

IDENTIFICATION MECHANISMS OF CONTACT POINTS WITH A CLIENT AS TOOLS OF IMPROVEMENT OF CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

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The essence of Russian economic modernization is in not only providing the technological progress and competitiveness, but also improving the standard of living of everyone and ensuring favorable conditions for future generations [1].

In recent years the term “customer focus” has appeared in the marketing departments of Russian service enterprises. Many companies rely on this strategy and do the right thing, in our opinion. But what does this mean to the client, and when does the client call your company “customer focused”? Obviously, any person has a right of a really high-quality service and the main point of a customer-oriented company is an achievement and provision of this quality. But one must not forget that in order to prove to the client that the company follows this strategy the customer has to first choose this company among many others.

Therefore, the main aim of a service enterprise is to define a mechanism of identifying points of contact with the client. So, to make sure a service enterprise is able to provide a real value product, it must first of all identify and develop its points of contact with existing and potential customers. If this mechanism is not defined, then the company cannot call itself customer-oriented. Factors affecting service quality include the identification of contact points and the degree of client’s satisfaction [2].

What is a point of contact? It is any, even the most superficial interaction of a customer (potential or existing), with everything that relates to this service. Points of contact can be initiated by a company or by a client. A service enterprise can control some points, but cannot control others; some points develop consumer expectations and others make a real impression.

The analysis of the "points of contact" is an analysis of a company, a service itself and market relations. The term "market" means not only a client, but also distributors, competitors, dealers and other structures that affect the market. Thus, the principle of "points of contact" is the key to successful implementation of a customer-oriented strategy [3, 4].

What is its meaning? First of all, it is necessary to list the cases (points) when the service enterprise and everything connected with it is responsible for interaction with consumers. The client interacts with any of the products of this company, with the company itself, with its communications many times. Customers interact with companies in different places (points), in a variety of circumstances and contexts. Sometimes it is the company that initiates the contact, sometimes it is a consumer, who does it and sometimes contact occurs without the initiative of both parties, by coincidence [4].

The potential problem is that the vast majority of companies pay attention to a very limited set of contact points. And for the most part these are points of contact where the company has influence, control or thinks that it controls them. The company focuses all its efforts on these points of contact, thus losing the one important component - the consumer. The consumer does not pay attention to how the company presents itself or its points of contact – he just makes his own impressions about each event of contact with the company. And often, these impressions are not in favor of the company.

Here are the main points of contact, which any business should develop and without which the modern customer does not assess the quality of service as "high":

- **customer contacts the company corporate identity** - corporate identity of topography (logo, colors, fonts), business cards, letterheads, business proposals, presentations, price lists, printing and branded merchandise;
- **customer contacts the company advertising messages** - advertising models in the media, online advertising, advertising on radio and television,

print advertising, outdoor advertising, mailings, trade shows, customer events;

- **client studies the site** - visibility in search engines, design, navigation, services (the opportunity to ask a question or make an offer), usability, FAQ;
- **client communicates with employees on the phone** - automatic greeting, response time, customer greeting by an employee;
- **office** - company information in reference books, a map on website, in advertisements, road signs, parking at the office, entrance design, navigation system in the office, waiting places for customers, promotional handouts, entertainments for a client while waiting (magazines, television, and music), drinks for customers;
- **service** - staff dress code, communication style, hospitality of the staff, waiting time in a queue, choice of payment;

This is a partial list of the most common points of customer interaction with company. But examining the development of services in foreign companies, one can add such interesting ways of improving the quality of service as:

1. Mandatory and timely response of staff to any message of a client. A customer sees the obligation even to such a trifle, and concludes that the company is also sensitive about his order.
2. Standardized text speech modules written in correct language with the correct accents in verbiage that also emphasizes respect for a client. Customers often pay attention to literacy of employee's speech.
3. The timing of contact is also important. If the client asks to call him back at 2 o'clock, it makes no sense to do it at 4 o'clock. By this time the customer will either find a different service provider or will be unable to speak with the company's representative, which can result in loss of the client.
4. Availability of a answering machine, operating in non-working hours. If the company is not working around the clock, this is its big bug. Because in an era of catastrophic shortage of time, companies benefit

greatly when provide customers with necessary service within 24 hours a day, that is, at the time when it is convenient for the client. But if a company cannot organize its activities in this way client should not wait for an answer and must get information about the working time of the office and its services in a message recorded on the answering machine.

