**Wow Factor**

***A wow experience, in my definition, is when service goes beyond fulfilling basic customer expectations and does so in a creative unexpected way. This is important because human beings–including human customers–remember best in terms of stories. So a wow experience is a powerful way to create a story in your customer’s mind that, ideally, will bring that customer closer to your brand.***

1. **Empower employees. Make it clear that it’s their job to be empowered in favour of their customers, and back that empowerment up with financial support/leeway so they can go out of their way for a customer even if it costs money.**
2. **Model wow. Spin tales of different ways that a customer can be impressed. These can be drawn from your own experience, your imagination, and anecdotes you’ve heard from (or experienced at) other companies. Don’t worry; you won’t have to be doing this for very long. As the in-house “bank” of wow stories grows, you can recount those homegrown examples instead.**
3. **Celebrate wow. When an employee or team of employees take the time and, if necessary, spend some money to create wow for a customer, this needs to be celebrated. The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company celebrates this both daily at their 10-minute “line-up” and weekly companywide. It’s not so easy to stay in the mindset of celebrating wow when such an effort leads an employee to get less of their routine work done. But it’s essential, and it’s up to you: as a leader, you have the choice to either criticize the employee for being less "efficient" or celebrate them for doing something that is very important for the future of your company.**
4. **Learn to wow at the right time. It’s important that employees understand that, from a customer’s perspective, it's not always the time for wow. At times, customers are in too much of a hurry or are feeling too unsociable to want to have anything to do with being wowed. It is up to your employees to pick up on this and not be forcibly wowed. Because that’s not the kind of story you want customers to take home with them.**

**Why Wow Your Customers?**

**Wowing your customers creates deeper loyalty and delight and promotes meaningful usage for years to come. In my case, the hotel staff had other things they could be doing besides baking cookies. They have rooms to keep clean, bookings to manage, and other, more pressing things that need to get taken care of.**

**That said, they cared enough to go out of their way to make my experience excellent. They wanted to wow me and show me they cared.**

**Similarly, your support department’s main job probably is not sending out free swag to new or valuable customers. If you asked them, they would say their job was to support customers and to keep them as happy as possible while doing so.**

**But your support team should deliver delightful experiences just as often as the hotel staff does. The long-echoed sentiment that "it's the thought that counts" comes to mind. Is it their job to send out swag? No. But would the customer be delighted to know that your team was thinking of them? Yes.**

**In creating reciprocity and positive feelings in other people, it is the thought that counts. Psychologist Norbert Schwarz first made this apparent years ago in his famous "dime experiment," in which found that as little as 10 cents could have a meaningful impact on one's attitude. According to Schwarz: "It's not the value of what you find. It's that something positive happened to you."**

**One important thing to note about the experiment and Schwarz's conclusions on small, joyous moments and an improved mood is that surprise is a crucial component. In customer service, "surprise reciprocity" is the name of the game. Figure out what customers do not expect, and then do it.**

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**To wow your customers, all you need is the drive to do so. Here are a few ways to put that drive to work.**

1**. Stick to your word**

**When you promise something to a customer, make sure that you can keep your word. Sticking to your word isn't just about under-promising and over-delivering; it's about making sure that everyone in your company knows your promises and is committed to achieving them:**

**Customer-facing teams should be on the same page with customer expectations.**

**Your CRM should be up to date on customer information.**

**Your product team must stay on track with their timelines.**

**The first step to wowing your customer by keeping your word is to set appropriate and clear expectations. Your customer should know what they are going to receive, when they will receive it, and what it will take on their part to do so.**

**For instance, in a restaurant, your waiter typically sets your expectations for the timeline ("I'll be back to take your order in just a few minutes"), returns to take your order and then brings your food, and the menu tells you how much money you will spend.**

**If any of those things do not happen — if your waiter never comes to your table or the menu doesn’t have accurate pricing — you might be confused or frustrated. The same thing goes for any other product or software.**

**State your promises to your customers and make sure that everyone is on board internally so no balls get dropped.**

1. **Give them more than they expect**

**For the most part, humans love small surprises. We are not talking fireworks and a trip to Cancun, but offering a discount or a small gift card can really wow your customers.**

**If you are a business with a physical product, one of the best ways to do this is to include a smaller product for free with the product they ordered.**

**For other businesses, offering an extra might look like sending out a free eBook, a coupon for a free consultation, or a meeting as a coach or consultant. These things cost relatively little for a business but go a long way with customers.**

