

Customer Journey

Turning the customer journey into a service paradise

In a world where products and services are increasingly similar, service offerings have become key differentiators. Digitalisation is shaking everything up. This article shows one way to optimise the range of services offered by your company.

TEXT

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Outstanding service is sadly the exception rather than the rule. Most companies concentrate on the design and optimization of so-called standard services, such as Home Delivery or Click and Collect. So it isn't surprising that many service offerings look almost identical. But no-one wins any prizes for these in the omni-channel world. The best you can do is avoid dissatisfaction. For example, I've never met anyone who's raved about a simple registration process, or mobile apps, or language assistants, or touchscreens. Customers expect these services as a matter of course today.

Pleasing each customer instead of one-size-fits-all

So how can you find the right path to becoming a service paradise? To differentiate and distinguish your company or brand through services, you need to create WOW experiences. You have to exceed customer expectations and keep your promises. Customers remember these positive experiences, then tell other people about them. But this is not about originality – it's about quality.

From customer to employee

"Why don't you do it yourself?" is the latest trend in customer service. Self-ordering, self-payment and other self-whatever solutions are shooting up everywhere like mushrooms. This new form of work-sharing is far from intuitive for everyone, and can quickly become a problem. Even simple everyday tasks, like printing out a bank statement or making an order, can trip up some customers. We must never leave customers on their own, without assistance.

Living the service culture

Employees make all the difference when it comes to service. But a service culture only works if everyone plays their part and "walks the talk". This means that the boss has to set an example of good service. Employees must also be empowered to take their own decisions, depending on the situation. Sadly, this is happening less and less.

For companies, the goal must be to turn the customer journey into a service paradise - before, during and after each purchase. Other ways to ensure success are:

- **Responsibilities and organization:** Unclear responsibilities and duplication are often the cause of inadequate service provision. So it's worthwhile clarifying who exactly is responsible for what. Services affect different areas of the company, so they need to be seen as a cross-divisional function.
- A broadly supported **service strategy** will help to align the service portfolio and its service processes with the company's strategic goals over the longer term. This includes, for example, sales and earnings planning, personnel and training requirements, innovation, technology and partnerships.
- **Smart services:** Digitalisation has a strong impact on services. Both customers and companies can benefit from smart services. The use of artificial intelligence and the internet of things are already offering many benefits for customer service.
- **Valuable services** must be sustainable these days, and meet ecological, economic,

and social criteria. Consumers rightly demand this. It's a no-no to chauffeur a pizza in a taxi across the city for free. One bright spot, for example, are "shop for your neighbour" schemes, by which customers shop for other customers in their area, deliver the goods to them - and earn money at the same time.

- And last but not least, **communication** of relevant content: Our studies show that it is often unclear to customers what exactly they can expect from a service and what it will cost. To claim that services are "free" or "inexpensive" is simply not good enough.

A positive customer experience will help you to stand out from the competition and increase customer satisfaction. Our experience shows that the chances of successful implementation increase exponentially when there's a clear focus on just a few services. In the final analysis, the path to a service paradise will come via deeper understanding of the customer, the involvement of employees, and the targeted use of technology. What is your service vision?

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