

Best practice in the customer experience training room



Introduction

Most businesses have a customer experience vision. Many are developing a strategy and programme. But, few invest in tailored employee training to unite their people around these. For lots of organisations, shrinking budgets, time constraints, the complexity of global and multi-site operations, large employee numbers and high levels of turnover means that customer experience training doesn't happen or it's sporadic and fragmented. Sometimes companies opt for a quick-fix academic or generic approach, but this often means that the company delivers a 'vanilla' experience that's similar to everybody else. When training is too generic, employees aren't equipped with the knowledge, attitudes, beliefs and the skills to deliver the difference the business is looking for. When training doesn't happen, individual management teams and frontline staff interpret what their brand of customer experience looks like the best they can. This can negatively impact service quality, consistency and brand reputation.

Customer experience leaders stand out because they invest in tailored training. This is aligned with their branded customer experience programmes to make sure their people are inspired, informed, empowered and motivated to deliver a differentiated experience time and again in a consistent way. The most effective brands strategically hard-wire this approach across the business. Best-in-class brands deliver experience their way. It's distinctive and difficult to imitate.

The customer view

Each and every interaction forms an impression on customers that either adds value or weakens a brand. The quality of the interaction also makes an impression on just about anybody else who is told about a positive or negative experience, sees a social media comment or overhears a service conversation. And there's work to do for some brands to improve service quality to ensure the weighting falls on more positive experiences and outcomes. A study by **Harris Interactive** found that **customers came away feeling that customer service agents failed to answer their questions in more than 50% of interactions**. This was also evident in research by **Aspect** which found that the **inability to complete a task or answer a question in a satisfactory way was the number one cause of customer frustration**. Clearly, there is gap between what companies think they provide and what customers actually experience. Even on the basics of making sure that individual employees are able to efficiently answer and resolve queries and complaints.

In digital times, customers still want the human touch. **Accenture** research found that **76% of UK consumers still preferred dealing with human beings rather than digital channels to resolve service issues**. While the automation of low-value service tasks is increasing, customers want to be able to escalate more complex queries to a real person. Training is crucial to equip team members with the knowledge and expertise to effectively answer these too.

Frontline teams need to play a more strategic role in the customer journey

The role of the frontline employee is changing. And they increasingly need to be better trained and better prepared to play a more strategic role in the customer journey. **Segment** found that **41% of consumers expect store associates to know what they have purchased online**, but only 19% experienced this. Retraining staff to use digital technology and proprietary data to help them better serve customers and make experiences more relevant is becoming a top priority.

The employee view

A customer promise that clearly states what target customers can expect from a brand is a key element of customer experience design. Employees are the gatekeepers of that promise so it's essential that management teams understand what the promise means to customer-impacting staff. Do they enjoy the same experience, or do they feel that their experience falls short of what they are being asked to deliver to customers? Consumers view their experience through the prism of interactions with the 'brand' and consistency in what you promise. How you train and empower your employees to deliver this will help ensure the customer experience mirrors the employee experience.



A key question here:

Do you have a reliable and effective programme of training and coaching to build and sustain the ability of your people to deliver your customer experience?

Best practice advice from the customer experience training room

Our expert trainers and digital team have worked directly with many organisations in retail, banking, hospitality, transport, telecoms and the technology sectors. We thought it would be helpful to share best practice advice to help inform your training design and the transfer plan you put in place to ensure sustainability. Great customer experience happens by design, not accident. Tailored training helps teams to unite behind a shared vision to deliver a service and sales experience that becomes a 'hallmark' of their brand - unique and valuable.

Whether you want to improve skills to better handle complaints, be more efficient at first contact resolution, roll out smart in-store technology to equip staff to make interactions more personalised, easier and faster or embrace new ways of working, the quality of the training impacts the quality of the outcome. Great training begins with high quality learning design - a skill that is in short supply in the UK.

Training design top tips

- > Start by creating a context for the training and link the content to the very specific values, behaviours and skills required to deliver your customer experience
- > Tailor the content to different functions and levels
- > Create short, focused, modules based on the day-to-day challenges your people face
- > Ensure leaders and managers are able (and encouraged) to role-model, coach, recognise and reward the right behaviours
- > Build the tools and practical job aids that will ensure the transfer of new skills from the training room to the daily operation

Here are five guiding principles for training to help generate the changes in behaviour necessary to deliver your customer experience

#1 Start with values and beliefs

Skills development on its own does not create belief in a new direction and a commitment to change. The catalyst for change is embedding the new direction into individuals' values and belief systems. New skills are always required, but these skills need a solid foundation of belief and commitment.

#2 Design from the customer back and link to company purpose and strategy

Be clear about how your employees' roles connect with your organisation's purpose, strategy and business results. Designing from the customer back, with a clear linkage to these issues, makes for a much richer experience for participants. It also makes it much easier to secure the active involvement (and attendance) of senior executives in the training rollout.

#3 Create value for the individual

Be clear about the benefit for the employee. The benefit may be in terms of progression, reward, personal satisfaction or simply the ability to perform better by 'being the best I can be.' Link training to the specific values, behaviours and skills required to deliver your customer experience and highlight the importance of every employee's role.

#4 Make the training fun and memorable

If training is fun and memorable, the experience carries an important message about the similar impact of behaviour on customer experience. This will also help to consolidate, and trigger, appropriate behavioural responses when employees are back in the workplace.

#5 Model real-world experiences

Model real-world experiences so that employees work directly with the customer challenges they face daily. This creates an opportunity for them to practice, get feedback, reflect and then practice again. This is far more effective in terms of learning

than an overly academic or generic approach. When participants feel like something is relevant to them they value it more.

Sustaining improvements

If you do not have the internal resource or time to run the training workshops and turn to the expertise of an external provider, make sure capability is transferable so you are self-sufficient and can sustain the improvements.

Customer experience your way

These guiding principles can help unite teams around the vision and strategy that will make the difference to your brand and customers. Valuing and investing in your own people is a major contributor to getting customer experience right. Recruiting for values and training for skills is increasingly common practice among the most forward-thinking businesses. Whether you're looking at face-to-face workshops or online programmes, or a combination of both, bespoke training will ensure your business delivers customer experience your way.

Further reading:

Case study: [How putting the customer first in retail drove sales 19% higher](#)

Playbook: This guide includes extracts from our new [Customer Experience Playbook for Retailers](#)



About cp2experience

cp2experience is a specialist customer experience consulting and training company. We help clients improve their customer experience in ways that drive profitable growth. We know that organisations which put customers and their people at the heart of their business outperform the competition. These enlightened companies create better places to buy for customers, better places to work for employees and better places to invest for shareholders. We are committed to sharing our knowledge, experience and insight with clients, friends and partners. To that end we hope you find this guide of value.

For more information:

London office:

John Aves, Chief Executive
Email: johna@cp2experience.com

Dublin office:

Mark Gould, Managing Director, Ireland
Email: markg@cp2experience.com

Visit: www.cp2experience.com