

A C B

Attracting Customers Bootcamp

Week 9

People and Physical Evidence

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Before we get started let us recap the outcomes from the ACB course:

- Understand what marketing is
- Understand how marketing can benefit you
- Understand your client completely
- Learn how to identify the best products or services to increase sales
- Identify the best way to promote your products
- Discover how you can give your customers the best experience
- Work out how you can stand out from your competitors
- Create a realistic and relevant marketing strategy

This week we will continue to look at the following learning outcomes:

- Discover how you can give your customers the best experience
- Work out how you can stand out from your competitors

Last week we considered how you can use processes to ensure that you offer the very best customer experience. By offering the best customer experience you will stand out from competitors, increase sales and customer loyalty and attract new customers.

This week we will look at how you can use people and physical evidence, the last two elements of the marketing mix, to offer the best experience for your customers.

People

People are vital to your business in terms of the people inside the business and the people who buy your products or services. Without people your products and services would simply not exist.

However the element of people is often left out in business planning, and this can be the main reason businesses fail.

For example, if we went into a restaurant and we were not looked after or the staff were rude we would quickly leave and would not return.

Whether you have 10 employees or you work just on your own you must have the right approach to people.

The right person in the right place can make all the difference to success

Benefits of People

If you make sure you have the right people in your business you can:

- keep your customers happy
- attract more customers as current customers will refer others
- save time and money- by putting the right people in the right roles you can save both time and money, For example if you have a good sales person in the role of selling or you outsource marketing or financial work to experts, you will be able to use individuals expertise to save money.

What does people actually mean?

Everyone involved in your business, whether you work alone or have a team of ten, will impact how customers see your business. This is such a vital point to remember in today's online world. Your customers can see your personal pages, and as the business owner your page must seem to be inline with your business.

Your customers are people too. We must make sure they are happy, as happy customers will mean your business grows. Always remember customers remember the experience and the people more than the product and service.

People and the Customer Experience

There are some immediate changes we can make, in relation to people, to make sure our customers have the very best experience. These changes include:

- Connect with customers
- Solve your customers needs, not your own
- Offer exceptional customer service
- Staff training
- Staff attitude
- Sales Support

Let us take each element in turn now.

Connect with customers

As a small business you have a huge advantage, you can make actual connections with your customers. This is vital as people crave connections in today's world. People buy from people, in other words we would rather work with a person who we know, compared to a stranger. There are many ways you can build connections- let us consider two ways now:

1. Meet with your customers

If you can get out and meet with your customers, this will have a profound effect on building relationships. You could meet with your customers on a one to one basis, or arrange a group get together. It does not matter how, it just matters that you meet them.

2. Give your customers what they want

From the emails you send to the blog posts you write, personalise your online content. Show your customers who you are and make them feel like they know you. Share stories on social media, put a photo of you on your website. Just show who you are. Tell your audience what your values are and what you want to do for them. All of these things will make your customers emotionally connect with you.

List the ways you can begin to connect with your customers today.

Solve your customers needs, not your own

Once again I cannot stress the importance of the work we completed in week two, your ideal client. We have already seen how your ideal client can help with promotions, marketing messages, products and prices. You can also use your ideal client to make sure you offer the best experience by making sure you offer your ideal client what they need in relation to people. In other words solve your ideal clients needs, not yours.

Let us consider two examples:

Imagine you have a query about a product you have bought. You look on the website where you purchased the item to get contact information for the company. The only thing listed online is a mobile phone number. You call the number and the line is dead. You have no way of contacting the business to ask about your query. How would it make you feel? You are unlikely to shop with the business again or recommend the business.

On the other hand imagine that you buy a product and you have a query. You go on the company's website and straight away you can see an email address, social media link, and phone number. You make contact and receive a reply immediately. The person who answered the call solved your query straight away. How would that make you feel? You would feel happy that someone spoke to you and resolved your query immediately.

This example demonstrates one way in which the people in your business can have a huge impact on the customer experience. Simply by thinking from the customers point of view you can begin to solve the customers needs.

There are many ways in which you can find out what your customers want. You can research and ask them. You can listen and see what people are doing online.

