

TAKE 5

with
YITZCHOK SAFTLAS

BUSINESS TIPS FROM THE TOP



CUSTOMERS EXPECT EXCELLENT SERVICE – SO YOU'D BETTER PROVIDE IT.

ABOUT THE EXPERT:

An expert in both customer service and customer experience, **SHEP HYKEN** — or Chief Amazement Officer, as he's known at his business Shepard Presentations — has worked with hundreds of businesses, including American Airlines, AT&T, and American Express. In addition to his professional speaking success, he has authored multiple *New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal* best sellers. His most recent book is *Be Amazing or Go Home: Seven Customer Service Habits That Create Confidence with Everyone*.

1

THE BUSINESS CLIMATE TODAY HAS CONDITIONED PEOPLE to a certain level of customer care. One positive experience with any business or company raises the bar for everybody else.

"Customers not only compare you to your competitors," warns Shep. "They had a great experience with the guy who just sold them shoes at the department store, and now they're dealing with somebody in manufacturing business, wondering, 'Why can't this person be as nice and helpful as that shoe salesman?'"

Hyken mentions several "rock stars" who are educating customers about great customer service: Amazon, Nordstrom, Zappos. The latter reported a customer service call lasting ten hours! "They want to show how far we will go to take care of a customer," Hyken explains, "even if it means staying on the phone for ten hours."

And while it cost Zappos a day's pay for one of their employees, what was the public relations gain? "Millions," Hyken estimates.



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2

BE JUST A LITTLE BIT BETTER THAN AVERAGE – ALL THE TIME.

THE KEY TO GOOD CUSTOMER SERVICE, Hyken explains, is to turn “Moments of Truth”— every customer interaction with the business — into “Moments of Magic” (a positive experience) as opposed to “Moments of Misery” (a negative experience).

“But there’s one in the middle: ‘Moment of Mediocrity.’ That’s average, just okay.” To many businesses, that might seem like it’s good enough. “But stay away from mediocrity,” Hyken advises. “Mediocrity doesn’t make you competitive.

“Everybody thinks ‘Magic’ needs to be over the top, blow me away. You don’t have to do that. ‘A Moment of Magic’ is anything better than average, even the slightest bit better. But here’s the key — it’s gotta be all the time, and that’s what makes it hard.”

It’s easy, Hyken says, to go “over the top” when a problem comes up. Say a customer comes in with a complaint: You work to resolve the issue, hopefully in a way that has the customer thinking, “Wow, this company is amazing.”

“Here’s the point: You can’t wait for problems to happen every day in order to be amazing,” Hyken stresses. “To be amazing you have to be a little bit better than average all the time.”

TERMS TO KNOW

MOMENT OF TRUTH:

Based on a concept by Scandinavian Airlines’ Jan Carlzon, this is any moment at which the customer comes into contact with any aspect of the business. Whether it’s a call to customer service, an in-person

exchange at a store, or even a visit to the website — it contributes to the customer’s impression of the business, which ultimately affects their inclination to continue to patronize that business.

ETHICAL UPSSELL:

A version of “Do you want fries with that?” that prompts a customer to buy items he actually needs but doesn’t realize. For example, when you go to the hardware store for paint, the salesperson should ask, “Do you need brushes? A drop cloth?” If he doesn’t and you go home without them, that’s bad customer service, Hyken explains.

3

MODEL THE BEHAVIOR YOU EXPECT FROM YOUR EMPLOYEES.

CREATING A CUSTOMER-FOCUSED CULTURE STARTS AT THE TOP, with leadership, Hyken asserts. For better or worse, leaders are being watched by all the employees, so they need to demonstrate how they expect their employees to act.

Hyken offers the example of Walt Disney. “He would come into the theme park... and see a piece of paper on the ground,

stoop down, pick it up, and throw it away. He called that ‘Stooping to excellence.’ He knew that if he did not stoop down and pick up that piece of paper, he was giving permission to everybody watching to do the same.”

So yes, the boss can come in at whatever time he wants or walk around talking on his cell phone — but his actions send a message he may not want to send. “It’s a huge

deal when the boss strolls in at 9:05, even if he has been working at home since 4 a.m. He’s giving permission to everybody else to come late.”

Hyken fervently believes in leadership setting the tone for the company, especially in his own business too. “If I ask you to do it, I should be not only willing to do it myself, but that’s my way of living.”

4

RAPID AND APPROPRIATE RESPONSE TO A PR NIGHTMARE CAN SAVE THE SITUATION.

PR NIGHTMARES UNFORTUNATELY HAPPEN. (Think United Airlines forcefully removing a passenger from a flight, to the point of injury.) Hyken outlines his five-step “textbook process” for handling a PR crisis or any other “Moment of Misery”:

1. Acknowledge that there is a problem.
2. Apologize for the problem.
3. Fix the problem. Announce how you will resolve the problem and, if you can fix it on the spot, of course do so.
4. Maintain not only a positive attitude as you fix the problem, but an attitude of ownership. “It dropped in your lap, it’s now yours,” says Hyken.
5. Do it with urgency.

“United Airlines only missed [the last] one,” Hyken qualifies. “They took 5 or 6 days before it came to an end. But it was the first time this ever happened. Let me guarantee you this — that will not happen again.” United recently announced requisite compassion training for 30,000 employees to teach them to better understand and react under stressful situations.

“That’s a good PR move for them,” assesses Hyken.



To hear more, tune in to Yitzchok Saftlas’s *Mind Your Business* radio show on 77WABC Sundays at 10 p.m.

5

FEEDBACK IS A GIFT SO ASK FOR IT – AND USE THAT INFORMATION TO IMPROVE.

HYKEN’S FIRST EXPERIENCE WITH CUSTOMER SERVICE, at the young age of 12, demonstrates that any business can benefit from feedback.

When he opened a birthday party magic show business, his mother suggested writing thank you notes to every parent who hired him. “That was the first customer service lesson I ever had,” Hyken recalls.

The next week, his father had a new suggestion: “Call the parents up, thank them again, but this time ask how you did — find out if you did a good job.” Specifically, his father suggested asking which tricks they had liked.

After getting feedback from several shows, Hyken’s dad told him to identify which tricks no one was mentioning were good, and then get rid of them and replace them with new tricks.

“My parents were talking to me about feedback and process improvement when I was just 12!” Hyken says in amazement.

