

BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE

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Strategies and Trends for the Successful Business

e-REPORT

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IDEAwatch

Tips for Growing Your Business

■ Do you struggle with completing the tasks on your to-do list?

Try this simple method by David Finkel, author of *The Freedom Formula: How to Succeed in Business Without Sacrificing Your Family, Health or Life*. First, be aware of the tendency to gravitate towards the tasks that are easier to cross off your list. Yes, they give a dopamine rush and a brief feeling of accomplishment, but those aren't usually the ones that will help you reach long-term goals. To combat that instinct, take a few moments every morning to choose the three tasks that will make the biggest impact. These are your "above-the-line" tasks. Draw a line under them to visually mark them as special and different, or, if you use a digital task organizer, you can annotate them with a special color. Then make sure that those three items are completed by 10:30 or that you have set up meetings or appointments to address them.

Source: www.inc.com

■ Add flair to your marketing writing with the use of metaphors.

A metaphor is a figure of speech that describes an object or action in a way that isn't literally true, but helps explain an idea or make a comparison. For example, Gordon Graham cleverly promotes "White Paper Checkups: Just What the Doctor Ordered." Besides comical medical illustrations, he extends the metaphor by including the expressions "on life support," "diagnose the health of your document," "test results," "our personal prescription" and "anything from a quick face lift to radical surgery." Most extended metaphors convey a perky, mischievous tone. So brainstorm in that spirit, and make sure the options you choose haven't been used a zillion times before.

Source: www.yudkin.com

STRATEGY

Creating Memorable Customer Interactions

by Marty Zwilling

AS A CONSUMER, I rarely pay attention to your marketing pitch, but I certainly always remember an exceptionally positive total experience with your team, based on a memorable set of interactions from first contact to discussions with friends. Yet, as a business consultant, I often find minimal focus on improving employee engagement and assessing their customer-facing performance.

For example, I commonly see metrics to keep track of revenue per employee, overtime and absenteeism, but I don't often see measures of overall customer satisfaction with individual employees. I assure you that even one or two employees with bad attitudes or lack of customer attention can override the best efforts of everyone else.

These days, it's critical, and not that difficult, to upgrade your focus on delivering exceptional customer experiences from every team member, all the time. Here are my recommendations for training and managing your team to keep their delivery memorable for customers, as well as profitable for your business:

1. Hire team members who enjoy customer interaction. I find that many managers are expected to hire new team members primarily on the basis of technical qualifications and years of experience, rather than communication ability, attitude or previous customer reviews. Remember that everyone will interact with customers, due to billing or delivery issues.

2. Provide training, tools and required decision authority. No customer will give you positive marks if employees can't resolve an issue or just pass you to the next level. At any Ritz-Carlton, for example, employees are trained well and authorized to spend up to \$2,000 per guest, without preap-

proval, to solve a guest issue or improve a guest's stay.

3. Incent and reward employees who delight customers. Incentives should be a combination of metrics and recognition to highlight results. Studies

Companies with a fiercely loyal following use customer experience as their competitive advantage.

show that peer recognition programs are often more effective than bonuses or cash rewards. If you provide recognition for the right behaviors consistently, the desired results will accrue.

4. Make sure all employees have the opportunity to meet customers. Every employee needs to understand that great customer experiences make your business and to feel they are contributing. In the old days, key employees were rotated through all roles as part of their training, to help them understand the business. That approach still is meaningful today.

5. Communicate and be a role model for customer focus. Employees need to be regularly reminded of your business mission, brand positioning and customer focus, and they need to see you acting these out in your day-to-day behavior. It's called walking the talk. You need to treat your employees just as you expect them to treat customers.

6. Build customer relationships to supplement surveys. Today I see too much dependence on surveys, and not enough real customer interaction by business leaders. Relationships get the body language to supplement numbers and provide critical feelings not found in surveys. Relationships also build loyalty, get referrals and drive more sales.

7. Under-promise and over-deliver on customer requests. Customers always remember positive

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■ **Google gives a tiny glimpse into its search algorithm** with the “About This Result” feature. You can access this feature by clicking on the three vertical dots on the first line of any search result. The feature already includes how long the domain has been indexed and if it’s encrypted. Soon, a section called “Your Search and This Result” will offer details on why a particular page is in the results. The details may include related search terms, your locality and if Google chose a result because it’s widely linked to by other pages. Google isn’t exposing any ranking secrets, but the information may still be helpful.

