

#93: Ideas & Inspirations

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Words of Wisdom

"I always feel that whatever I do, I could do better. I suppose it is perfectionism"

- ROWAN ATKINSON

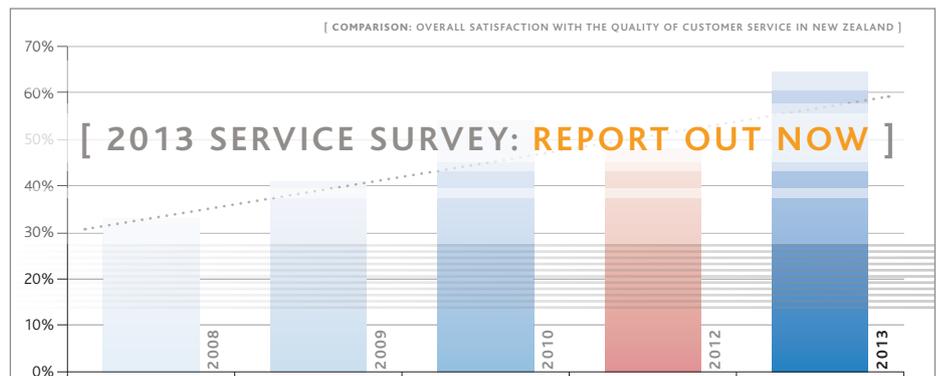
Service Tips:

IDEAS & INSPIRATIONS offers a weekly customer service success idea delivered by Pod Cast. KiwiHost's Service Tips Podcasts are a 90 second dynamic service message that will inspire you to focus on one aspect of your customer service. It will get your mind stimulated to look for ways to implement real customer service improvements.

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New Zealand's worst customer service industries revealed

Industries that rate the worst for customer service in New Zealand are Government agencies, local councils, telecommunications, utilities and insurance companies.

Customer service satisfaction in New Zealand overall has, however, doubled from 2012.

The results of the fifth annual KiwiHost Perceptions of Customer Service Survey of more than 1,250 New Zealanders, carried out over September and October last year, reveals that the private sector appears to be heeding the call for better customer service.

The survey covers customer service across sixteen different industries, from automotive repairers, hotels/motels, banks and accounting/legal to supermarkets, medical centres, local councils, Government agencies and Internet Service Providers.

"It appears we have hit a critical point where the general level of service has improved to a level at which most organisations are providing somewhat satisfactory service," he said.

The perception of satisfactory customer service levels increased by 16 per cent – compared to previous years – to 64 per cent compared, to 48 per cent in 2012, and 54 per cent in 2010.

However, the increase in satisfaction is not necessarily reflected in what customers believe, with only 32 per cent of customers saying that customer service is getting better. This is however also a marked improvement on 24 per cent from the previous year.

"If satisfaction levels continue to improve at current levels, those that are not delivering good customer service could find that the responses to their failings become more strident and obvious than in the past, particularly with tools like social media sharing now available to customers.

"We believe that there is still room for improvement when you consider that 36 per cent of those surveyed said they were not happy with the level of customer service provided generally. When you combine this with the 58 per cent of people who say they never complain, it becomes abundantly clear that this does not mean companies can become complacent," Mr Brixton said.

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SOCIAL MEDIA A GROWING INFLUENCE

Social media continues to surge as a popular medium for communicating with companies, whether to express satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the level of service.

"Those using social media have evened out across all age categories and we expect that social media will increase in significance as a medium of communication between a company and its customers.

More than 52 per cent of respondents told the survey that they have posted positive feedback via social media, while 30 per cent of respondents said they had used social media to respond negatively to poor service.

"If companies use social media to respond to both positive and negative feedback, the survey would suggest that they stand a better chance of retaining their customers."

