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THE BUSINESS NEWSLETTER FROM AUSWILD & CO
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4 Steps to Ensuring Customer Experience Comes First

Today's customers, armed with websites, blogs and peer-to-peer recommendations, are more knowledgeable and demanding than their counterparts at any time in history – thanks to the internet and social media.

As such, successful business owners must not only deliver a high-quality product or service, they must do so in a manner that provides a memorable experience to win over and retain these customers.

This is what some experts and thought leaders have to say on customer experience –

"Make sure that you are giving them a premium experience and that you are really answering their questions about the product," *Miles Dinsmoor*, CEO of digital advertising firm Modus Operandi.

"The key to developing truly breakthrough products and services can be found in first understanding the consumer experience and then innovating meaningful ways of transforming it," *Deepa Prahalad* and *Ravi Sawhney*, authors of *Map the Future of Design for Enhanced Customer Experience*

"As boundaries blur between product, service and brand experiences, marketing leaders need to look to customer experience as an integrated digital strategy. Today, customers expect exceptional branded moments on the path to purchase and over the longer arc of a customer relationship," *Jake Sorofman*, digital marketing analyst at Gartner.

"Customer experience simply comes down to how customers perceive their interactions with your company," *Harley Manning*, analyst at Forrester Research.

Business owners seeking to win and retain customers must take the time to thoughtfully analyse each point of interaction, including the company website, call centre, marketing collateral, product warranty, service guarantee, return policy along with the shipping experience, and ask, "With respect to this touch point, am I delivering what my customer wants and expects from me?"

According to *Jesse Torres*, Thought Leader, Influencer, Radio Host and Author, in an article in **Entrepreneur.com**, there are four ways to improve the customer experience:

Be trustworthy

Can your customers trust your organisation? Can they trust you that you won't rip them off? Can they trust you to deliver the service you promise?

Every day companies have a chance to demonstrate their commitment to their brand's promise. Trust takes time to build but can be shattered in an instant.

Business owners must ensure that their policies, procedures and people work in alignment and that every touch point is optimised so that their businesses deliver on the promises of customer service, accessibility, delivery time and quality.

Set priorities

As much as everyone wants to listen to every piece of customer feedback and solve every possible customer issue right from the start, it's just not practical.

Business owners must prioritise which touch points will be improved and focus first on those bringing a chance of quickly gaining clients or harbouring the risk of losing current customers.

"Even the biggest brands really cannot participate in all areas equally at the same time," Dinsmoor warned, advising figuring out "which channels are your audiences on the most, what are they doing there and then picking and choosing the strategy accordingly."

Get closer to customers

Create "a customer-centric culture" where you seek to understand and welcome "the voice of the customer" to the table and where you are defined by the level, quality and breadth of service provided to customers and the experience they have doing business with you.

This requires companies to become acquainted with their prospective customers and understanding what gives them the "warm and fuzzies".

Business owners doing business online can access plenty of analytics to generate a profile of customers. Companies with offline sales can rely on traditional surveys and sales data to glean information about the typical customer.

Guided by the customer profile that's developed, determine if the various touch points provide the necessary service and information.

Measure progress

Use metrics to gauge the customer experience. To assess how consumers feel about the company (using perception metrics), ask questions like "Did we meet your needs? Were we easy to do business with? And were we enjoyable to do business with?"

Use outcome metrics to figure out future customer behaviour by asking questions like "How likely are you to buy from us again? How likely are you to recommend us to a friend or colleague? How likely are you to take your business to a competitor?"