

Mind ur Business

Shep Hyken: “Make the Customer Experience Easy and Effortless”



By Yitzchok Saftlas

Every Sunday evening since July 2015, Yitzchok Saftlas, CEO of Bottom Line Marketing Group, hosts 77WABC’s “Mind Your Business” show on America’s leading talk radio station. The show features Fortune 500 CEOs, CMOs, and top business leaders, where they share their business knowledge and strategic insights on how to get ahead in today’s corporate world. Since Q2 2017, the 77WABC “Mind Your Business” show has remained in the coveted Nielsen “Top 10” in New York’s highly competitive AM Talk Radio market. Guests have included John Sculley, former CEO of Apple and Pepsi; Dick Schulze, founder and Chairman Emeritus of Best Buy; Beth Comstock, former Vice Chair of GE; and Captain Sully Sullenberger, among nearly 200 senior-level executives and business celebrities.

Every other week, TJH will feature leading questions and takeaways from Yitzchok’s popular radio show.

On a recent 77WABC “Mind Your Business” broadcast, Yitzchok sat down to speak with Shep Hyken about the secrets behind his remarkable success. Shep is an American customer service expert, author, and speaker. He is a *New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal* bestselling author and has been inducted into the National Speakers Association Hall of Fame for achievement in the speaking profession. He is the founder of Shepard Presentations, a management and customer service consultation agency. He is the author of several books on the customer service experience, including *The Amazement Revolution*, *The Cult of the Customer*, and *Be Amazing or Go Home*.

YS: *Tonight’s show is going to be about Shep’s latest book, called **The Convenience Revolution**. The subtitle is “How to*

deliver a customer service experience that disrupts the competition and creates fierce loyalty.” Shep, I’m curious. What made you decide to go with this angle?

SH: It happened during the editing of my last book, *Be Amazing or Go Home*. I was working with a person who was cleaning the book up for me and he said, “Shep, I’m fascinated by all these companies that you mentioned. Why do you use them as examples?” I started to think about it. And the best answer I could give him was: They are so much easier to do business with than others. And then it dawned on me. Has anybody ever written a book about just being easy to do business with? No. So that’s why I took this angle when writing this book. Amazon is almost a cliché of great business stories, and their customer service is amazing. When I was drafting the book, I thought, why

is Amazon so successful? It’s because they make it so easy to do business with them and to buy their products. You can shop 24 hours a day, and once you are set up in the system, you can purchase through one-click ordering. And they deliver really quickly.

Then, I started looking at other companies that aren’t quite like Amazon but are still very successful. In many cases, they have something that they’re doing that’s disrupting a competitor, maybe even an entire industry. I mean, think about what Uber and Lyft did to the taxicab industry, right? And they did it with convenience. They made it easier to get around. With Uber and Lyft, once you’re set up in their system, you’re good to go. And that’s why they completely disrupted the competition.

YS: *Do you have to be as extreme as Uber? Uber invested millions and millions into the*

technology of their company. In this book, you go into how any small business could be wired to make the experience they offer user-friendly and disrupt the market.

SH: Big, small, medium – it makes no difference. Even a company comprised of an individual working with one other individual can be more convenient. There are six convenience principles – I’ll get to them later.

YS: *What does the convenience revolution have to do with customer service? On the cover of your book, there is a circle and an “X” with a zig-zag line connecting then and then the words “quick, direct, easy, frictionless, efficient, accessible, and convenient” connecting the two points in a straight line as well. So, at the end of the day,*

this book is about customer service, right?

SH: It is. And by the way, those words are all in a straight line because the shortest distance between two points is a straight line. But look at all that zig-zagging stuff — that's what most companies do to their customers. Whether they realize it or not, they don't plan the process out properly. In addition to customer service, customer experience is a big part of everybody's lives today. Customer service is a part of the overall experience. I recommend that business owners should identify every touchpoint that their customers have within their company. And I mean *every single one*, from the moment they even begin thinking about you.

