

PEOPLE
CUSTOMER
SERVICE



Love Thy Customer

TAKE YOUR SERVICE STANDARDS TO THE
HIGHEST LEVEL.

BY SIMON T. BAILEY

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eady to hear your new edge in business? It's customer love. The key is simple: Stop selling and start connecting.

Going beyond the transaction is what keeps you in business. Only 4 percent of entrepreneurial ventures survive to see 10 years. I'm proud to be one of the exceptions, with 18 years behind me as a speaker, author and coach. Before starting out on my own, I spent years in hospitality, even working at Disney, so I have a deep appreciation for great customer service. My years as a solopreneur have only furthered my belief that relationships are the currency of professional success.

By turning introductions into opportunities and moments into memories, you can create clients for life.

Unforgettable experiences improve your brand story, increase customer retention and stimulate word-of-mouth marketing. I am convinced that this is the greatest time in history to level up your business, and I challenge you to think of your interactions as connect-the-dot experiences that confirm why someone should do business with you instead of the bland customer service encounter they might expect from one of your bigger, stronger competitors.

To understand how to truly love your customer and provide the ideal service experience for them, get to the bottom of three key questions.

- *What is the experience of your business, brand or service?*
- *Are your client connections meaningful, or only money-oriented?*
- *Where can you create an above-and-beyond moment?*

Once you have drilled down on the answers to these questions, you can get to work connecting with people. Customer love is the professional embodiment of intentional empathy, creating a positive emotional imprint and giving extra effort with no strings attached.

There are a few primary principles I learned early in my career and use in my own business to this day. I know they'll help you, no matter if you're moving real estate, working as an independent marketer or coach, or trying to find the true believers in your startup.

1. SEE CUSTOMERS AS GUESTS.

Provide a warm and gracious greeting to everyone you come into contact with, thus creating a customer love environment.

Action tip: Use your customer's name when possible; if you don't know it, ask.

2. PERSONALIZE THE EXPERIENCE.

Be prepared to individualize how you create a platinum service moment. This can be done in almost any type of



SIMON T. BAILEY

business. There was an Uber driver who delivered me to the airport once in Columbia, South Carolina. He made it a point to ask if I enjoyed my visit and promptly provided a laundry list of vetted suggestions regarding local restaurants, scenic sites and other off-the-beaten-path goodies should I decide to return. That gentleman created an impression that lasted long after our meeting. He understands how to create an appetite for return travel. Now, that's customer love.

Even if most of your customer interactions are online instead of face-to-face, first impressions still count. David Crystal, a renowned British linguist, wrote in his book, *The Stories of English*, about how modern technology has affected

language. He explains that email, texting and “netspeak” have all visibly changed the way we interact with language, as well as how quickly our modern vernacular evolves.

Although the digital age has certainly strengthened the global community, “cyberspeak” shorthand can be a quick way to depersonalize and disconnect. Keep that in mind, especially when you're replying to customer reviews or questions on social media.

3. ANTICIPATE AND UNCOVER NEEDS.

Success in today's competitive business environment is contingent on predicting and understanding customer behavior. Only after identifying what the guest of your brand or business wants are you then able to customize solutions to suit their needs.

A great example would be how the digital analytics company Amplitude is partnering with the fitness brand Peloton. I recently had a chance to speak at a virtual event for Amplitude and learned that Peloton is brilliant enough to leverage the behaviors of their most active users. They developed a framework to harness the most emergent activities: Observe customer actions, validate them across a variety of user profiles

SUCCESS SAYS

“I had an amazing experience with a waiter who recently gave my wife and I a great wine recommendation. At the end of the meal, he didn't just give us our bill, but also a photocopy of a full page of his handwritten notes about the bottle. We both got great tips that night.”

Josh Ellis
Editor-in-Chief





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WHAT'S IN A NAME?

According to research, **small-business employees only request customer names in 21 percent of client interactions**, though 86 percent of customers in the same survey reported that they enjoy when a business representative refers to them by name.

and use that information for a future feature and product ideation. According to Amplitude, another way to think about emergent behaviors is to call them “usage patterns,” and identify what appears to organically repeat within a highly engaged subset of your community.

Peloton posed two questions: How are our most engaged members using our product? How might we productize these behaviors and make them applicable to the widest possible audience?

How could you ask the same of your business or brand?

4. RESPOND WITH IMMEDIATE AND APPROPRIATE SERVICE.

Take a vigorous approach to improve the experience and resolve issues in a way that demonstrates a commitment to customer love. If you can't fulfill your promise to your clients, immediate communication to manage expectations is paramount. According to a survey conducted by American Express, 78 percent of consumers have canceled a charge or not completed an intended purchase due to a poor customer experience.

5. KEEP THEM LOYAL THROUGH ACTS OF KINDNESS.

Surprise is a powerful emotion. When you delight a customer, you strengthen his or her memory response and create powerful, lasting connections to your brand.

The customer love mindset is about investigating the value of random acts of kindness—deciding where you can do more or go the extra mile instead of the extra inch.

Customer love is seeing your current and prospective clients as guests, personalizing their experience, realizing their needs and operating with appropriate immediacy, all while also engaging in random acts of kindness. The economic uncertainty of the past year has created an opportunity across many industries to reset or revamp the way we show up for ourselves and our business.

My parting advice for you would be to take this time to See, Help, Infuse and Praise your clients and customers.

SEE your clients for who they are, instead of who you think they are or who you want them to be. It's critical to take what someone has to offer without the limitation of expectation. Pay attention to the language they use, the questions they ask and what drives or excites them.

HELP the people you interact with where they are, not for what you can gain from where they are going. Often our default is to only initiate what we perceive as advantageous relationships. If this is always the goal, there are indefinite opportunities and valuable connections you will pass up from professional hubris.

INFUSE them with hope. Equip, empower or encourage the guests of your brand or business with the tools to harness their potential and get the most out of what they are doing or where they want to go.

PRAISE them for the value and difference they are already making. Never underestimate the power of celebrating others for the little things they do. When you empower others, you create relationships that drive results. ♦

BAILEY IS THE AUTHOR OF *BE THE SPARK: FIVE PLATINUM SERVICE PRINCIPLES FOR CREATING CUSTOMERS FOR LIFE.*