



Live Your Strengths

Welcome to the March edition of *Live Your Strengths*, the monthly e-newsletter from In Search of Excellence.

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Emotional Satisfaction: A Tale of Two Service Providers

“Focusing on creating satisfied customers is a one-way ticket to mediocrity... it will not differentiate the good from the great.” ~ John Fleming and Jim Asplund, Human Sigma

I have recently had the opportunity to experience technical repair service from two different companies with very different approaches. The experience has caused me to reflect on what customer satisfaction really means and how every organization can draw on a few key behaviours to ensure their customers or clients are delighted with the service they receive.

My first service encounter was with my phone service provider. Although I found their on-line work order form a little tedious, the repairs I requested were completed within a reasonable amount of time without too much inconvenience for me. As well, although the repairmen were obviously disgruntled with the company, tossing out frequent jokes and critiques of the company, they were pleasant to me and answered all the questions I had.

The other repair service I experienced was with a printer I had just purchased. Within 5 minutes of sending an email to the salesperson from whom I had bought the printer, she called me back to find out what was the problem was. She was polite and very eager to make the situation right, assuring me that it was a great product and that the problem would be resolved very soon or they would replace the printer. She even went so far as to call the technical hotline for the company and wait on hold with them to get the answers I needed, rather than just giving me the number to call myself.

In the end, I was ‘satisfied’ with both service experiences because the problems were resolved in a timely manner. However, in one situation I was left feeling ambivalent about the company and in the other, I was ecstatic with the service. And, even though I had approached the printer company about a problem with their product, by the end of the service I was happier with my purchase than ever before.

This is a great example of what John Fleming and Jim Asplund refer to as ‘Customer Engagement’ in their recent book *Human Sigma: Managing the Employee-Customer*

Encounter. Their research has found that the level of satisfaction a client experiences with a company may not be the best indicator of continued patronage. A number of case studies have shown that customers who would rate themselves as being 'extremely satisfied' with an organization's products or services can be classified into two very distinct groups: those who are 'emotionally satisfied' and those who are 'rationally satisfied'.

It appears that these two groups have very different behaviour patterns: Emotionally satisfied customers deliver enhanced value to the organization over the long term by buying more products, spending more on those products, or staying longer with the business. On the other hand, these researchers found the surprising result that rationally satisfied customers are not necessarily better customers. In fact, they behave no differently than customers who are dissatisfied!

At this point, it is necessary for us to give some thought to who our customers really are. For some organizations, the answer is simple: the customer is the person who buys their product or services. But for other organizations, the 'customers' may be donors or volunteers. For people working in large organizations, their 'customers' may be their team members, colleagues in another department, or key suppliers. For many organizations, their customers will be a mix of those mentioned above.

Regardless of who *your* customers are, it is crucial that you take the necessary steps to increase their level of emotional satisfaction. For a detailed look at customer engagement, I recommend reading *Human Sigma*, as it offers some very valuable insights. For some quick tips you can begin to apply right away, join me in this month's *Live Your Strengths* Challenge (see below).

Back by Popular Demand:

The Leadership Challenge Workshop

May 1 - 2, 2008

Holiday Inn, Guelph Ontario

Around the world, The Leadership Challenge Workshop consistently receives rave reviews. The intensive two-day public program is a catalyst for personal and organizational transformation.

Based on the best-selling and award-winning book, *The Leadership Challenge* by James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, the workshop features:

- In-depth exploration of The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership
- 360-degree feedback using the research-based Leadership Practices Inventory
- Engaging experiential learning and multimedia instruction
- Thought-provoking group discussions
- Creation of a personalized leadership development plan

For more information about this public workshop, please [click here](#). To find out how to bring this workshop to your organization, please [contact Denise](#) or phone 519-923-9968.

Live Your Strengths Monthly Challenge: Engage Your Customers

Although there are a lot of components necessary to create an engaged or emotionally satisfied customer, there are some key elements that are required:

- *Always deliver what you promise.* As a basic requirement, this means knowing *what* your organization promises and making sure that everyone in the organization is clear about this mission. Recent research has shown that only 43% of customer service employees actually know what their company stands for and how it is different than its competitors.
- *If a problem arises, find ways to reach a fair resolution.* Your organization must become known for treating people fairly and consistently. This means acknowledging and apologizing for problems, and taking ownership and following up (even if the problem has not yet been resolved). It is important to follow the policies and rules laid out for handling problems (even as minor as refunds and exchanges), but to still be flexible about handling out-of-the-ordinary situations. In the end, the goal should be to leave the customer *better off* than before the problem occurred.
- *Always treat people with respect.* Although it sounds simple, to always be respectful is a difficult feat because it has to apply to all elements of your relationship. This respect should extend beyond the customer-employee encounters, to smaller things such as your parking facilities, the design and layout of your building or website, the sales approaches you use, even your advertising campaign (for a great example of respect in advertising, just look at Dove's Campaign for Real Beauty).
- *Build on your existing strengths.* Identify the customers you feel are most highly emotionally satisfied with your organization. Ask these customers about their experiences: what do they like most about your organization? How does your organization differ from others they have experienced? Next, determine if you are currently playing up these strengths to all your customers. Are there ways that you could expand and build on some of these strengths?

Could you use some guidance with this challenge? Call Denise for a free 30-minute coaching session. Start living *your* strengths!

Do you know someone who would be interested in receiving the *Live Your Strengths* newsletter? Please feel free to pass it on to those in your network.

Creating the path to your potential

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