



## TOOLKIT 19 – BUILD YOUR BUSINESS BY DELIGHTING CUSTOMERS

- ❖ **Increase customer loyalty, get new customers from referrals and reduce price sensitivity.**
- ❖ **Build competitive advantage.**
- ❖ **Grow your business profitability.**

Delighting customers means doing that bit extra for customers in order to create customer satisfaction beyond the norm.

If it is done well it can lead to high levels of repeat business, new opportunities coming from referrals from delighted customers and a lowering of sensitivity to price.

Delighting customers is more than just good customer service. Making it easy to place an order, being treated with respect, getting queries answered and deliveries on time does not delight customers, this is basic customer service. It's a right not a delight.

Delighting customers has the following additional qualities over basic customer service:

- Often spontaneous or unexpected.

E.g., a private hospital was averaging 56% on its patient satisfaction ratings. In order to boost their ratings the hospital rang each patient one week prior to their operation to check if they were OK and had any questions or concerns. The call was repeated one week after the patient was discharged. The calls were courtesy not medical. Within one month the patient satisfaction ratings rose from 56 to 85%; a 50% improvement and stayed there. It's amazing what showing genuine interest in your customers can achieve.

- Delivered with a breathtaking speed of response, e.g. 'They said expect delivery in 3 days and it arrived within hours.'
- Outstanding attention to detail.

## THE BENEFITS OF DELIGHTING CUSTOMERS

Example benefits enjoyed by businesses that have delighted their customers:

'Our customer delight approach means we are now able to negotiate rather than tender for most of our work, this has improved our margins.'

Dick Watson  
Keepmoat Plc

'We set out to delight our customers from day 1 and consequently 80% of our customers are regulars. They also recommend us to their friends and colleagues. We have never had to spend money on marketing or advertising.'

Stephen King  
Ye Olde Sun Inn Restaurant

'We charge twice the price of our nearest competitors because we delight our customers and their animals.'

Ann Adlington  
Triple A Ranch (Animal Hotel)

Here is a story to illustrate how customer delight exceeds customer service. We had carpets fitted on two separate occasions. Carpet fitter A did it to the very minimum customer service standards. Carpet fitter B delighted us by exceeding our expectations. We can compare from the six points of contact how A and B performed.

1. **A** suggested we visited their shop to look at some samples.

**B** delivered his carpet samples to our home within one hour of our initial contact (speed and different from the norm).

2. **A** extolled the virtues of a new carpet, which was 'selling like hot cakes'.

**B** asked us about our colour scheme; did we need hard wearing, how long did we plan to stay (no point in investing in good carpets if you are moving in 12 months) and a host of other very detailed questions, which suggested he was really interested in helping us make the right choice for us not him. Nothing seemed to be too much trouble. (Personal touch, attention to detail, warm and friendly different from the norm.)

3. **A** said the carpets would be delivered in the next two weeks.

**B** said they would be delivered to his shop next Tuesday and then 'Would it be convenient to fit them on Wednesday at 8.00 am?' He confirmed all this in a short letter with contact numbers to check details (attention to detail).

4. **A** said he would fit the carpets sometime on Wednesday morning. He called on Wednesday morning to say he was running late and would Thursday be OK?

**B** turned up at the appointed time to fit the carpets. He rang the night before to confirm all the details (attention to detail).

5. **A** fitted the carpets but left the off cuts for us to clear away. The carpet fitters worked at lightening speed without speaking, other than the occasional grunt. Was this a quick and nasty job? Did we trust them? Did they care...?

**B** was warm and friendly and explained what he was doing in some detail. He made us feel they were highly professional, knew what they were doing and intended to do a quality job, we trusted them. (Warm and friendly, attention to detail.)

6. **A** left without a word, when they had finished.

**B** explained how to look after the carpet and even recommended the best vacuum cleaner. They even left a small vase with some flowers and a card 'Mrs Hall, welcome to your new home, from the carpet fitters'. (Beyond expectations, put a smile on our faces, spontaneous.)

The results of these two quite different experiences were:

1. We actively discouraged people from using **A**.
2. We have used **B** to fit all our carpets over the past 15 years. We have recommended them to at least 10 other people.
3. **B** was more expensive than **A** but we believe the premium is well worth it.

Customer delight in living colour.

Customer delight may or not come from one piece of outstanding service or it can be a combination of several pleasant surprises that add up to delighting customers.

### **STORY – BONAR FLOTEX**

'Can you come and meet us, we are interested in your idea about delighting customers,' was the request from Peter Bartlett the CEO of Bonar Flotex in Derbyshire.

The following day an AA route map arrived giving exact directions from my office to Bonar Flotex (not the usual unreadable faxed copy of a photocopied map that looks like a black blob).

I turned up at their factory and the security guard on the gate greeted me with a warm smile with 'Good morning Mr Hall, park your car over there'. (How did he know who I was?) He pointed to a reserved car parking spot next to reception with a sign that read 'Reserved for Mr David Hall'. My normal experience is that these are generally reserved for the company's Directors, occasionally with a sign 'If you park here your car will be clamped.'

On entering reception the receptionist smiled and greeted me very warmly, 'Good morning Mr Hall, did you have a good journey? Here's your badge, please take a seat.' (How did she know who I was?) Again this is not the norm, in my experience you are usually asked to fill in a form by an often over-busy receptionist.

As I took my seat a door opened and a young man arrived with a black coffee, Colombian (my favourite) and two chocolate biscuits. 'Good morning Mr Hall, Mr Bartlett will be with you in two and a half minutes.' (How did he know who I was?)

This was getting beyond belief. I was half expecting Jeremy Beadle to appear! How did they know I had black coffee and chocolate biscuits at 10.30 every morning...?

