

## What Exactly is 'Customer Delight'?

### - 6 'Ingredients' from Andy Hanselman

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I speak at conferences and seminars up and down the country and regularly 'rant on' about 'delighting' customers. When some people hear the phrase for the first time I sometimes see them grimace and with a look of despair say *'Oh no, he's been to Disneyland for his holidays – it's going to be one of those seminars!'*

So, in this article, I thought I'd explain what 'customer delight' is by highlighting some of the 'ingredients', how it can benefit your business, and maybe 'prompt' you to take some action! Here's a little incentive to get you started: according to the recent IPSOS Loyalty Report *"in a business to business engagement, 'delighted' customers are FIVE TIMES more likely to plan on repurchasing than merely satisfied customers."*

So, first of all, let me state what customer delight is not! It is not *'Have a nice day!'*, *'Buy One, Get 10 Free!'*, - obviously, it's got to make commercial sense (hey, anyone can give stuff away!)! It's not a gimmick, and it's certainly not a 'one off'!. In truly customer focussed businesses, customer 'delight' is part of the culture and make-up of the business. It's the way we do things around here!

So, what exactly is 'Customer Delight'? My definition is ***'surprising customers with the level of service you provide'*** and let me just emphasise, it's surprising them in a positive way please!

It's about 'exceeding customer expectations', and the scary thing is that in many industries, that can simply mean delivering things 'on time, on budget and in a courteous and friendly way'!

What does it 'look like'? Well, obviously, it's different for different types of industries, businesses and, by definition, different types of customers. What would 'delight' a corporate client of a large law firm may be very different from something that delights a teenage shopper!

So, although there are lots of ways of 'delighting' customers, what I have seen are common 'ingredients' of success. Your challenge is to work out what these 'ingredients' look like for your business, and crucially, your customers!

Let's look at those ingredients of 'Customer Delight':

#### **Ingredient 1: It produces a 'wow' reaction!**

The level of service provided 'surprises' customers – it could be the speed of response, the knowledge and willingness of the staff member, the way a problem is resolved. It's not what they expect from your industry sector and not something they've experienced from competitors or from you in the past. It's the returned call at the specified time, it's the delivery that arrives early, it's the front line member of staff who deals with your query, your enquiry, or your problem on the spot (and doesn't have to ask a manager for permission!)

#### **Ingredient 2: It appears spontaneous or unexpected!**

'Customer delight' by definition is often unexpected. However it's worth pointing out that some businesses build 'spontaneity' into the way they do business! It's the 'welcome note' when you arrive in your hotel bedroom, it's the car parking space that's reserved for you when you arrive at your supplier's offices, it's the receptionist who's expecting you, remembers you, and even remembers how you take your tea or coffee (mine's black, no sugar!), it's the 'standard letter' that says *'according to our records, you paid us on time – Thank you!'* (It amazes me how many businesses have standard letters for saying 'you're 30 days / 60 days / 90 days overdue', but don't have one to say thanks for prompt payment!). 'Planned spontaneity' can happen anywhere in the customer journey.

***“Really customer focused businesses know and understand their customers, what's important to them and what makes them 'tick'”***

### Ingredient 3: It's the personal touch!

Really customer focused businesses know and understand their customers, what's important to them and what makes them 'tick'. The key bit is letting customers know you know this! It's the unprompted bit of 'value adding information' that gets sent to them, it's the handwritten personalised ps's on letters, it's having their number on caller id (in the office as well as mobile) that allows you to recognise them when they call, it's the delivery guys who know your 'history' as a customer and your importance to the business.

***“Your challenge is to do stuff that gets people talking (positively please!)”***

### Ingredient 4: It makes customers feel 'valued'

This can often be a simple 'thank you!', the email that says *'Welcome and thank you for your first order'*, it's the personalised card or letter that says *'you've now been a customer of ours for 12 months – thank you!'*. Sometimes, it's the quick phone call that says *'How are things?'* or *'here's something I think you might find useful, interesting or helpful'* (it might be something not directly related to your products – an interesting news article, website, case study, lead, or opportunity – as before, the key is making sure it's 'relevant', 'personalised' and 'genuine!'). Scarily, it could be something as simple as 'front line staff' taking an interest in me as a customer, and demonstrating that – listening, smiling and answering my questions!

### Ingredient 5: It's genuine!

The downside of this stuff is that when it's done badly, it looks false and creepy. I call it 'scriptease' – when it's easier to 'follow the script' than it is to interact with and genuinely care for the customer. Really customer focussed businesses empower and encourage their people to take responsibility and to take the initiative. Every employee at Ritz Carlton Hotels is allowed to spend up to \$2,000 to solve a customer's problem without referring to a manager! How 'empowered' are your front line people?

And finally....

### Ingredient 6: It creates a 'talking point'!

The power of word of mouth (and 'word of mouse!') is getting stronger. However, people only talk about brilliant stuff and poor stuff – they don't tend to talk about 'ok stuff'! The challenge therefore is to do stuff that gets people talking (positively please!) and that's what 'customer delight' can do!

In the words of Maya Angelou, *“People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel”*

And that's the point! 'Delighted' customers feel it, they remember it, they talk about it and they come back for more of it! (However, it's worth pointing out that they do come back with 'higher expectations', but that's another article!)

But until then, *'Missing you already!'*

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