

Telecommerce – Customer Service Vision & Values

An extract from Steve Pink's submission for Companion Membership with the Institute of Customer Service

Telecommerce has summarized below some of the key values that together comprise our vision in relation to customer service. We use these values to guide clients seeking our advice on marketing, sales and service issues in the contact centres they run or intend to develop.

Walking in your customers' shoes – the only perspective you need

If we use the example of Financial Services – we often hold this sector as the most tightly controlled, compliance driven, customer protective market place we have in the UK consumer arena. Financial Advisers are constrained to undertake a wide ranging fact finding exercise and needs analysis before they are allowed to make any product recommendation to their customer. Why would any organization do it any other way?

So often we hear “we’ve got this wonderful product” – great – are there any customers that need it or want it? Our philosophy is that you have to start from the customer perspective. Talk to customers, hold focus groups and undertake surveys – whatever method you choose you must ascertain a customer need for a product or service before you rush off and develop it (or worst still start selling it!).

Once a product or service is defined with the help of customers it is equally important that we ask the customer how they would like to access the product – online, via a call centre, in a retail shop. Does the customer wish payment by cash, credit card or account?

Keep taking the customer perspective – there lays the road to a successful business.

Sales through service deliver sales that stay sold

Having worked extensively in the direct marketing, telemarketing and telesales arena, they are entirely valid disciplines provided they are executed in a manner that values the customer perspective. Outbound calling campaigns to dubious lists with unreasonable pressure on staff to achieve sales targets are a recipe for poor quality sales from people you call customers but do not think of themselves in that way. They may not understand the product they have been sold, they may have no need for the service and they may have no intention of proceeding with the process.

Salvation – and improved business results – lays in equipping your staff to answer any queries on the product, ensure a full needs analysis is completed, check the customer has the means to pay and confirm the intention to use the service.

Customer Retention prioritized over customer acquisition

We hear that it costs 10 times as much to obtain a new customer compared to keeping an existing customer. Those organizations that listen and make an investment in keeping, helping, developing (yes – and selling more to) their existing customers will build a sustainable profitable business. With one client the role started as Head of Telesales and ended up within 18 months

convincing them to build a customer retention team – best decision they made that year!

Staff satisfaction delivers customer satisfaction

If you ever lack time or budget to ask your customers what they think – do the next best thing – ask your contact centre staff – after all they speak to customers all day long! By the same logic if you have happy staff you will increase your chances of having happy customers. Invest in your staff – training – coaching – development – promotion – incentives – and just watch the payback as your customer satisfaction scores improve.

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Telecommerce have edited a series of “Extracts” – these are drawn from customer service research, articles and original commentaries / notes compiled by me. The library of extracts currently stands at circa 80 – ask us for a relevant example.