6 Ways to Give Your Customers a Great First Impression!

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Some organizations provide a great first impression. Others do not. By first impressions I mean the first point of contact a customer has with an organization. The reality is, customers, have choices, and organizations that get it, pay attention to the details that matter to customers.

Every organization has a slightly different first impression moment. However, all organizations have that first opportunity to make their customer feel like they have come to the right place and will get their needs met.

6 First Impression Opportunities

1. Company Website

Today's consumers use the internet to find out information about an organization. Successful organizations know this and have a well-designed and easy-to-use website. Customers want to know what products and services are available, hours of operation, location(s), customer testimonies, service guarantees, and to simply get a general feel for the business.

Take some time to audit your website and view it from a first-time customer's perspective. Here are a few things to think about:

- Is the look and feel of the website current or outdated?
- Is the content accurate, clear, and error proof?
- How easy is it to find needed information? The last thing you want to do is frustrate a customer by making it difficult to navigate the site.
- Are there pictures or videos that engage the customer and tell a story?

Ask someone who has never been to your website to go through it and give some honest feedback from a customers' perspective. You may be surprised at what you learn when an objective person shares their thoughts.

2. The Telephone

A customer who calls in to ask questions or book an appointment may be the first point of contact for many businesses. And no one enjoys calling a business and interacting with a rude, incompetent, or apathetic employee.

Ask yourself these questions:

- How is the phone answered?

- Does a live person answer the phone or is there a multi-level triage system that you have to work through?
- How long are the wait and hold times?
- What does the hold background music/information sound like?
- Is the person answering the phone friendly, knowledgeable, and able to answer questions?
- How many times does a customer need to be transferred before getting information or a question answered?
- How quickly are calls returned?

Training employees is the key to a great phone experience. Additionally, scripting employees who answer the phone can help ensure that customer questions are answered in a friendly and efficient manner.

3. Business Lobby

Someone new to your business may notice the cleanliness of the parking lot, entryway, and lobby. Things that we may have become blind to you will be very obvious to a new guest.

Ask yourself:

- Is the parking lot free from debris or blowing trash?
- Is the entryway free from debris or blown leaves, etc?
- Is the glass on the doors and windows clean?
- What does the building smell like? I personally have a sensitivity to smell, and I make impressions based on smells, either good or bad.
- What does the furniture and carpet look like in the waiting room? Is it clean and fresh or stained and worn?
- Is the public restroom clean and fully stocked?

Take some time to clean, paint and refresh an outdated facility to improve a customer's first impression.

4. Receptionist

The receptionist is often the first representation of a business. How well they are trained, or untrained, communicates a lot about a business.

Think about these things:

- Is the receptionist friendly?
- Do they have a pleasant speaking voice?
- Are they knowledgeable about the organization?
- Can the receptionist answer question about the business or products?
- Is the receptionist equipped to do service recovery if a customer is not happy?
- Does the receptionist do personal things while on duty? For instance, do they eat at their desk, read, or polish their nails?

5. Business Culture

When someone visits your business, are the workers friendly, happy, and helpful? If employees are not engaging, they can leave a negative impression on customers.

Ask yourself:

- Do employees vent or voice frustrations in front of customers? For instance, do employees complain their job where customers can hear them.
- Do they ignore customers thinking that it is "not their job" or do they stop what they are doing to help the customer?
- Are there underlying internal issues that are seeping out to the customers?

Customers don't really care about the internal workings of an organization. They just want to know that their needs will be met. If there is an employee engagement or morale issue in the office, figure out what it is, and fix it. You may think that customers don't pick up on that, but they do.

6. Marketing Materials

I know marketing materials can be expensive, but they really do communicate a lot about an organization. Marketing materials should be professionally done and represent the organization by having current, clear, and error-free information.

The goal would be for these materials to answer the questions that someone might have about the organization. When creating marketing materials, think about answering these questions – who, what, where, when, and how.

For instance, who is our target audience, what are we trying to share with them, and how can they access our products and services. You Only Have One Shot at A first Impression

Finally, there is an old saying – "you only have one shot at making a good first impression" and it is true! Customers are quirky at best and business owners need to make sure that a new customer's first impressions are positive.

Audit your first points of contact (website, marketing material), train your employees to interact with customers, make sure your facility is clean- and you will be well on your way to creating a positive first impression!