Before you go on to do any research there are some basic considerations you can think about to solve your customers needs at the moment. Let us consider these now:

1. Offer a convenient way for your customers to contact you and speak to you. Ensure your products or services offer a convenient solution.
2. Ensure you and your staff empathize with customers who get in touch with your business for assistance
3. Offer fair terms and condition, prices, delivery and returns policies.

4. Remain open and honest with your customers at all times, especially in relation to mistakes or changes.
5. Give your customers the control they need. From the start of the relationship to beyond the transaction your customers should have control over returns or changes they need to make.
6. Give your customers options to suit their own needs, not your own.
7. Ensure the customers have the right information when they need it.

What changes can you make to ensure you are solving your customers needs, not your own?

Exceptional Customer Service

Customer service links very closely with the customer experience. Customer service is one to one interaction between your customer and a representative of your company. It is the most crucial factor in making sure your customers are satisfied to ensure they come back.

Let us consider some ways you can offer exceptional customer service.

1. Respond quickly

Whether someone calls you on the phone or contacts you via social media you must respond quickly. If you cannot immediately provide the answer acknowledge the enquiry, and make sure you get back in touch.

One of the best tips I ever received was to always answer the phone with a smile on your face. Trust me customers will be able to tell when you do.

2. Treat your customers as *real* people

Part of offering an exceptional experience is making sure your customers feel valued. Get to know your customers and remember names and conversations to really stand out.

3. Go the extra mile

If you go the extra mile you will make your customers happy and customers will be likely to recommend you. You can go the extra mile by

- enclosing a thank you note
- sending a personal email
- offering something free
- send a thank you gift if your customers refer you.

A great way to work out how you can go the extra mile is to ask yourself, or ask friends, if I was a customer what would make me feel special?

4. The customer is for life

Treat your customers as if they will want to work with you forever. If you satisfy your customers they will keep coming back. Evidence shows a happy customer will tell three friends about their experience. How amazing is that? Your customer will bring another three customers if you keep them happy and go the extra mile.

List 5 ways you can offer exceptional customer service

Staff Training

Whether you operate on your own or have a team of 20 you must make sure your staff are trained as this will ensure your customers have a positive experience.

We all know how annoying it is when people who work in businesses do not know what they are doing!

When training your staff here are some things to remember, your staff must be:

1. Knowledgeable about your products and services
2. Patient with customers
3. Adaptive- in others words be able to read the customer and adapt to their needs.
4. Able to empathize with your customers
5. Positive- from using positive language for example use words such as 'absolutely', 'enjoy' and 'definitely' to smiling when they greet a customer

**How can you make sure you and your staff follow the above guidance?
Can you have a sign on your wall or offer training sessions?**

Staff Attitude

I was once told a big store made staff work in the offices instead of the shop floor when they were having a bad day. Now I do not know how true this is, however it shows how important the right attitude is.

I know if you work on your own it can be difficult to face customers on a bad day. However there are some ways you can overcome the times when you and your staff have a bad day.

1. Take time to understand why you or your employee is feeling like this.
2. Make sure the working environment is positive- display images or motivational quotes
3. Remember the customer. I find when I have a bad day, if I focus on the customer my spirits lift as I am distracted from my problem.
4. Celebrate every win!

Please note if you are having problems with a staff members attitude please investigate ways you can overcome this as this may require more attention.

List 5 ways you can overcome a bad day

Sales Support

Sales support is the activities you do to support sales. Unlike customer service which is one to one interaction with customers at any time, sales support includes customer service and so much more. Sales support includes the behind the scenes activities which people do, and the customer does not see. Sales support can include emails, lead generation and marketing.

How can you use your sales support to offer the best customer experience?

Physical Evidence

Physical Evidence is the final stage in the marketing mix. Physical evidence is the physical environment that the customer experiences. Physical evidence can include: the layout of your website and store; packaging; uniform; the smell of your shop; and vehicles.

List the physical evidence for your business.

The physical evidence must be in line with customer expectations in relation to your:

- branding
- brand position
- prices- if you charge high prices then the physical evidence should reflect this

If you were to buy a budget airline ticket you would not mind if the aeroplane was old and outdated in terms of style. However if you pay a premium ticket price you would expect a luxurious interior and smart looking staff.

