



COMMITTED
TO SERVICE
EXCELLENCE



EHL ACTION PLAN

How to Achieve Service Excellence? A 7 Step Action Plan



THE CHALLENGE

A large percentage of business success stems from how a customer is made to feel, not just how happy they are with their purchase or service.

In today's experience economy, customers not only value but expect exceptional service - and they will reward or punish for the quality of how they are served with their spending choices.

Any company unable to respond to their needs, expectations or compensate for unfavorable experiences, might as well wave goodbye to any hopes of customer loyalty and re-engagement.

We've had the privilege of advising leaders from over 500 major organizations around the world. As a result, we've recognized a number of concrete actions that go a long way in identifying the right priorities, projects and people to drive valuable results in customer experience.



Advisory Services

1- Dig into Your Customer Behavior

Knowing your customer is the first step towards achieving Service Excellence.

At Marriott, to stay in touch with customers, Chairman of the Board and President Bill Marriott personally reads some 10 percent of the 8,000 letters and 2 percent of the 750,000 guest comment cards submitted by customers each year. Once you know what the customer is actually saying about the service delivery of the brand, it becomes easier to bridge the gap between where you are and where you want to be.

What is your customer saying about the service delivery of your brand?

Today's businesses are fortunate enough to have enough customer data at their fingertips, so they can deeply understand their audience - to both improve their performance and become more customer-centric.

By leveraging data analytics, or 'big data' as some call it, companies can build a 360° view of their customers, allowing them to foresee their clients' needs and desires and delight them with products or services that solve their needs - before they've even asked. That's the key to maintaining a competitive edge.

Data can also help companies develop a tailored Marketing strategy. It's time to face the music: mass-Marketing or one-size-fits-all strategies have become irrelevant, as customers increasingly respond to tailored messaging, delivered on the right platform, at the right place, and at the right time. Personalization - whether it be for B2B or B2C markets - has defined new-age Marketing as we know it, and data is the key to unlocking that strategy.



Article:
The path towards
customer-centricity
in hospitality

2- Make Customer Focus Part of Your Culture

Developing a company Service Culture is an imperative.

What a company really needs is a SERVICE CULTURE, which will be oriented towards the end customer in everything it does and at any level...ALWAYS! All employees - including the management and the board - defend small daily gestures, words, attitudes, interactions, which make-up a service driven company.

Because service is often intangible and cannot be measured, excuses are found not to fight for it.

Only a service culture can act against these odds and make sure that a solid web is created in the minds of the people in order to make the right move, use the right words and expressions, and act in the right way, whatever happens. Any small action can have extremely important consequences for the employee, the team, and ultimately the company.

A customer-focus should be engrained in your company's DNA - from your philosophy and values to your company culture and the characteristics of the people that you hire. Make sure that you clearly define your company culture and values - and communicate them throughout your organization.

These values should focus employees on how to operate with customers on a day-to-day basis, as well as how to build them into their decision-making processes. It should encourage all employees to understand that when the customer wins, the company wins - from your Marketing teams and customer-service agents to your operational staff.



Article:
The Customer is King, and
Customer Service Culture
is his Queen

3- Hire with Service Excellence in Mind

Delivering Service excellence requires specific skills

Once you have defined the framework for your culture of service excellence, you will need to ensure your staff are able to deliver on your promises. This starts as early as the selection process.

As a customer-focused business, your employees must live and breathe your company values.

Hire employees that are committed to helping your customers solve problems, and are willing to go above and beyond to serve their needs.

This involves finding employees who are flexible, open-minded and innate problem-solvers. They should excel at communication skills, and have a natural ability to turn complex problems into simple solutions, while satisfying both the needs of the customer and the business.

Depending on the type of service provided, companies should hire people that resemble their customers, sharing their expertise and interests – which will help them build a closer rapport with their customers and better anticipate their needs. For example, if your company operates in a highly technical field, make sure that your team shares the same technical skills and know-how so that they can serve your customers effectively.

 Article:
Delivering Service
Excellence: 5 Lessons
from Ritz-Carlton



4- Set-up Customer-focus Governance

Effective customer-experience efforts need to be uniquely cross-functional.

From marketing efforts to operations, defining a strong customer focus (not only customer service tools) is an essential of customer-centricity. This calls for smart governance: Clearly defined leadership, behaviors, and metrics.

Adequately addressing the challenge of putting in place such governance requires a dedicated effort on three levels.

- A customer-centric leadership structure must ultimately report to the chief executive and should be designed to stimulate cross-silo activity and collaboration.
- Leaders must commit to demonstrating behaviors and serving as role models to deliver customer-experience goals to frontline workers and refine and reinforce those goals over the long term.
- It is necessary to put in place the correct metrics and incentives that are critical for aligning typically siloed units into effective cross-functional teams.

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Customer Service shouldn't be a department, it should be the entire company.

Tony Hsieh, the CEO of Zappos



Article:
Is Service Excellence the
New Marketing
Excellence Definition?

5- Set Customer Service Goals

Service excellence goals set the stage for your long-term strategy, helping you maintain an excellent relationship with your existing customers, and foster meaningful relationships with new ones.

To implement effective customer service practices, business leaders must define two sets of service excellence goals: one for the entire company and another for individual representatives to better serve their clientele.

Well-planned, achievable goals provide business direction and a sense of accomplishment when attained. Goals focus attention on desired outcomes and provide motivation. Employees know exactly what they are expected to achieve and should be encouraged to determine the best way to deliver what's required.

In the same way that a Sales team have their own set of targets that support the overall business objectives, similarly, the Customer Service team needs realistic goals which support defined business objectives.

But goals only succeed if they're realistic, aligned with your business objectives and include a clear strategy on how to achieve them.



Article:
Setting customer service
goals: 4 steps
to excellence

6- Equip Your Employees to Deliver on Excellence

The customer will have multiple opportunities to form an impression about your organization. Listing down of those opportunities as a part of the Customer Service cycle and what needs to be done during those interactions/opportunities is essential if you want your frontline staff to deliver excellence on them.

In some cases hard-coding the experience works, whereas in some cases setting up a broad framework and guideline within which your employees can operate works better. The decision should be solely based on what would work better for the end customer.

Documenting the standards is not enough.

You need to equip your employees with the right knowledge and skills required to deliver service excellence on the defined standards. Effective training workshops and interventions are very helpful in facilitating the knowledge and skill transfer to your employees. Additionally, setting up processes and guidelines which allow for quick decision-making and remove bureaucracy have a great benefit.

The Ritz Carlton allows, better yet encourages employees to spend up to \$2000 to solve guest issues. More than the money, it's about giving control to the employees to use their time, effort and when needed – the company's money to enhance the experience of any guest. Till the time your employee does not own the interaction and feel like they are in control to make decisions, you are not equipping them to deliver on excellence (both from a process and mindset perspective).



7- Measure Your Performance

How do you know if your customer service is living up to customer expectations?

The answer is in KPIs (key performance indicators). There are plenty of different KPIs used to measure customer service and the success of a business's customer service strategy. Research the ones that best suit your type of organization.

Managing what you can measure via scores and data is essential to understanding where you stand on the principles of good service.

At the end of the day, numbers don't lie.

If you want to stay ahead of your competitors and keep your customers satisfied, it's important to closely monitor how your customers are experiencing your brand. Track how your team is doing, both in the short and long-term, and set goals for what you want to accomplish. But don't forget to stay flexible, reactive and solutions-oriented - and fix what needs mending.



Article:
How to measure service
excellence? 6 KPIs



EXPERIENCE IS EVERYTHING

Customer Experience Service Excellence

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