LISTEN TO YOUR CUSTOMER AND ACT FAST!

We have already discussed how important is the customer and its satisfaction to a business and how Customer Support & Services can push business to another level.

You materialize this importance by listening, understanding and acting fast.

Listening to customer is an important strategy of a business. To know customer perception about product, services and the company itself is paramount.

More than only knowing how they feel like is to have their feedback, their inputs to your products and processes. Small rough stones, difficult to find, cut and polish, but when you do it properly the little stone turns to a diamond which will value thousand times more than it costed to make it.

A quite important step in the company's business plan.

There are several ways to learn customer's opinions and feedback.

- Survey with customers
  - NPS survey
  - Customer Satisfaction assessment
  - Customer Effort assessment
- CRM system
- Call Center
- Field / Customer visits
- Customer social media interactions
- Customer Forums
- Customers Focal Groups
- Customer oriented blogs
- Customer associations channels

If you want to listen to them, there are plenty of opportunities. It only depends on you.

Everyone of them have their value and can help you out.

If you have not done that yet, start with something, get the sense and soon you will realize how important is and will evolve in the process.

Before we detail what can be done, there are some show stoppers, some key points which you must know prior to start. (do not underestimate the impacts by not following them)

- Close the loop – meaning, demonstrate to your customer you listened to him, show to him what you did with his feedback. You will guarantee his continuous support and perhaps add one more argument for his loyalty to you. Do the same with your teams, show to them what the customers are saying about them and have them build the plans to address the issues reported.
- Do not use any automatic answering process. Make it personal.
- Separate properly the different group of customers. If you don't, you might mix issues which are not universal and act where you don't need to.

- Have a transparent management process, somebody with the ownership to make sure issues will be taken care of.
- Have regular and continuous process (perception changes quickly)
- Be pragmatic in regards to correcting the issues, manage them until is implemented and works.
- Keep in mind:
  - The more the customer uses the product/service the less satisfied he is likely to be with it
  - There are people who simply do not believe in giving 10's or too nice to give low scores.

Let's talk about a some ways to assess customer satisfaction:

NPS – Net Promoter Score

NPS became quite popular and can even be upgraded to Net Promoter System, as in fact is not only an index, but also a management system. It promotes changes in the company through Customer Satisfaction. An integrated system, which gives the importance to the customer journey, the product/service life, not only the survey data. Always with the very simple cycle listen-analyze-act.

Starts with the famous question:

How likely are you to recommend (the company, product, process) to a friend or colleague?

It will give you a good indication of whether you are on the right track or not. You will get the "gut response".

The customer shall be asked to grade from 0 to 10. The assessment will translate the numbers into groups of customers:

- 0 to 6 – detractors
- 7 and 8 – passives
- 9 and 10 – promoters

NPS = (% of promoters) – (% of detractors)

When Fred Reichheld created this methodology, he was researching for a method, which could identify/measure better customer loyalty and satisfaction.

It really became an icon on how to assess the customers. Identifying promoter, passive and detractor customers allows you to focus your strategies for these different groups.

The path to excellence and to a profitable and sustainable growth starts by the creation of more promoters and less detractors, as simple as that.

But the "NPS question" won't be able to support your detailed plan as it does not indicate where to work, what needs to be corrected. So as important as the first question are the follow-on questions, which will identify the opportunities.

For the detractors, for example, "what can we do to improve?", "what do you indicate needs to be changed?", etc, etc.

For the promoters, "what is the main reason for the score?", "what do you think should be our next step?", to "where should we be evolving to keep this level of satisfaction?", etc, etc.

Customer Satisfaction Score / Customer Effort Score

There are other ways to try to capture customer satisfaction. Other than giving you a full perspective and more connected to long term and relationship vision they are more directed to recent experiences, with transactional focus, assessing short term experiences. Used after events, it can add value understanding that they allow you to have feedback from specific experiences, which might be what you are looking for.

In fact a survey system could be formed by NPS and these other ways.

Focused feedback

Whenever possible and feasible to have groups of customers to provide you face to face feedback with the possibility of discussing situations is very welcome. It establishes an interesting intimacy with the customer. Initiatives like customer forums, customer focus groups, customer association channels will definitely demonstrate your focus and interest on their results.

IT systems:

A good CRM system (with a strong management process behind), call center feedback, field customer visit reporting system, customer media interaction assessment, customer blogs. They all can provide good insights if well managed regularly.

What about understanding customer behavior? There are today artificial intelligence companies which are mapping hundreds of thousands of different behavior patterns, understanding their connections and allowing companies to better assess the customer more likely decisions. This another type of feedback could also support a company in the path to excellence.

Do not pretend to think you know what customer wants and likes. Big mistake. He was probably not raised the same way you were, or might not have the same education, life experience, political and religious preferences or is from a different generation…. Who knows…

You must ask him!!

Avoid bad profit, when customer pays but is not happy with it.

Be a customer centered organization, value their voice, focus on customer focus, listen to them, be truthful, act fast and collect the benefits.

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