Physical Evidence and the Customer Experience

As the physical evidence will have an impact on the customers attitude, it also has an impact on the customer experience. There are four main ways you can ensure physical evidence has a positive impact on the customer experience:

1. VIP Programs
2. Visual Experience
3. Reviews
4. Packaging

VIP Programs

VIP Programs are also called loyalty programs. Through VIP Programs you can turn first time customers into loyal customers. A loyalty program rewards the customers who frequently engage with your business- the more loyal they are, the more benefits they get.

When devising a loyalty program you must consider what the customers want. It must benefit your customers for them to use it.

Here are some tried and tested ways of running a loyalty program.

1. The Points Program- customers receive points for everything they spend, and the points can be used to pay for products or services
2. The Paid Program- customers pay a monthly fee to join a VIP club. This works well when marketed to existing customers and the club must include member benefits.
3. The Charity Program- customers get rewards for loyalty and they can easily donate to a charity
4. The Tier Program- a staged system the more a customer buys, the more rewards they get
5. The Progress Program- you help customers get closer to their goals, when the goals relate to your business. For example Nike give you more rewards the more you exercise.
6. The Subscription program- customers can sign up for a subscription to get your products or services at a reduced rate.
7. The Referral Program- customers who refer you receive rewards or discounts.

What Loyalty Program could you introduce?

Visual Experience

Whether you have an online store or website, a physical office or store, or if you are just holding an event, you must make sure everything your customers see is coherent to your brand and what the customer wants.

For example think of Apple's website and the stores. The website is crisp without excess information and the stores are uncluttered, with space to trial products and the Genius Bars. The visual experience is coherent across all locations. The experience meets the customers needs of trying the products, and ensures customers feel they are purchasing something special.

Here are some pointers to help you create the best visual experience:

- Do your customers want lots of choice and clutter, or do they prefer things to be streamlined and easy to navigate?
- What colour scheme will you use?
- What leaflets or handouts will help them remember you?
- Do your customers want a luxurious feeling, or something that feels like you are offering good value?
- Do customers want space to view goods?

Visually what do your customers want from your website or physical store?

Packaging

Packaging is another important factor in the customer experience. We have all been into shops where we have purchased an item and it is beautifully packaged in tissue paper and a gorgeous bag. On the other hand I am sure we have also at one point or another received an item in a plain white plastic bag.

Whatever business you are in, you can make sure your products or paper work is beautifully packaged.

When deciding what packaging to use consider:

1. First impressions count- if you wish to develop a luxury brand, use luxurious paper for printed documents and expensive packaging materials.
2. Packaging is the face of your brand and simple works well.
- 3 What is inside counts. Over complicated packaging can annoy people, customers want the goods as quickly as possible without feeling the company has scrimped on packaging.
4. Always choose quality packaging to give a luxurious feel and to protect whatever you are sending.
5. Unboxing is a huge trend- people film themselves unboxing products. Consider how would your products look as your customer opens the item?
6. People care about the environment, try to offer eco-friendly packaging.

How can you make sure your packaging assists in creating an amazing customer experience?

Reviews

Reviews are something your prospective customers will see, and they will impact a customer's buying decision.

Good reviews can have a great impact. To display your reviews you must first get them from customers. You can get reviews by simply asking customers via follow up emails, social media posts, or feedback forms. You can also offer rewards for reviews.

You must use your reviews. It is no good having amazing reviews and leaving them in your inbox. You need to use and display reviews on:

- Your website- specifically your homepage
- Search ads
- Social posts
- Adverts
- Marketing Materials

In other words anywhere your customers will go.

How can you get more reviews and display them?

Summary

This week we have completed our work on how you can offer the very best customer experience and stand out from competitors. I have given you some prompts to encourage you to look at how you can offer an exceptional customer experience. However there will be other things which you can do.

I cannot emphasise enough how important it is to listen what your customers are saying and what your competitors are doing, because this will be the best way to offer the best experience.

Take a few moments before next week and jot down how else you can offer the best customer experience.

Notes