By now I was timing them but at 10.30 am precisely, as suggested, Mr Bartlett appeared and showed me into his office. I thought, I will find a crack in this amazing customer delight experience, so I asked how good they really were at service with their real customers? He turned to his computer and said 'Let's start with delivery – do you want year to date, this month or this week?' Year to date 98.4%, this month 99.6%. 'Oh OK,' I said, 'I surrender, how do you do it?'

'Well we got the team together and we brainstormed how we could delight our customers. The team had loads of ideas because they are dealing with customers all the time. So we developed their customer delight ideas. For example when a new customer or contact is coming to visit us my secretary calls theirs and finds out their car registration number and how they take their beverages, and we write it in a book and communicate it to everybody. Simple stuff but it blows customers brains out.'

It certainly impressed me but the real point is that 10 years later I have purchased Bonar Flotex kitchen carpets everytime I have moved house and have recommended them to dozens of people and that's the real point.

'Customer delight really does work, try it.' Peter Barlett, Managing Director.

## HOW TO CREATE CUSTOMER DELIGHT IN YOUR BUSINESS

**STAGE 1** Ensure your basic customer service system is operating effectively (see Customer Service toolkit no. 18). You will not delight customers unless your basic customer service system is sound and consistent.

TIP: Check for any sales prevention officers in your business and keep them away from your customers.

**STAGE 2** Get your team together and explain that you want to build your business by delighting your customers. (See also 'Working on the business' toolkit 7.)

- Brainstorm opportunities to delight your customers from the initial point of contact with them right through the business transaction until they pay the bill.
- Use the ingredients checklist to help people recognise delighting opportunities.
- Use the customer delight example checklist to provide ideas and inspiration to your team.

### Checklist

#### The ingredients of customer delight:

- Beyond their expectations
- Spontaneous
- A personal touch
- Speed of response
- Attention to detail
- Make them feel important
- Put a smile on their face
- Warm and friendly
- Different from the norm

Checklist – ideas for delighting customers:

- Send an AA route map to help them find your office
- Allocate a car-parking slot with their name on for their visit
- Put their name on a board in reception
- Personally greet them at reception
- Send a thank you note personally written
- Get and use their first name often
- Treat them like a best friend
- Introduce them personally to your team
- Do something for them at lightning speed i.e., sending a quote within the hour by e-mail
- Give them your undivided attention
- Focus on the details
- Give them a company gift – tie, mug etc
- Take them out to dinner
- Find out what interests them and provide it
- Offer to introduce them to your network
- Solve a problem for them
- Hire people who are good with customers

**STAGE 3** Help stimulate your team's creative thinking about customer delight by getting them to talk with and learn from those businesses that really do delight customers.

For example:

- Get people to talk to First Direct the telephone bank and see how they are treated.
- Visit any Four Seasons Hotel in the world and see how they delight customers.
- Take them to a really good restaurant as a team to see how they delight customers.
- Find out in your area who delights customers really well and arrange for your team to visit them.

**STAGE 4**

- Collect all their ideas on a flipchart. Decide which is only good customer service and which is likely to delight your customers.
- Agree the customer delight elements. Get everyone to agree to delight customers and set up a system to ensure customers are constantly delighted (see example – Bonar Flotex).

**EXAMPLE:**

Bonar Flotex's CEO's secretary calls visitors' secretaries and get's their car registration number and their tea or coffee preference. This is written in a book and communicated to people, so when visitors arrive they are greeted properly with a car space and their appropriate refreshment.

TIP: Ask customers how they found your service and feedback the delight examples back to your team to reinforce the process.

TIP: Put delighting customers onto your meeting agendas and constantly seek new ideas to keep it fresh.

**STAGE 5** Conduct regular customer feedback sessions to establish how consistently you are delighting customers. Feedback the results with a sincere 'well done' to everyone.

**STAGE 6** Inspect your customer delight process yourself.

Try to see your business through your customers' eyes to ensure 'no system slippage'.

Get a trusted friend to 'mystery shop' your business on your behalf.

**STAGE 7** Make sure your customer information system monitors the effect of delighting customers.

- Calculate the level of repeat business as a percentage of sales. It should be 80%+.
- Record the source of new business i.e., level of referrals.
- Nudge your prices up to test your customers' reaction i.e., are they delighted enough to pay more – the acid test!

<b>Stage</b>	<b>Key outputs (examples)</b>
1 What is your basic customer service proposition and is it working?	<b>Queue time no more than 2 minutes. Current data shows that the majority of customer have to wait in excess of 3 minutes before they are served</b>
2 Get your team together and share the vision of excellent customer service	<b>Customer do not have to queue Where staff 'queue' to see customers Where our opening times mean that customers can undertake their transactions at a time that is right for them</b>
3 Ask for external examples of customer service that 'delights'	<b>Disney – where queues don't feel like queues because they entertain the children and adults so it is like being in a moving show! Call centre - where you speak to a real person straight away AND they can answer your question Self service when it is positioned as a service enhancement rather than a cost cutting exercise</b>
4 Annotate how you and your team could 'delight' your customers	<b>Change opening times Give out personal mobile phone numbers Change from a selling pitch to a service pitch (sales will come later!)</b>
5 Review actions being undertaken and discuss how these actions are being received	<b>January – mobile numbers given out February –Agreement to change opening hours from 9 am to 7.30am and all staff telling customers about this.</b>
6 Check the actions – go through the process yourself	<b>Went to branch on Thursday at 8am branch open but seemed sleepy. Agreed that background music required.</b>
7 monitor key metrics	<b>Customer satisfaction score rising</b>

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