STAR PERFORMERS

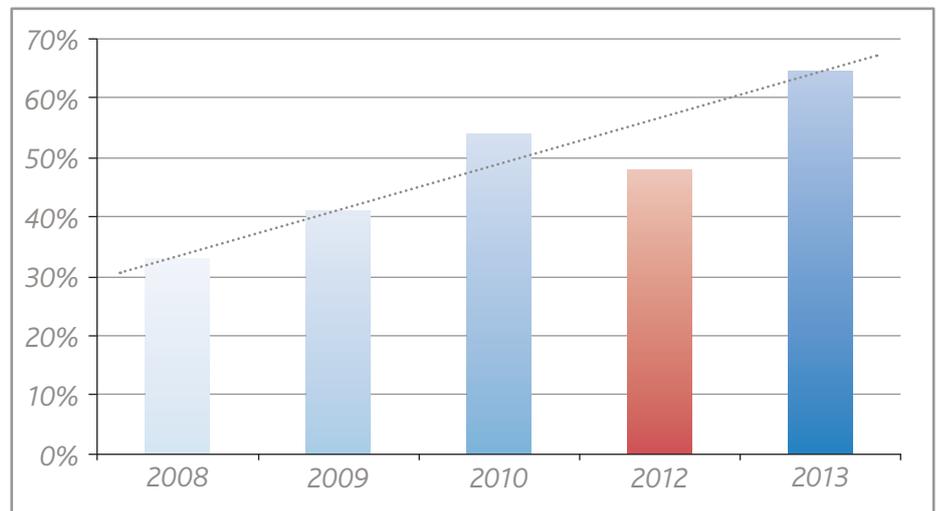
Air New Zealand remains the star performer when it comes to performance across the customer service landscape with a Happiness Rating of higher than 80, compared to other international airlines.

ASB leads the banking industry with a Happiness Rating in the mid-50s, while 2 Degrees heads the telecommunications industry with a Happiness Rating in the mid-40s.

Those surveyed gave the retail/hospitality industry (cafes, bars and restaurants) a combined Happiness Rating of nearly 70.

"Respondents have a more favourable perception of the level of customer service provided by banks overall, but the retail/hospitality industry and supermarkets are right up there with them – the retail hospitality industry and hotels/motels had the least number of negative responses.

"Telecommunications and Internet Service



The perception of satisfactory customer service levels increased by 16 per cent – compared to previous years – to 64 per cent compared, to 48 per cent in 2012, and 54 per cent in 2010

Providers have clearly got the message and improved the most from last year, going up by 34 Happiness Rating points. On the other hand, Government agencies are still barely making a positive impact.

"It may be easy to say that nobody ever feels favourably disposed towards Government agencies, but the same can be said of local councils, yet local councils – while being the other cellar dweller – still significantly outperform government."

Mr Brixton added it was interesting to note that TelstraClear had gone from being one of the worst performers in the perceptions of customer service survey in the previous year, to notching up a significant improvement following the Vodafone takeover.

Companies are rated by customers according to a Happiness Rating, which applies to the number of satisfied responses minus the number of unsatisfied responses, represented as a percentage of the total number of responses for each company.

A Happiness Rating of 100 would indicate that all responses from the company were

positive, while a negative Happiness Rating means that responses suggest that the company has more unsatisfied customers than satisfied ones.

KiwiHost Managing Director, Jared Brixton, said half of the industry sectors surveyed came out with a Happiness Rating of 50 or more, which is double that of 2012 when only four sectors achieved a similar result.

"At the other end of the scale, no sectors scored a negative rating, which is a tremendous improvement over the previous year. Unfortunately Government agencies, while making a big improvement from last year, just scrape home with a Happiness Rating of three.

