?” Leah replied in the affirmative at which point he directed “You go stand over there by that desk.” Which Leah duly did. Another man came over and obligingly organized Leah a replacement. Leah thought this was also a good moment to enquire whether they sold electric blankets. He replied “yes we do”, handed her the coffee machine, said “thank you very much” and continued to process the exchange.

Leah departed that store with her \$69.00 replacement coffee machine and went to an outlet of another chain and purchased both the dishwasher and electric blanket—a considerably more profitable exchange.

> LINKING INSIGHTS TO ACTIONS

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skills

HARD AND FAST
LINKING INSIGHTS TO ACTIONS

What can we learn from “New Zealand’s No.1 Choice”?

So what happened? Leah was in the store, they sell the items she wanted, yet she still drove elsewhere to make the purchases.

It was simple really. While the staff weren’t rude, they were only there to process sales—logical. With a little bit of emotional connection thrown in, the product exchange could easily have turned into a new \$1000 purchase. Leah wanted to feel as though they valued her being there. Not much to ask really—perhaps a friendly smile, an acknowledgement, some sort of rapport building, and then some enthusiasm and interest around what she was purchasing.

1 Interpret customer satisfaction measures with caution. Some psychologists now argue that when we say we are “satisfied” it means that we really felt nothing at all. As a gauge of the relationship strength, satisfaction only counts if it is emotionally based.

2 Aggregate scores of customer satisfaction, engagement, or loyalty, can be very misleading. Fleming, Coffman, and Hartner argue that averages are far outweighed by the “local variability” (e.g. from store to store). In one analysis of retail chain stores, the top-performing stores achieved customer engagement levels 3.5 times higher than the poorest stores.

3 Can emotional connection be achieved consistently in industries where staff turnover is high? Bendapudi and Bendapudi (Living the Brand, HBR May 2005), say a resounding yes! The secret is generating a bond between employees and the brand. In practice it requires recruiting for brand-fit, carefully establishing expectations with staff (tasks, attitudes, and behaviors), building a sense of community, and focusing all staff on delighting customers emotionally!

What tone of voice does your brand speak to?

Reinforcement of the brand and consistency in how it is reflected externally and internally is important. The voice of your brand should be distinctively authentic to your organization and its brand personality. While taking care of the visual elements is relatively straight forward, often a strategy that focuses on the verbal side of the brand’s interpretation is missing.

The tone, spirit, and logic of written communications provides a significant opportunity to reinforce the essence and personality of the brand.

Here’s an example of a generic job advertisement (example 1), which was then rewritten to reflect the brand personality of a specialist food manufacturing company (example 2).

Review the two examples and then answer the questions at the right.

- Why is it important for our communications (internal and external) to be on-brand?
- Who could be attracted to Example 2 of the job advertisement compared to Example 1?
- What tone and spirit of language would be on-brand for your organization? Try rewriting example 1 in line with your brand.

EXAMPLE 1—GENERIC

WANTED
[company name] is seeking an Accounts Clerk for management of accounts receivable and related customer enquiries. Must have Excel experience. 3 yrs accounts experience with excellent communication skills a must. Good remuneration and prospects for the right person.

The Branded Customer Service Tool-Kit includes a complete process called Write On-Brand™, which defines the unique voice for the brand and provides a workshop for writers and commissioners of internal communications to get on-brand. Like to know more? Visit www.brandedservice.com

EXAMPLE 2—ON-BRAND (FOR THIS COMPANY)

WANTED: ACCOUNTS WIZARD
FOOD FOR THOUGHT. Our company is one of the sweetest in the state, distributing a whole range of delectable products to passionate foodies. We’re looking for a dependable Accounts Clerk to join the wholesome, fun-loving, and highly regarded accounts team. This is certainly a role you can nibble away at. Business is bubbling and statements (more and more of them) are sent out on a weekly basis. If you want to be part of a gelling team that is dedicated to delicious service and making a difference, then this is an exciting opportunity to move ahead.
At [Company name], you will need to hit the ground running, so to succeed you will definitely need to have some previous accounts receivable experience. Excelling in Excel is key, but delighting customers in response to their queries will be the icing on the cake. The menu of work changes fast, so you need a positive attitude and be nice and flexible.
If all this whets your appetite and you would like to work for a company where your contribution will be truly valued, satisfy your hunger and contact us at:

Coca-Cola make it real

on-brand

Even when you are a fast moving consumer goods company and customers hardly ever directly interact with your employees, the world's most valuable brand demonstrates the benefit of great off-brand service recovery. Here's an account of Jeff Mishlove's recent experience with Coca-Cola.

Service recovery is a key moment when the brand is placed under greatest scrutiny and it provides a unique opportunity to enhance or diminish its value. Not to mention the tangible benefits that can be gained from the feedback provided. After all, any company has got to appreciate getting feedback from their customers that helps them to remain on-brand.

