

Psychology of The Angry Customer

Customer Needs/Wants/Customer Expectations - What's The Difference

There is some confusion about the meaning of customer expectations. In the customer service literature, it's often said that you need to exceed customer expectations, but often that phrase is not defined or ill defined. That can get people and companies off on the wrong track.

Customer Expectations

There is some overlap between "customer expectations", "customer needs", and "customer wants". We define customer expectations in line with the actual meaning of the words. Customer expectations are simply what the customer expects regarding their interactions and service levels they will receive in the future. It does NOT necessarily mean "what customers want". That's a difference concept.

For example, a customer may go into a government office expecting to be treated in a curt, inattentive way, because that person holds a negative perception of government. The customer doesn't WANT to be treated that way. It's just what the person expects.

Customer Wants

Customer wants are simple. On one level they reflect how the customer WANTS to be treated, rather than how they expect to be treated. On another level, a set of customer wants may also refer to what the customer says he or she desires -- for example features of a product. However, notice that there can be a difference between what the customers says is wanted, and what the customer NEEDS to solve is or her real life issue or problem

Customer Needs

Customer needs differ from what they want. This may seem odd, but in fact, it's an important distinction. The customer is not always the expert on how to solve a particular problem. In fact, they look to sales staff and customer service staff for help in solving a problem. So, for example, a customer may "want" a particular make or model of a car, or home theatre, but it's quite possible that that would be a poor choice for the customer.

Customer needs refer to what the customer requires in order to solve a problem, and does not always correspond to what they say they want.

Implications

- The job of the customer service person is to identify what the customer needs, and then providing advice on the best choice to solve the problem. That means going deeper than accepting what they customer says he or she wants.
- To not do so may result in a sale, but an unsatisfied customer, or return, once the customer discovers the problem remains despite the purchase.
- While it's a good idea to try to exceed customer expectations, remember that expectations do NOT reflect what the customer wants -- only that they refer to what they expect to encounter.

Psychology of The Angry Customer

Unique solution ID: #1011

Author: Robert Bacal

Last update: 2013-12-02 20:16