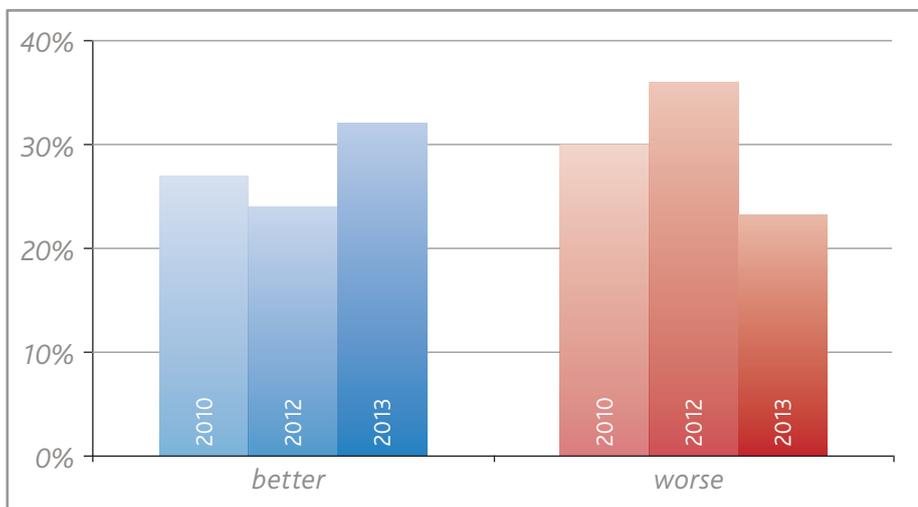
REASONS INFLUENCING PERCEPTIONS OF CUSTOMER SERVICE

The KiwiHost Perceptions of Customer Service Survey revealed that New Zealand customers have three basic expectations of an organisation:

- Listen to me and understand my needs
- Demonstrate a willingness to help
- Respond to me in a timely manner

"When a business does not deliver on these three themes, the result is a dissatisfied customer," Mr Brixton said.

TO DOWNLOAD THE FULL 2013 SURVEY REPORT GO TO KIWIHOST.CO.NZ OR:



However, the increase in satisfaction is not necessarily reflected in what customers believe, with only 32 per cent of customers saying that customer service is getting better.

Five Best Practices to Managing Customer Service Issues

No matter how good your customer service plan is, nothing happens exactly the way it's supposed to. Customers will judge your company for service failures, large and small, from bugs in your software to responses not answered within five minutes. But you can seize these opportunities — how you handle managing customer service issues and conversations is what counts.

MONITOR CUSTOMER SERVICE ISSUES AS THEY EMERGE

Use social channels as "listening posts" (create private lists on Twitter, save search terms for industry keywords, hashtags and company mentions).

When a customer reaches out for help, you should respond on the same channel quickly and transparently.

HANDLE ISSUES AS THEY ARISE TO PREVENT A POTENTIAL CRISIS

If there's a problem that might affect a number of customers, post regular updates on the status page of the company's website.

Let people know you are working on the problem.

As you figure things out, share the results.

If a customer is complaining online, community teams should be aware of who they are and why they're upset.

RESPOND QUICKLY AND ACCURATELY

Make a rule to respond to complaints within



Most companies aim to retain customers for a lifetime. It's not too much to ask, provided companies are managing customer experiences over the course of time, not just as a one-time event.

a set time frame (one-fourth of customers who complain via social media expect a reply within an hour).

When someone has an issue, namecheck them so that they're made aware, or reply directly asking them how you can help.

If it's a bigger issue, ask customers to contact you via phone or email so you can better understand what happened and solve the problem in a reasonable amount of time.

BE TRUTHFUL AND TRANSPARENT

When you get a complaint, don't avoid handling it. When you do wrong, apologise and make it right.

MAKE FOLLOW-UPS SYSTEMATIC

Always follow up - on social channels for smaller issues, through phone calls and emails for larger ones - to make sure the disgruntled got what they needed.

Welcome advice and constructive criticism and collect it for reporting.

Sometimes customers complain because they care. They want something to work and are disappointed that it didn't. It's your responsibility to fix the problem. How you communicate with your customers, how you accept responsibility, and how you make things right is what people remember.

Top 9 tips for amazing customer service

1. Always Strive for Better – Pay close attention to all aspects of your customer experience and strive to make it better. No detail is too small.

2. You are NOT the Boss – You are in the business of servicing your customer's needs. You can only do that if you listen to your customers and learn their expectations. Remember, your customers pay your salary and that of your employees.

