

THE NEED FOR SPEED

“I feel the need, the need for speed.”

Tom Cruise uttered the iconic line in the movie “Top Gun”, but most companies and employees don’t share the sentiment. They don’t recognize the value of speed for attracting and retaining customers, and for doing a good job in any situation.

As technology has increased the demand for speed, it has become critical for businesses and their employees to deliver it.

Most companies worldwide have created roadblocks to speed, with endless rules, policies, and procedures that handcuff the employees in their dealings with customers. They don’t trust their employees to make empowered decisions that will satisfy the customers and solve their problems effectively, because they think the employees will give away the store.

What they don’t understand is that when we empower our employees to solve our customers’ problems, the customers won’t just continue to do business with us, they will reward us with ongoing word-of-mouth advertising – with the volume turned up – as they tell everyone about the great experiences they had with our company.

The employees, too, are to blame for the dearth of speed in businesses today. Their mindset is locked on “slow,” which means that if you give them four hours or days to complete a task, that’s exactly how long they’ll take. Whether they are dealing with external or internal “customers” in the guise of coworkers and management, they simply aren’t driven to complete things swiftly.

EMPLOYEES SHOULD TAKE THESE STEPS TO 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 it will take to do what needs to be done.
- **Prioritize.** Break the project down into small steps. It will allow you to focus on the details while understanding the “big picture” goals you’re working toward.
- **Manage your time.** Identify specific timelines to complete each segment, then work to meet or beat the time you’ve set for finishing the entire project.

- **Recognize opportunities for efficiency.** Look for ways to incorporate vendors and coworkers into a project early in the process. This means considering all the tools at your disposal, from your coworkers’ expertise to your organization’s tech assets.
- **Limit distractions.** Every time you have a conversation at the water cooler or check Facebook, you’re going off course, which can derail a project. It doesn’t mean that breaks aren’t 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. Not only will it demonstrate the effectiveness of your use of speed, it will reveal how you approach and overcome barriers. Constant communication will force you to think about your own and your team’s responsibilities, and how all of you can maintain speed over the project’s duration.
- **Keep promises and over-deliver.** It will show your customers, coworkers, and supervisors that they can depend on you to come through in a clutch. Over-delivering allows you to beat expectations by completing projects well ahead of the schedule, without compromising quality. Quality and speed must go hand in hand.

In the face of stiff and growing competition throughout the world, it is critical that speed becomes a focus for everyone in your organization, from the CEO to the frontline workers. If there isn’t a commitment to making speed a priority, it will never happen.

For more information about John Tschohl and the Service Quality Institute, visit www.customer-service.com.

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John Tschohl is the founder and president of Service Quality Institute, a global leader in customer service. He is considered one of the world’s foremost authorities on all aspects of customer service, and is the author of several books including Moving Up: A Step-by-Step Guide to Creating Your Success. His monthly strategic newsletter is available online at no cost at www.customer-service.com.