1. **Respond quickly**

**In a recent study by Forrester, 45% of consumers reported that they would abandon a purchase if their questions were not addressed by the company quickly. So, if you respond slowly, not only are you not wowing your customers, but you are actively losing them.**

**Quickness is relative, of course. A slow response via chat might still seem super speedy via email. Analyse your answers' speed for each channel and set a goal based on where you are currently.**

**For instance, you may already have a fantastic chat response time, but your phone resolution times look rough. By understanding how you are presently doing across channels, you'll know where to focus on getting the most wow for your work.**

1. **Make things easy**

**It used to be that it took over 25 steps to order a pizza from Domino's. Then, they realized that the best way to earn customers was to make things easy. They revamped their website, shortened their ordering processes, and even made integrations with tools like Google Home and Alexa to make it even easier to order.**

**Customers were excited about it! The company's conversion rates shot through the roof, and they've continued to be able to put that revenue into making the experience even easier.**

**There are tons of pizza places to order from, but Domino's won over the competition by wowing their customers with ease of use.**

1. **Get to know them**

**It feels good for your customers to be known and understood. Beyond that, getting to know them can better position your products to meet their needs.**

**By taking the time to get to know your customers, you build rapport and trust. You learn about their interests and what they care about when it comes to business. You can then use that to custom design their experience to wow them.**

**Knowing a customer means that you'll also know all of their pain points and what you can recommend to address them. If you come from a place of service and help them resolve all their problem areas in one fell swoop, you'll earn a customer for life.**

**With additional information about your customers and their journey, you can also be more proactive with your sales and support outreach. When you reach out before the customer even realizes they need help, it feels like magic.**

**6. Empower your agents**

**One of the founders of the Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company said that the company's employees "have total power, and all the resources of our organization, to create these moments, these stories, on their own, without needing to ask permission, without needing to involve management, without needing to worry that they're going too far. The time spent creating these stories isn't time taken out of their job; this time spent is their job."**

**As you probably know, the Ritz is royalty when it comes to customer loyalty, and it's because they empower their team members to wow their customers daily.**

**Let your agents be the arbiters of their destiny. They should be allowed to determine things like refunds and policies and have permission to bend or break the rules every once in a while.**

**Not every interaction is going to be by the book. You will run into situations where your team just won't be able to find the right answer.**

**Instead of making the customer wait until your team member can ask permission, give them permission to solve the issue right then and there in the way that they think is best.**

1. **Do regular check-ins for no reason**

**It does not take much to reach out when someone crosses your mind. Encourage your agents and customer success managers to reach out to customers that they’re thinking about and just check in.**

**You can set the expectation that you don't want anything from the customer and that your company genuinely cares. Consider creating a budget to send "just because" gifts. Keep the focus entirely on the customer — do not use it as an opportunity to upsell or talk about your newest feature.**

1. **Express gratitude**

**Thank the customer as often as you can: at the start of emails, at the end of emails, just because. In particular, if a customer leaves a positive review, that’s a great reason to say thank you, and it’s a great opportunity to build an even deeper relationship.**

**Consider it from the customer's perspective: They don't expect you to reach out after they leave a review, so do the unexpected.**

1. **Treat all of your users the same**

**Many companies tier support — trial or free users can get support via communities or forums, and paid customers get help from an "actual" support team, sometimes via email, but also over chat or phone.**

**Can you imagine how much it wows customers when that's not the case? It is a delight to come to a support experience expecting a pretty low bar and getting preferential treatment instead.**

1. **Give your employees props**

**When it comes to "how to wow your customers," your employees are responsible for writing the book. Reward them when they do an excellent job, and you'll continue to keep the hype train rolling.**

**People respond well to praise, and if you commend them for exceptional service, they'll continue to raise the bar higher and higher.**

**Beyond that, hire people who have the drive to do the work. Make a list of the traits that create a fantastic employee on your team:**

***Do they need to be technical?***

***How much patience is essential?***

***Does humour play a role in wowing your customers?***

**Make your list and start hiring for the raw talent. Then, once you have hired them and they are batting a thousand, make sure you praise and encourage them for their excellent work. Too often, companies fail to recognize the value of those soft skills — but they are the landscape that excellence is grown on.**

**Get wowing!**

**You do not need a ton of money or time to wow your customers. Sometimes, even something as small as a "thank you" can get the job done. Practice the same things that you would do in a**

**meaningful relationship:**

***Stick to your word.***

***Keep things simple and easy.***

***Empower the people around you.***

***Treat others equally and with respect.***

**The small things — cookies rather than fireworks — are what make the most significant impact on people.**