

Improving Customer Service through Empathy

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Abstract : Many organizations would like to gain customer loyalty, and to achieve this they invest in customer management systems which help them to learn and anticipate the customers' needs, get feedback from them and serve them. One of the most elementary ways to achieve customer loyalty is for employees to be able to empathize with their customers, and to be able to feel what they feel when the company betrays their trust, which usually otherwise shown in patronage and loyalty. Unfortunately, the staff and management of organizations do not always realize the negative impact of treating customers badly, because they do not stop to think how these customers feel. If they did, they would be more careful and more respectful of these people who are human beings just like they are. They would be wiser, since this would ultimately make them more profitable businesses. This paper looks at thirteen descriptions of situations in which customers felt treated badly by organizations they trusted, and focuses on the feelings of these customers. If the organization (made of people) could empathize with the customer, then customer service would be surely enhanced. It is expected that these stories, real experiences narrated by young professionals working in Nigeria, can awaken greater empathy for consumers within organizations. Thus, they may help the organization to learn empathy and to incorporate it into their foundational principles for ethical behavior. The paper's contents contribute to a heightened appreciation of empathy as an organizing mechanism by showing how putting one in the consumer's shoes can help managers to understand how he or she feels. This will lead organizations to be even more innovative in finding ways to meet their customers' needs and to deserve and win their loyalty. It addresses an issue that cuts across cultures, and therefore can be quite thought-provoking for every business owner or for team leads within organizations. By trying to stimulate empathy across the seller-buyer divide, it necessarily contributes to a deeper understanding of empathy as a building block for a sustainable society.

Keywords : customer service, empathy, ethical behavior, respectfulness

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