

The Price of Missed Opportunities

Recently, I was writing a whitepaper on 'customer-focus'. What does it really mean and how to achieve strategic advantage through 'customer-centricity' – what might be considered the laser version of being customer-focused. I was describing, perhaps a little cryptically, some of the challenges forcing businesses to re-think strategies and adapt and innovate in today's environment. One of my colleagues queried what I meant by "*atomisation of markets through customisation and personalisation to produce 'the segment of one'*". It made me think more deeply about what this really meant. So I explained in my email.

Segment of One

What it means is that technology, data/information and communications have enabled the refinement of market offerings to produce a level of market granularity that permits products and services to be customised and personalised to the individual level ie. a segment of one.

Product Focus

Let me illustrate by way of example. In the past golf clubs were sold retail, and still are, through golf shops; and now of course, online). You simply bought the product 'off the rack', as is, after a few practice swings, between the aisles of other sports merchandise. You adjusted your game to them accordingly, with all its strengths and limitations. Just how I bought my first set of clubs 20+ years ago.

Customer Experience

However, contrast this with purchase of my latest set 12 months ago - I searched the Internet to acquaint myself with the latest brands, golf club technologies and design. Then I went to a golf professional who took all the critical measurements - physical and swing, club head speed etc. I tested different brands/club designs and specs etc. Based on his detailed feedback I selected a set of clubs. Not all the clubs of a standard set though - I kept my old 'get out of trouble' 3 iron, selected the specific angle of driver, number of woods and irons.

All data/specs were recorded via specialised video app. All data were sent to USA, where my clubs were individually manufactured to my specifications. Within two-three weeks the new clubs arrived from the other side of the world, nicely packaged, with my initials engraved on each club, a lifetime guarantee, and the opportunity any time to have individual, customised clubs made up at the drop of an email from the golf pro. Product uniquely designed and personalised for a segment of one! A pretty impressive customer experience.

Failure to Connect

And am I likely a convert for life? Well, this might be so, but for the fact that the company didn't close the loop with me. I have no contact with the company, and no means of contact or forging a relationship with their people, except through the golf pro who fitted me out, who may or may not be around. At bare minimum, what they could have done is put me on their email list to keep me informed of new golf technologies, advances in club design, upcoming golf expos, new products, special promotions etc. They could have sent me a personalised note with my clubs. They could have included bonus balls, golf tees, a signature towel – whatever. This would have certainly made the experience more special - 'memorable and remarkable', not just passing for 'impressive'. This is truly a missed opportunity.

Transaction Misses the Relationship

It is emblematic though of what is happening across so many businesses, industries and sectors. There are missed opportunities to win customers and keep in touch to build relationships. Instead, in my experience, the golf company has basically treated the purchase as a transaction, not the start of a long term relationship. Where will I go again to purchase my next set of clubs? I'm not sure. But if the golf company had done it right – my answer, with the enthusiasm of a true zealot, should have been Ping!

What Are You Doing With *Your* Customers to Drive Business Performance?

What are you doing to develop a customer-centric business that will win, and keep, your customers? What are you doing to identify and develop the eight key drivers of customer culture, and implement cultural transformation to drive customer centricity? The fact remains that customer-centric organisations outperform their competitors on every key dimension of performance – from customer satisfaction, innovation, and new product success, to sales revenue, profit growth and profitability, not to mention employee performance, retention and satisfaction. Wouldn't you like to know how?

Author Note: Jane McIntosh is a Partner at CustomerWise, a company dedicated to delivering customer-centricity diagnostics and strategies, and innovative change management programs to drive and support customer-culture transformation. Projects and initiatives are designed to assist organisations in achieving sustainable competitive advantage and superior performance and profits. jane.mcintosh@customerwise.co, or +61 438 802 246 Oct. 2016