3. Remember You Have Two Ears and One Mouth – One of the greatest pieces of advice I got from my mother is to listen more and speak less, this augurs well for amazing customer service. Don't assume anything, really listen to them, and also look at their body language. Some people are bashful and aren't comfortable voicing their desire so body language and tone may

be better clues.

4. Anticipate Needs – There are hundreds of businesses just like yours in the world. What separates the good from the great ones? Ones that provide an amazing experience and not just sell a product or service.

5. All Customers are VIP's – Treat every customer with the best service possible. In this connected world we live in, treating a customer that's only spending 25 cents with you poorly can give you a bad review just the same as providing bad service to someone spending a million dollars with your business. Always be sincere and treat everyone with respect and attentiveness.

6. The Power of YES – Sometimes you might get hit by a request which surprises you into initially saying no. Take time to

reflect after those moments and try and figure out how you can say yes next time.

7. Say Sorry – Mistakes will be made. Learn to say you are sorry when you do and be sincere. Be open to complaints and try and learn from them.

8. Deliver More Than You Promise – I recently stayed at a hotel and when I opened the door and inspected the room a plate of cookies was waiting for me. This little gesture instantly placed a smile on my face and made the experience better. People remember the little things in life.

9. Encourage Feedback – Firstly, if you don't provide channels for feedback, your customers will take to the web to send it publicly. Secondly, you should embrace feedback and always be thinking of ways to improve your service.

Don't forget about our other programmes!

ADVANCED SERVICE SKILLS FOR HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS

A workshop specifically for Healthcare Professionals. Learn what your patient's service expectations are and how to meet them effectively.

DEALING WITH DIFFICULT CUSTOMERS

Our NEW & IMPROVED Dealing with Difficult Customers workshop gives participants skills to manage conflict, so that they can approach disagreements with confidence that keeps personal and professional relationships strong.

TIME MANAGEMENT

Is time management an illusion? An effective ideal? A learnable skill?

In a time where the reality is the need "to do more with less" what are the secrets of the effective, productive, management of time.

Please contact your local KiwiHost representative to see if these workshops are running in your area, or for more information!

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How do you build the brand awareness your company needs while keeping costs down?

One area that is often overlooked by small businesses - or executed poorly - is social media. When used strategically it can give you direct engagement with many of your target audiences.

It is all too easy to think "we need to be on social media" and not get any further than that. Too many businesses launch into social media without thinking about what they want to get out of it. Unsurprisingly, this rarely yields results. Instead, companies need to think about what they are trying to achieve, and work out their strategy from there.

Here are 4 questions you should ask yourself when formulating your social media strategy.

WHO AM I TRYING TO REACH?

A key part of this is understanding your audience. Are you a B2B brand, or are you a consumer brand whose main customers will be mothers? Do you have secondary audiences? Establish clearly who your primary and secondary audiences are.

WHAT CHANNELS ARE MOST APPROPRIATE TO REACH THESE PEOPLE?

Too often when considering social media, people just assume that they need to be on every available channel: Facebook, Twitter,

LinkedIn, Pinterest, Tumblr, YouTube... Work out which channels are appropriate for your customer base and focus solely on those.

WHAT KIND OF CONTENT WILL THEY CARE ABOUT?

It's a rare consumer who loves being bombarded with marketing. Have a look at companies that have been successful in engaging similar audiences and see what type of content works. Make sure that you get the balance right between marketing content and content that engages on a broader basis.

HOW MUCH TIME DO I WANT TO DEDICATE TO THIS?

There is no point having channels if you don't use them. Silence probably won't lose you followers, fans or viewers, but it won't gain you any either, and it won't achieve your marketing or brand awareness objectives. Conversely, posting something that isn't relevant to your brand or your audience will likely alienate fans or followers, so make sure you have the time to put into relevant, meaningful use of the channel.

Thinking about these 4 questions when you formulate your social media strategy will put you in a much better position to reach your audience in a manner that generates positive business results.

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