It was a normal reach for a container of Coca-Cola from an upper shelf of a pantry closet. It was an eight-pack, a new packaging style, where the cans are held together by a piece of plastic that loops over each can—the modern day version of consumer jewelry. Previously, with the six-pack version, cans have become detached from the plastic loop, often resulting in a very well shaken soda. That's what happened this time, too, but in a slightly more elaborate fashion. Even as the can fell to the floor and time felt like it was suspended, I couldn't have envisaged the explosion that was to follow. The can ripped apart along its side and Diet Coke flew everywhere covering the floor, walls, and rugs. A thought flashed through my mind that Coca-Cola was making a statement about the explosive excitement in a can of Coke!

Once the disaster recovery plan had been implemented I wondered if Coca-Cola would want to know about the incident. Sure it was a Sunday, but I decided to ring the 800 Consumer Information line printed on the can.

Talk about on-brand! Here's what Coca-Cola promises:



"The Coca-Cola Company exists to benefit and refresh everyone it touches."

I definitely needed refreshing at this point and I wasn't disappointed. The customer representative was not only cheerful, well-informed, sensitive, and courteous, she clearly was engaged with Coca-Cola and its products. Pretty quickly I was also starting to feel more engaged with Coca-Cola again.

I first asked if she was the right person to take my complaint and she immediately assured me that she was and would be happy to learn about my problem. Coca-Cola wasn't hiding in any way.



"Coca-Cola is the world's most inclusive brand, and Coca-Cola must also be the world's most inclusive company."



"This begins with insisting on absolute quality for every one of our products and acting with a strong sense of accountability in everything we do."

While I was the one who had dropped the can, there was not even a hint that I might have been at fault. She suggested that I hold on to the exploded can—they might wish to inspect it first hand. You bet I was going to hold onto it. This was the first time in my life that a soft drink can has exploded on me and I had fantasies that it is something of a collector's item. Perhaps it will even end up on e-Bay one day!

Only after she had heard my feedback fully did she ask for my personal information. I was not seeking any compensation, I was really calling to report a possible manufacturing defect—and to test their service recovery process.



"Everyone who works for Coca-Cola is empowered and expected to maintain the highest standards in products, processes and relationships."

She then explained that they planned to reimburse me for the entire case of 32 cans! When I mentioned the stain on my woolen rug, she gave me detailed instructions for removing stains caused by Diet Coke. Finally, upon concluding our conversation, she made a point of thanking me for bringing this matter to Coca-Cola's attention. All in all, she provided a solid foundation on which the brand can rest. And as fast as the postman could arrive I had coupons to continue my love affair with Coca-Cola.

who said what

“Brand is the ‘f’ word of marketing. Everybody swears by it, few people understand its impact, and everyone would like you to believe they do it more often than they do.”

—Mark Di Somma, *The Audacity Group*®

Read more: <http://www.audacity.co.nz/articleRead.asp?articleID=10>

“Stories about your customers are everywhere in your organization: in the chitchat in the lunchroom, in emails, at the coffee machine. Such stories are easy to tap into, and collectively they can increase the levels of customer understanding, insight, and creativity in the organization, without expensive research.”

—Neil Davidson, *Marketing and Communications Consultant*

Read more: <http://www.marketingprofs.com/5/davidson1.asp>

“At the end of the day, FedEx is not the logo or its sales force. To the customer, FedEx is the person who comes to your door and doesn’t let you down.”

—Frederick W Smith, *Founder and President, Federal Express*

READER FEEDBACK: “Branding has been inside the marketing thinking pattern for so long that this refreshing look, coming from an innovative perspective, gives the reader an insight on the true meaning of a brand. Like every other dimension of your company, it’s your people who will make it or break it. Barlow and Stewart guide us through new models for (re)thinking and developing a brand. Having employees with “on-brand” behavior should be the main concern of every company.” —I Vargas



Do we periodically conduct full scale reviews to make sure our performance evaluation system is on-brand?

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View their video testimonials at: www.brandedservice.com

Registrations are now open for two more On-Brand Simulator Camps:

- 7th-12th November 2005—Las Vegas, USA (just a few spaces left)
- 6th-11th March 2006—Auckland, New Zealand

For more information, visit www.brandedservice.com or email info@brandedservice.com



Released onto the market just four months ago, the Branded Customer Service Tool-Kit is already being used in over 15 countries around the world. In fact, the initial production run sold out, but more will be available from October. And they are still priced at the 2005 introductory offer of US\$3,950.

More Tool-Kits available

Consulting IP, knowledge, and experience jammed into an integrated package of consultant guides, tools, processes, workshops, and management resources. Kick start yourself in building customized solutions that integrate your customer service with your brand and business strategy. View the Tool-Kit on-line at www.brandedservice.com

“The Tool-Kit is simply amazing—far beyond what I expected. The design is cutting-edge... it will jump start your organization” —Rich McLafferty, *Brand Guru, Boost Mobile*