

The Need For Speed In Business Success

| Attracting and retaining customers

 By **John Tschohl**, Service Quality Institute

“I feel a need for speed.”

Actor Tom Cruise made that line famous when he played Maverick, a fighter pilot, in the movie “Top Gun.”

Unfortunately, most companies and employees do not share that need. They do not recognize the value of speed when it comes to attracting and retaining customers – and simply doing a good job, no matter the situation.

As technology has increased the demand for speed in everything we do, it is critical to the success of businesses and employees that they deliver it.



Most companies throughout the world have set up roadblocks to speed. They have established rules, policies, and procedures that handcuff employees in their dealings with customers. They do not trust employees to make empowered decisions in order to satisfy customers and solve their problems because they think those employees will give away the store. What they do not realize is that when employees are empowered to solve customers' problems, those customers will not only continue to do business with you, they will reward you with word-of-mouth advertising as they tell others about their experiences with your company.

Employees are also at fault for the lack of speed in businesses today. Their mindset is locked into "slow," which means that if you give them four hours or four days to complete a task, that is exactly the amount of time they will take to do so. Whether they are dealing with external customers or internal customers, in the form of coworkers or management, they simply are not driven to complete things swiftly.

How Employees Can Increase Speed

Organize. Assemble everything you need to tackle a project or solve a problem so that everything is at your fingertips. Then evaluate the time necessary to do what needs to be done.

Prioritize. Break the project down into a series of small steps. This will allow you to focus on the

details while understanding the "big picture" goals you must work toward.

Manage your time. Identify specific timelines you need to complete each section of the project and then work to meet — or beat — the time you have established to finish the entire project.

Recognize efficiency opportunities. Look for ways to incorporate your vendors or coworkers into projects early in the process. That means considering all the tools at your disposal, from the expertise of your coworkers to your organization's technology assets.

Limit distractions. Every time you have a conversation at the water cooler or check your Facebook posts, you are getting off course, which can derail a project. That does not mean that breaks are not important. Take short ones throughout the day to quickly recharge, maintain your creativity, and stay ahead of fatigue.

Communicate. Provide coworkers and managers with appropriate updates on your progress and timetable. That not only illustrates the effectiveness of your use of speed, it demonstrates how you handle and overcome barriers. Constant communication forces you to think about the responsibilities of you and your team members and about how you can each maintain speed throughout the course of the project.

Keep promises and over deliver.

When you do this, it shows your customers, coworkers, and supervisors that you can be depended on to come through in a clutch. Over delivering allows you to further beat expectations by completing projects well ahead of the original schedule without compromising quality. Quality must go hand-in-hand with speed.

In the face of stiff and increasing competition from across the world, it is critical that speed becomes a focus for everyone in your organization — from the CEO to frontline employees. If there is no commitment to making speed a priority, it will never happen.



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