

Catalyst

Volume 2, Issue 6, June 2012

Newsletter from
Customer Service Excellence Foundation

Customer Service Excellence Foundation is a not-for-profit organization
striving to create a customer experience driven, globally competitive Indian economy.

www.customer-service.org

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Are we hypocrites?

All of us wear multiple hats, be it at life or work. Let me explain. We are simultaneously a boss, a subordinate and a mentor at the work place. Similarly at home, we can be a parent, child, uncle and nephew at the same time. If I were to draw a parallel to the challenging and often frustrating world of customer service, here too we wear twin hats- one of a demanding customer who wants the earth, moon and stars and the other often as a defensive service provider who is quick to come up with excuses (and perfectly valid ones) for his own failure or his organization's non-delivery on the service front.

Are we like that only?

You drive in to a five star hotel and if the doorman does not spring to open your door, you are already classifying the hotel as "uncaring, arrogant and overpriced." You try speaking to your mobile service operator and fret as he puts you on hold (interminably) even as the jingle of how wonderful they are grates on your impatient ears. You write a complaint mail to the CEO of a large insurance



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company, and if he does not respond within two hours you are itching to go on Facebook to tell the entire circle of your friends about this "wonderful" company. Your frown matches that of the bank clerk when you try to get your passbook filled up on a crowded Saturday at the bank. Mind you, I am fully empathetic to your travails as a customer and can tell you that I too have "been there, done that" and have gone through similar, if not greater heartburn when I get inferior service.

Blind to our own faults?

Now let's shift to our own organizations and talk about customer service and try to analyze our own performance objectively. How easy is it to get to our own landlines? (Try asking your spouse) How is the phone being answered? How long does it take for people to get directed to the right person?

How promptly are customer complaints being responded to? How long is it before someone actually reaches the spot of the complaint? And what happens when someone writes to the CEO? You and I know that things are far from perfect and yet what is our reaction usually? The trouble is with BSNL, our servers were down, the customer is being unreasonable, and it will take time to respond...



Parents who tend to be overly critical of their friends' children usually turn a blind eye to their own children's faults. Is this how we are looking at our own organizations when it comes to service?

My question is simple. When we have such high standards for the people who are serving us, should we not raise the bar when it comes to our own organization's service delivery instead of looking for excuses?

Can you set the tone?

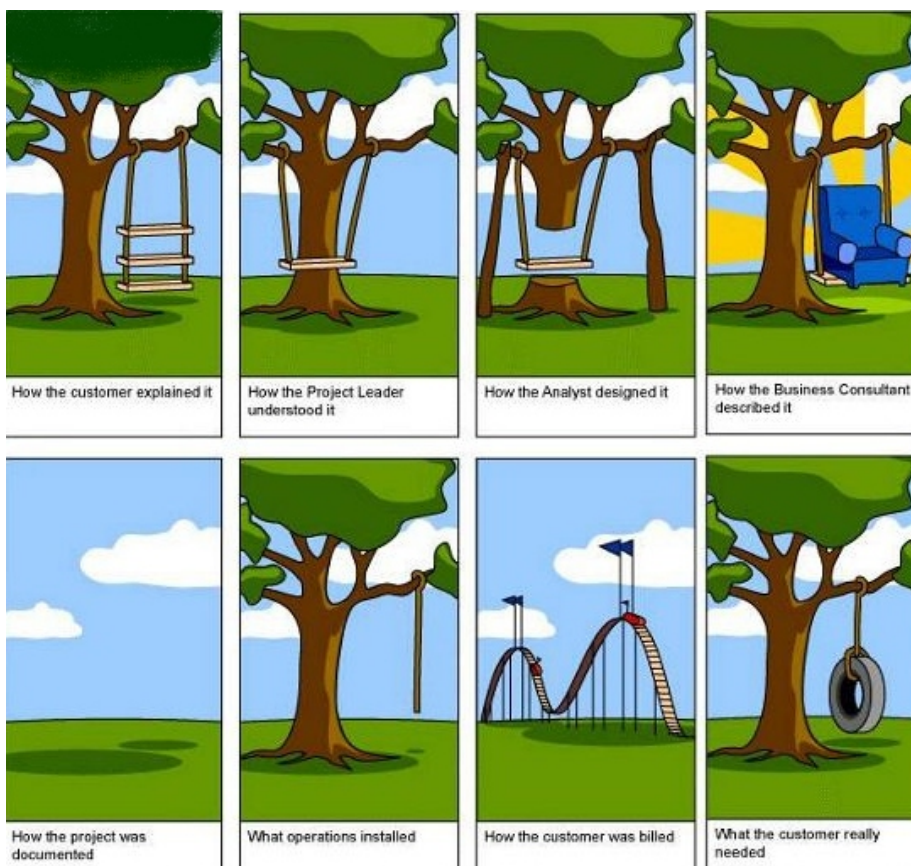
At the risk of stating the obvious let me once again reiterate that the level of service is directly proportionate to the level of senior management involvement. Is the senior management, ideally the CEO passionate about the service levels of his own organization? If not, I am certain that you are going to have a problem as your service responsiveness determines the way your brand is perceived. As someone who has been studying brands for the last three decades or so, I can tell you unequivocally that "branding is everything that your company does" and that includes the way the phone is answered. Another statement that I am fond of repeating is that "your employee is your brand." And employees need to be trained on handling the brand with the tone being set by the top most executive in the organization. So are your employees geared and trained to serve?