5. Availability of places to entertain children while servicing the customer. Companies providing such services benefit in the modern world. Nowadays many people live, work, start families away from their parents and the possibility to obtain the required service in the office where client can come with his child, has become very important.
6. Customer will appreciate a thank-you letter from the company. And if it is a creative message in an expensive branded envelope with the signature of the CEO (Director, President, etc.), sent by mail to the customer's home address, this small gesture can help customer make the choice in favor of the company next time [1, 3, 4, 5, 6].

In addition, there are specific points of contact that are related not to the all service sectors, but to a particular specialization.

For example, a travel agency might have added to this list the driving directions to the airport for a client, preparation of traveler's documents, security of apartments for the holidays, medicine kits for holiday, vaccinations when traveling to high-risk countries, printing photos after vacation and so on.

A company, providing an interior design service, can develop intuitive application for its site where the client could make the first sketches of the future project himself and then show his ideas to designers.

But all the efforts of the company to differentiate its services and "outdo" competitors mean nothing when consumers do not show up. Here is an example showing how a potential customer takes solutions. Eight years ago, a fitness club "Vitasport" was opened on the bank of the Moscow River. And the advertising department started its work with a release of a magazine. It tells about essential problems that can be resolved with active lifestyle, as well as about its experienced

instructors, who help the clients. This magazine is still available, actively promoted, and enjoyed. As a result, today the "Vitasport" has not lost any of its clients, who have come for 8 years and continue to join it, despite the fact that another club opened near them 4 years ago, with the best pool and reduced prices. Consumers are learning more about the club "Vitasport" and problems which the instructors help solve from regular issues of the journal. Later, when they have doubts about their choice of the club, customers choose "Vitasport" because most they trust what is familiar. This is the same prejudice, as the one that makes you think that plane crashes killed more people than the flu. Most often people believe what they hear or what shakes them to the core, but in fact the flu or cancer kill people 4 times more than catastrophes.

Also, there is another surprise: it is better to have bad reputation, than none at all. Over time, the negative information is erased from the memory, while the memory of the name of the company remains. When later somebody will be asked which club he can advise, the person selects familiar name, even though he has heard bad things about it. It is force of habit [7].

The very concept of "service" scares people because paying their money or agreeing to pay, they still do not know exactly what they will get. At the time of signing the contract, they get only a promise that something will be done. The job of good managers is to reassure consumers, to tell them more about the advantages, to give examples from real life, and finally to establish a probation or trial day (as in the case of a fitness club). A healthy dose of criticism in the story makes it more real, as more people trust the product that is not quite perfect, but good, and the people who are not perfect, but able to learn from their mistakes [4].

Many companies also mistakenly believe that an important role in the choice of customers is price. Yes, it is important and should match the quality, but the price is NOT the final criterion for the selection of a consumer. In a service industry, consumer can see whether a price matches the quality only after he receives the service. A big discount on the second visit will play a bigger role,

rather than a low initial offer. Low price makes a client think of a company as second-rate, and he may initially be afraid to get a deal.

Thus, there are many ways to interact with a client, but the company is not always able to identify them. Some mechanisms exist to identify points of contact. In addition to the common ones - competitor analysis, attraction marketing specialists, etc., there is an important and a very easy way, which many companies do not follow - "friendship" with existing clients, the constant "human" interaction with them, and an interest in their personalities. In response to real attention, customers always share the problems they have to face [8, 9].

However, one of the most important tasks of service industries is not only to identify the points of contact, but to analyze the quality of customer satisfaction, and identify opportunities to improve them. The data on customer satisfaction quality of service must be analyzed systematically to make timely decisions about improving the quality of service. The analysis should provide two types of initial data [6, 7].

Firstly, there is data on the relative importance of the various benefits to a customer from additional services that increase customer satisfaction and loyalty to the company. These estimates are more objective and reliable than direct consumer ratings.

Secondly, there is data how a customer perceives the impact of purchased services. The relevant data can be obtained only through interviews or communication. Impact assessment is usually based on a direct comparison with similar services of major competitors in this market segment. For example, the reliability of express mail must be assessed in relation to the means of delivery used by competitors. If the company delivers a letter in a week and its competitors do it in 3 days, then the lack of customers should not come as a surprise to the management. In the modern world, time is much more valuable than money, and if the company has not realized that, then it has already lost [10].

And, of course, nobody can ignore the fact that the "client-oriented" business can only exist if all the employees of the company are focused on the result. All the

personnel of the company must clearly understand why the strategy orientation to a client is necessary.

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