



Are You Monitoring the Customer Promise?

Ensure that customers' emotional connections to your company are not shattered at the point of interaction.

The idea of monitoring customer interactions is not new. In fact, the act of managing call center agents and observing their work performance is fundamental: "Make sure you hire the right people, define what you want them to do, teach them how to do it, make sure it's happening and continue to perfect the output."

It's not rocket science. So why do so many interaction centers find it difficult to implement monitoring programs to ensure the customer experience is in alignment with the company's customer promises?

Here are a few reasons why I believe making this fundamental act "real" is such a struggle:

1. Hiring the right people is talked about, but often merely as a gesture.

2. We define what we want reps to do conceptually, but not behaviorally.

3. Our training budgets leave a lot to be desired. We expect reps to pick up skills from their workstation neighbors, in an hour-long tutorial or, at best, in a single orientation program during their lifetime on the floor.

4. Coaching is inconsistent. Who coaches and when varies with call volumes, quality assurance rotations and supervisory demands.

5. Perfecting the output requires us to change how it has always been done, and we're resistant to the effort change requires.

6. There's a lack of support — technological support and/or moral support — from reps and executives

Any one of these factors is not insurmountable; however, a combination of them can make monitoring a monumental effort. Hats off to those centers that have a well-oiled monitoring machine! For the rest of us who deal with these issues daily, this column's for you.

I'm not going to preach about the virtues of monitoring — as managers,

you know most of the advantages. Rather, I would like to reposition the need for monitoring as seen from a customer's point of view. After all, we are all customers at one time or another. Perhaps this perspective can serve as a wake-up call and create a sense of urgency for monitoring.

Customers Have an Emotional Connection

As a customer, I usually have a choice about with whom I do business. That choice is usually predicated on: 1) a need for your product, 2) a belief that your particular product will satisfy my need, or 3) an emotional connection to your company.

What's that No. 3 reason, you ask? Let me give you an example. As an outdoor enthusiast, I could purchase my camping gear and outdoor wear from a number of places. I choose to order from Patagonia because they tap into my "customer spirit." They celebrate my need for "adventure." OK, so I'm not really into rock climbing. But they don't make the assumption that each of their customers is an Olympic medalist. However, the company knows that, in our hearts, we like to imagine the surreal.

So I flirt with Patagonia because they promise me adventure — that's an emotional connection. That connection is sustained when I flip the pages of their catalog and see pictures of myself (I mean, athletes), when I shop online and am allowed the adventure of a text-chat session, or when I meet a rep at a conference and see there are no titles permitted — we're all one spirit. Is that enough to make me a customer for life?

That depends on whether or not my sense of adventure is manifest in my actual interactions with the company. If the emotional connection is shattered because the products are not viable, or worse, when I call I'm treated like the 85th call of the day or I'm sent a canned response to my email, then I'm not in for

Tips for Upgrading Your Monitoring Process

- Involve your reps — they often are your most creative source. Have reps play the role of the consumer and call best-in-class 800 numbers or experience live-chat sessions to gain perspective.
- Design a monitoring form that includes skills requiring experience and finesse. Ask reps what they believe are the keys to a positive customer experience. Incorporate their answers on the form.
- Look for ways to reveal the essence of your company on your monitoring form, instead of including cliché terminology that has lost its meaning.
- Determine whether you should use a weighted scale for measuring each behavior or perhaps no scale at all.
- Calibrate your interpretation of rep performance with others who are responsible for monitoring. For example, what does "effective questioning" mean to everyone involved?
- Listen and look for specific behaviors to applaud and do it often (rather than coaching the whole call all the time).
- Coach with trust and preserve self-esteem. Set actionable goals rather than using vague parting words, such as "do better next time."
- Analyze behavior by combining it with other performance statistics to find out what's really going on.
- Always ask why you do what you do

life. I'm a short-term customer. And therein lies the urgency.

Monitor For More Than Service

Monitoring programs today have a heavier burden than they've had in the past. We need to monitor for good customer service, but we also need to ascertain whether or not reps are connecting to customers in a manner consistent with the way the company is presented. For instance:

- Are calls and email opened and/or

signed-off in a way that promotes the brand?

- Are reps taught how to give online customer service, not just decrease the email volume?
- Do reps represent the company's "essence" (i.e., trust, security, care, fun) at the point of interaction?

Customers do business based on a personality they come to know and trust, according to Preston Creative Marketing. When that message isn't echoed in the call or email, then the trust erodes and

marketing dollars are meaningless. Marketing draws you in emotionally, but it's the service that keeps you connected. In today's economy, our promise is all we have left. [CCMReview](#)

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