Who is your service champion?

Successful companies have brand champions. It could be the founder, the CEO or the Chief Marketing Officer. They live, breathe, eat and dream the brand and its success. They ensure that everything that the brand does is in line with its vision and its tone of voice is carefully articulated in every piece of communication the company releases. So here is my question to you? Who is championing the service delivery in your organization? It seems a simple question to answer but it is in effect just a little tricky. Service cannot be a mere function in a company that wants to rule the future. It must consume senior management time and attention and not just be a pain or a pressure point or something to be quickly discussed and ended. This calls for a completely new attitude towards service and the total commitment and involvement of senior management.

Service could well be your true differentiator in the undifferentiated world that we all struggle in. But that starts with a commitment from the top.

Are you ready to give customer service your everything or are you going to silently watch your competition do it and overtake you in the bargain?



Spend a lot of time talking to customers face to face. You'd be amazed how many companies don't listen to their customers.

- Ross Perot

Experience is increasingly valued

McKinsey Consumer and Shopper Insights - **Standing Tall: Japan's Resilient Luxury Market**
by Brian Salsberg & Naomi Yamakawa - June 2012. (For full report, visit <http://csi.mckinsey.com/>)

Experience is increasingly valued

“The in-store experience is a key element in enjoying luxury, and it may be particularly important in Japan, whose customers are renowned for their high service standards. Asked what were the key elements that enhanced the buying experience, the top two answers Japanese consumers gave were: 1) The staff was kind, and 2) The staff was knowledgeable. Responses were consistent across categories. Luxury executives tell us that for their best customers, the in-store experience and overall customer relationship are nearly as important as product performance. Luxury brands, by definition, are about high quality and exclusivity; providing an excellent customer experience helps to deliver something extra, and those we spoke with are convinced that doing so is well worth the investment. One executive told us that his

company, a luxury automaker, saw tremendous value in closely monitoring the daily customer relationship management activities of its sales team and using the information to coach staff, not only on closing a sale, but on upselling various options and features. The value of experience also comes through in what consumers tell us they want. There is clear potential for luxury experiences to become “the next big thing.” Asked their level of interest in various products, those 30 and up named luxury hotels above all others (it came in second among those in their 20s). Spas and beauty services also scored highly. We also asked one of our favourite questions from previous surveys: “Imagine you won 300,000 yen (about \$3,800) in a lottery today. How would you spend it?” Except for those in their 20s, travel scored highest by a decisive margin...”

Experiential Innovation Areas

Source : London Business School

Innovation in Experiential Services - An Empirical View

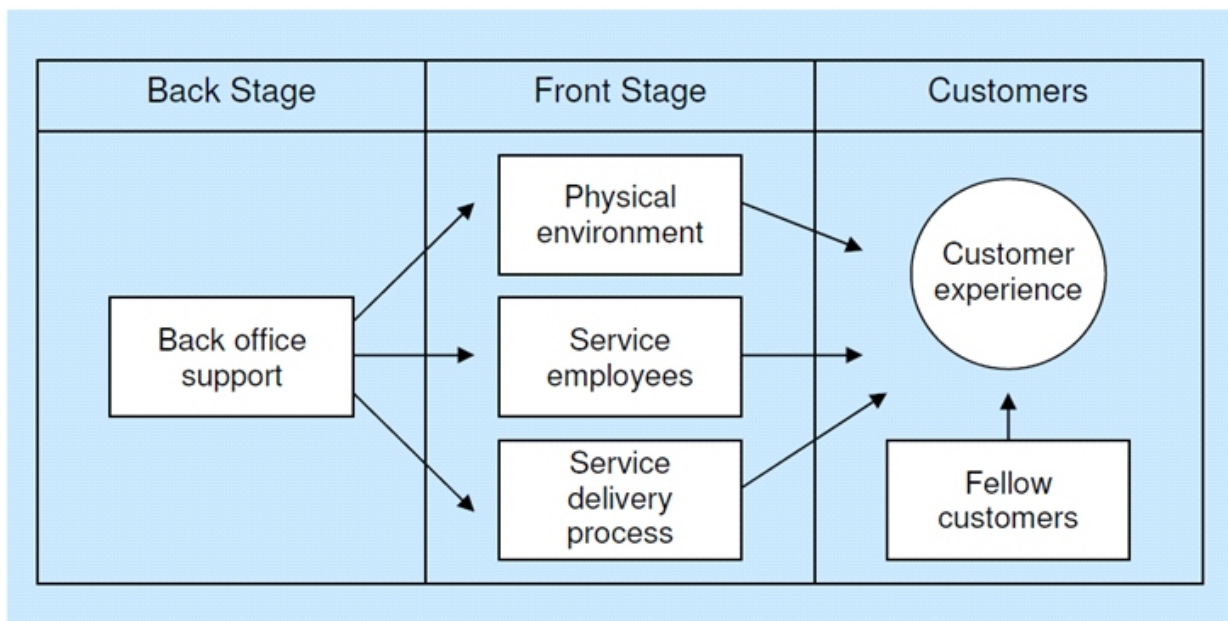
Chris Voss and Leonieke Zomerdijk - June 2007