They land on your website. How easy is it for them to navigate? How easy is it for them to find your phone number if they want to call you or reach out to you? And when your customers call, how quickly can they reach the right person? Any amount of time that they're waiting creates friction. You have to look at every touchpoint along the way, every interaction with your customer, and say: can I make this better? That used to be the word I used in customer service — what can I do to enhance that moment to make it a better moment. But now I say to myself, what can I do to not only enhance the moment, but maybe even make it a little bit easier. That's what convenience is. I'm looking at that one touchpoint, and I've hopefully made it better for my customer.

YS: There are six defining principles that this book covers. What are they?

SH: The first is simply *Reduce Friction*. That's number one. We've already talked about what Uber and Lyft and Amazon do. But some companies like them have created their entire value proposition around reducing friction. Number two is *Self-Service*, giving control to the customer. Number three is *Technology*. Good technology can drive a great experience. Number four is the *Subscription* model. Subscriptions are not just for newspapers and magazines anymore. You can subscribe to almost anything. Num-

ber five is *Delivery*. You have to bring your product to the customers. And finally, number six is *Access*. Access could be your business's hours of operation or your location. Are they convenient for the customer logistically? Are you close to the customer? There are different ways to be accessible.

YS: Can you go through each principle in detail? The first one is reducing friction. You say that customers are 115% percent more likely to recommend you to others when there is very low friction.

SH: If you really think about it, the reason you love a company is because they're just so easy to do business with. Let me give you an example that we can all relate to.

“Any interaction you have with your customers is an opportunity for them to form an impression of your company.”

When you travel, before you're even allowed to enter the concourse you have to go through security, run by TSA. So, TSA comes up with this idea: For a small fee, you get to go to another line that's shorter, and you don't have to go through the usual inconvenient security measures. They basically just eliminated friction for the customer. It's all about that.

YS: Let's move to principle number two, Self-Service.

SH: Yes, putting service in the hands of the customer. You probably don't think of ordering something from Amazon as a self-service experience, but that is a 100% self-service retail experience. If you have a question, rather than picking up the phone and calling customer support for a company, you go online, and they've got frequently asked questions or video tutorials that will actually be even better than talking to

a person. It's also really important that there is always a human employee that's there to help the customer out. Make sure there's always a good human fallback that can get in there and quickly resolve the issue.

I was once in a Panera Bread, and I noticed that they had these online kiosks for ordering instead of ordering through a waiter and these vibrating pagers to let you know when the food was ready. Once it vibrated, the waiters brought the food over to each table. I asked the manager why they did it that way. His exact words: “It's more convenient for guests.” I asked, so how do the employees feel that they are being replaced? And he said, “No, they're not being replaced. Instead, they're the ones bringing the food out to the customers. They're the ones that are engaging

great example of a successful subscription model. Chewy's.com sells you dog food every month that shows up like clockwork on your doorstep. The Dollar Shave Club — that's a subscription model. And they all met with great success by offering subscriptions.

After subscription comes *Delivery*. Take it to your customer. Do whatever you can do to deliver. Look at how Amazon created the “delivery wars.” Target came out with one-day delivery and set a new standard that all the other companies tried to follow. You may only be competing with your direct competition, but you are compared to the best service your customers received from anybody, so companies like Amazon set the bar higher for everyone.

And finally, number six is *Access*. Are you accessible? I use a bank as an example. Now, you can do your banking online. There's a stat in the book that I can't remember off the top of my head, but it's something like 80% or 90% of the U.S. population is within 10 minutes of a Wal-Mart. That's accessibility. If I walk down the street here in Manhattan, I will find a Starbucks on almost every block. That's accessibility. Another aspect of accessibility is hours. You have to consider — are your hours convenient for your customers?

YS: I think you had mentioned this earlier in the show. The most critical of the six is reducing friction, correct?

SH: Reducing friction is final, because it's within all the other principles. Anytime you can save a customer, time, effort, or stress — that's reducing friction.

YS: Can you please share a final takeaway for the audience?

SH: Any interaction you have with your customers is an opportunity for them to form an impression of your company. Understand your interactions journey; map it out. Write down what your typical customer goes through. Write out where the interactions can be made better and how they can be made more convenient. Start there, and join the convenience revolution. ▲

YS: Can we go through the rest of the principles?

SH: *Subscriptions*. Netflix is a