

Sales and Service Excellence

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Dare to Be Different

Differentiate your product/service.



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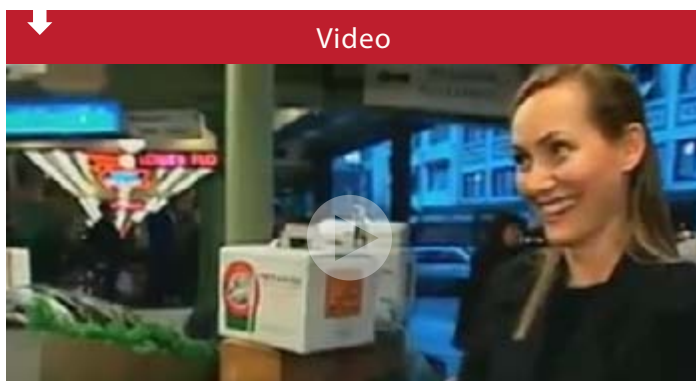
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Article
"It All Starts with Attitude" Harry Paul, Stephen C. Lundin, and John Christensen

In today's dog-eat-dog marketplace, you need to develop a strategy to stand out—to separate yourself from your competition, to be different!

As Ted Levitt noted: *"Everything can be differentiated, even so called commodities such as cement, copper, wheat, money, air cargo and insurance."*

Price is the enemy of differentiation. By definition, being different is worth something. Consumers are willing to pay a premium, redefine the buyer/seller relationship, erect barriers to the seller's competitors and establish the seller as a trusted advisor when a differentiated platform offers perceived value in the market.



Seattle's Pike Place Fish Market

On a trip to Seattle in 1998, John Christenson, filmmaker and CEO of ChartHouse Learning, came across a fish market called Pike Place. As he entered the fish market, he was stunned by what he saw. Fishmongers were tossing around salmon, tuna, trout, mackerel, crabs and everything else for sale. There was so much energy, excitement and laughter from customers. John was taken by the electric atmosphere and the manner through which the fishmongers engaged and interacted with their customers. Often, the employees of Pike Place invite customers to join the fun—complimenting them on their fish-throwing ability and commiserating if they missed catching a flying fish. John soon became deeply engaged in a memorable customer experience—a differentiated, emotion filled sales process through which garrulous hams in bright orange overalls had taken the task of selling

fish and turned it into an art. The entire purchase process was choreographed from the tentative approach of the prospect, engagement with the fishmonger, presentation of information, closing the sale and then tossing the fish. Seattle's Pike Place Fish Market's self-declared business goal was to become "World Famous"—and they have done it! From that initial visit, John Christenson was inspired to create the FISH! film, which then led to the FISH! Philosophy, helping people gain insights into differentiation, employee engagement, customer emotion, loyalty, and strategies to engineer the customer experience. So what's the point? A group of people turned an otherwise mundane sales process into an emotionally packed, differentiated customer experience.



Differentiated Value Proposition

Value proposition is the reason for your professional existence. It describes how you create value for others. It makes you stand out in a crowded marketplace. Without a compelling value proposition, you are ordinary and disposable—a commodity. With a distinguished value proposition, you are unique and indispensable.

Your *unique value proposition statement* summarizes the reason why a potential customer should buy your particular product or service, how it exceeds that of your competition and why it is worthy of the price they must pay. The ideal value proposition is concise and appeals to the customer's strongest decision making drivers. It is an irresistible offer, an invitation that is so compelling and attractive that the customer would be out of his or her mind to refuse your offer.

Do you have a value proposition in the form of a clear and concise statement that explains the tangible results your customers will receive, the unique benefits you bring to bear that others cannot? A value proposition must go beyond functional product or service descriptions to express the results a consumer can expect to achieve. Has someone tried to sell you a product or service without focusing on the benefits or outcomes? If so, you were most likely uninterested and disengaged. You get the point.

Customer Experience Journey

The Customer Experience Journey is the sum of all experiences that the customer has with you and your organization—the actions and results which make the customer feel important, understood, heard and respected. Each customer interaction molds and shapes the Journey. While you may take great pride in the “features and benefits” of your offerings, you need to assess the degree to which you are stimulating the emotions of those whom you serve. To do this, you must deeply engage your customer’s emotions in addition to, and even above, their intellect. You will hit roadblocks unless you discover your customer’s goals, passions and struggles that opens the door for an intense and lasting relationship – an emotional connection which transcends price and product.

The Customer Experience Journey guides you through a range of emotions that affect the consumer’s decisions including fear, greed, pride, envy, anger, pain and guilt. Emotional connections are essential components of the Journey. More than 50% of the customer experience is subconscious, or how a customer feels. The self-conscious brain is a fertile garden to sow positive seeds. The mind is highly selective, processing millions of pieces of information each second. Whether you realize it or not, you are impacting the subconscious in each step of the Customer Experience Journey.

6 Steps to Differentiated Experience

In designing and delivering a *Customer Experience Journey*, you need a plan to engage the consumer (emotional engagement is the foundation of customer experience). People rationalize personal decisions first but make decisions based on feelings. A great experience transcends the rational attributes of a product or service (price).

Cecil Beaton, the English Academy Award-winning costume designer said, *“Be daring, be different, be impractical, be anything that will assert integrity of purpose, emotion and imaginative vision against play-it-safers, the creatures of the commonplace, the slaves of the ordinary”*.

I suggest six essentials to differentiate yourself from your competitors: 1) Listen to the customer. A pleasurable and memorable experience occurs when the customer has the opportunity to speak about his or her dreams, goals, passions and aspirations. 2) Exploit the differences of your product or services from your competitors. You must highlight these differences. If not, you are in the crowd. 3) Demonstrate the value of your offering so the consumer can feel the impact on the key indicators. 4) Include creativity and passion in building customer solutions. 5) Demonstrate your personal commitment to ensure that the consumer achieves the outcomes proposed; and 6) Shoot for the customer’s heart. Engagement and loyalty requires an emotional connection.

Dare to be Different? You bet! **SSE**



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