Source: www.fastcompany.com

■ **To qualify a sales lead**, ask “*How will you solve this problem if you don’t buy?*” The answer will tell you all sorts of interesting information, such as: How serious they are about solving the problem; whether they have viable alternatives to buying; whether they see the problem as a spending priority; whether your competitor is already in the account; the real time frame for solving the problem; and whether or not they’ve thought the problem through. The question also allows you to preemptively position your product against the alternative solution.

Source: www.itthinkbigger.com

■ **Apple is trying to kill email open rates.** The upcoming iPhone iOS 15 update includes a feature that prevents companies from seeing if subscribers opened their emails while using the Apple Mail app. Not everyone uses iOS or Apple’s email app, but losing even partial data makes it harder to make informed email marketing decisions. To prepare, immediately start testing subject lines using emojis, special characters, length, emotion and tone to learn which approach tends to work best. From there, you want subscribers to click inside emails, so focus more on content and calls to action (CTA). Ensure your content and CTA match the subject line and pre-header text. Finally, if you haven’t already, start collecting mobile numbers for SMS text messaging. That will help future-proof your marketing communications.

Source: www.mytotalretail.com

Best content for each stage of buyers’ journey

Business-to-business (B2B) buyers are increasingly thirsty for content marketing from potential vendors to help them make a wise purchasing decision. But some forms of content are more effective than others depending on whether the buyer is in the beginning, middle or end of the buying journey, according to new research from Activate Marketing Services and MarketingCharts.

At the beginning of the buying journey, blogs are the most effective form of content, according to 72% of respondents. Two-thirds (66%) find infographics to be most effective at the top of the funnel, while videos earned third place with 64%.

For the middle of the buying journey, respondents said that virtual events (56%) and webcasts (53%) were most effective. Last year saw a jump in the use of webinars and virtual events, largely due to the Covid-19 pandemic, forcing

the cancelation of live events. It is worth noting that although six in 10 respondents rated the performance of online events as excellent or good, there are indications that buyers are starting to burn out on these types of content. Other effective mid-funnel content includes concise white papers (summary level, snackable content, 49%) and customer case studies (43%).

Once prospects approach the end of the buyer’s journey, longer forms of content appear to be most effective. Nearly half (46%) of respondents consider in-depth white papers and e-books to be most effective at the bottom of the funnel. Customer case studies and third-party or analyst research were also considered highly effective at the bottom of the funnel by 39% and 30% of respondents, respectively.

Source: MarketingCharts.com, June 30, 2021

90% say inflation will change buying behaviors

Just in case inflation isn’t transitory, as predicted by the Federal Reserve, you can expect changes from your customers.

According to a recent Numerator study, two-thirds of shoppers say that they expect product prices to continue to increase over the next six months, and 54% are moderately or significantly concerned about having to pay higher prices.

An overwhelming 90% of respondents say that they plan to change shopping behaviors with price increases. More than

half are already making changes. Those shifts include switching to lower-priced brands, seeking more promotions and discounts and cutting back discretionary spending on things like restaurants, apparel, electronics and travel.

Numerator’s study found that 49% of shoppers will switch to lower-priced brands with slight inflation, while 60% will make that move if significant inflation arrives.

Source: Progressivegrocer.com, July 20, 2021

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surprises, and they never forget negative ones. I’m still impressed when a package arrives a day earlier than promised, or I get a free promotion with my order. Pleasant surprises don’t have to be big — like how fast you return a phone call or email.

8. Sponsor experiments to create memorable elements. Don’t let your customer interactions go stale. Customers enjoy fresh perks to give them something to talk about, and make your business stand out. Encourage employee innovation in service, just like you must always be looking for ways to improve your product offerings.

For example, a few years ago, TD Bank wanted to thank their customers in a memorable way for being their customers. They did so by temporarily

transforming their ATMs into “automatic thanking machines” that dispersed gifts, as well as money.

More and more, I see that companies with the most fiercely loyal customers and the best image in the marketplace provide the most memorable overall customer experience, not just the lowest price or the best quality product. That customer experience is the best competitive advantage you can have, and the best predictor of long-term success. Today is the time to start down that road.

Marty Zwilling is CEO and founder of Startup Professionals, Inc. He serves as an advisory board member for multiple start-ups and is an Adjunct Professor at Embry-Riddle University. His writing has been published by *Inc.*, *Forbes*, *Entrepreneur* and *Huffington Post*. Follow him on Twitter @StartupPro.