“...In addition to applying the service as a journey perspective, experiential service providers and design agencies and consultancies in the field of experiential services innovated in five distinct design areas:

1. Physical environment ('stage')
2. Service employees ('actors')
3. Service delivery process ('script')
4. Fellow customers ('audience')
5. Back office support ('back stage')

These five design areas directly or indirectly contribute to a customer's experience. In a restaurant for example, the dining experience consists not just of the quality of

the food and drinks but is heavily influenced by the atmosphere and comfort of the venue, the behaviour of the staff, the presence of other guests, and the flow of the meal, for example, waiting to be served. The areas are often referred to in theatrical terms, emphasising that a service can be seen as a performance that involves a stage, actors, a script, an audience and a back stage area (e.g. Grove et al., 1992). The research reported here shows that companies innovated in each of these areas to improve existing or develop new customer experiences. The relationships between these five areas are shown in the Figure...”



TVS Automobile Solutions Limited

TVS Automobile Solutions Limited (TVS ASL) is a part of the 100-year old automobile behemoth TV Sundram Iyengar & Sons Limited. The businesses that form TVS ASL have been in existence since 2003 and have been conducted under the brand 'MyTVS' which was spun off as a new entity in February 2011 with fund infusion from Kitara Capital, a PE firm in the Middle East.

The organization is primarily into two lines of business 24 X 7 Service Assistance and All Car Service (ACS).

Under the 24X7 Service Assistance vertical, 'MyTVS' offers 24 X 7 Emergency Roadside Assistance (ERA) for any car, any time, anywhere! MyTVS 24 X 7 ERA is now present across India (except J&K and the North Eastern States) Covering 1681 locations and 22 states with a network of 3058 Authorised Service Providers (ASPs). Any MyTVS ERA cardholder has to just call the company helpline in case of a vehicle breakdown and the organization ensures a technician attending the vehicle on the spot. MyTVS, in its endeavour to serve the customers as a single-point service provider, has plans to enter into the Travel Assistance field.

ACS is a chain of more than 30 company- and 50 franchisee-owned multi-brand car service workshops. The motto is to provide dealership levels of service at economical price points of the prevailing service costs in dealership workshops. Currently the operations are spread in Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, and Karnataka. Company is in advanced stages of having pan-India network of service workshops and increasing its total number of outlets to 200 by FY 2013 increasing to 300 by FY 2014. Toward this end, joint ventures have been finalized for Eastern and Western India and outlets would be coming up in West Bengal and Gujarat by Q2 of this fiscal. To supplement this, an expansion of the franchise network is on the cards.



FY 2013 would see TVS ASL enter Northern India, with NCR being the first location.

To focus more on the emerging value-added services that customers are looking from reliable players, the company has tied up with Excelfore, a US-based telematics equipment provider, to cater to the growing remote vehicle tracking and fleet tracking service market. It plans to bring other services around the GPS/GPRS technology to enhance its presence in this market.

FY 2012 will also see TVS ASL entering vehicle insurance and broking businesses with the acquisition of a broking firm.

The organization currently has a team of 600 employees and is led by a competent team of higher management that has more than 2 decades of experience in the automobile industry. Riding on the back of this strength, FY 2013 would see TVS ASL adding another 500 employees and clocking in INR 140 crores as revenue, a more than 3-fold jump over FY 12.

As evident from the brand "MyTVS" the entire organization, including customer, employees and investors, is woven around the thread of relationship and trust. This has been and will continue to be the differentiator for organization and will help TASL reach its 2015 vision of becoming a single point service provider catering to all needs of car owners across India.