■ **Attract new customers with these low-cost tactics** using filters on Facebook Ads Manager. You can narrow down your target audience and then in Detailed Targeting, select specific Life Events, such as birthdays coming up within a month. This means you can run ads that directly reference someone's birthday. For example, "Ready to celebrate your birthday? Use the code birthday to get 20% off your order" or "Your birthday is coming up. Are you really going to let one more year go by without chasing your dream of _____? Schedule a consultation with me today." Other life events to target include: anniversaries, recently moved, just married, as well as people visiting your area.

Source: www.socialmediaexaminer.com

■ **Productive "gripe sessions" can improve morale.** When your entire staff seems unhappy, provide a forum for them to vent their frustrations productively. Ask them to "tell it like it is." You want them to talk to you, not behind your back, so don't be defensive when they gripe or criticize. Promise that there will be no repercussions — that you just want to learn about the problem. To keep the session from becoming a free-for-all, pose clear questions, such as "What's gone wrong since we installed the new system?"

Source: www.ragan.com

■ **When speaking at an event,** it's common to offer your audience a handout like a copy of your slide deck. Instead, you may want to consider putting together a "job aid." A job aid, which is often used in instructional design and training, is something that people refer to over and over again to remember a process, procedure, framework or other tips you taught in order to do their job better. This is not just about some notes or highlights from your presentation. It should be focused, actionable and task-oriented. It's your chance to help attendees do their jobs long after your presentation ends.

Source: www.searchengineland.com

Post-pandemic: Desire for online convenience

Consumers want faster delivery, added convenience and more interactive live events as the Covid-19 pandemic eases, judging by a new study by Software AG. Now that consumers know what is possible, they not only expect the enhancements and conveniences they see today, but they want more.

Of those surveyed, 55% want better in-person experiences. And 34% have greater expectations of fast online retail delivery than they did a year ago — in fact, 70% will choose a retailer based solely on delivery speed.

In addition, 73% believe their restaurant experiences — whether dining or takeout — should be enhanced with a mobile component, and 72% plan to use at least one of these services after Covid-19 restrictions have been lifted: mobile-enabled ordering — 54%; mobile-enabled payment — 38%; and mobile-enabled reservations/booking — 38%.

Moreover, 80% of shoppers who use a store's "buy online, pick-up in store" option (BOPIS) will continue to do so after safety restrictions are lifted.

Source: [Mediapost.com](http://mediapost.com), June 28, 2021

Young workers valuing respect over fun perks

Millennials once grabbed the national spotlight with their publicized demands for "fun" work perks, such as happy hours. However, researchers at the Novak Leadership Institute have discovered a shift in the mindset of today's young workers, placing more value on finding meaning in their work and having respectful communication in the workplace over trendy work perks.

The researchers surveyed more than 1,000 full-time workers, ages 21-34, who represent 18 different career areas. The team analyzed how participants rated, on a 1 to 5 scale, how each of the following workplace culture aspects were representative of their current place of employment — respectful engagement,

autonomous respect, occupational resilience, job satisfaction, employee loyalty and retention, and job engagement.

The results show more emphasis needs to be placed on training leaders and managers on how to be effective communicators and convey respectful communication with their employees, according to lead researcher Danielle LaGree. "As we see here with our research, actively recognizing employees for the value they bring to their organization will help equip them to bounce back after adversity, to perform better in their jobs and be more committed to their organizations in the long term," LaGree said.

Source: [ScienceDaily](http://sciencedaily.com), July 22, 2021

Consumers less attached to brands

The erosion of brand equity has been happening for some time, but startling new research from GroupM's Wavemaker unit reveals that the problem becomes much worse online.

The study indicates that there are variances by specific product categories, but the overall net is that consumers consider about 50% more brands during an online purchasing experience than they do during an offline one, and the material impact is that the consumer's original brand choice often gets bumped by an alternative option when they are buying online.

"In general, this shows that consum-

ers are getting less attached to brands," says Wavemaker Chief Strategy Officer Dennis Potgraven, noting that it's a simple function of the abundance of choice and the frictionless ability to shift brand choices when buying online.

To help alleviate this phenomenon, Wavemaker suggests more consistency in message, visual and media usage to lift final conversions. Also, build strong "product icons" that are consistently supported throughout brand communications to develop stronger online brands, instead of simply brand value messaging.

Source: [Businesswire.com](http://businesswire.com), June 24, 2021



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