

How to Increase the Value of Your Company: A Real Game Changer!

By John Tschohl

If you focus on your competition, you will constantly be playing catch-up. While you and your competitors are busy fighting over fractions of a market-share point, someone else will come in and completely change the game.

In May of 2003 I experimented with nine leading companies in the area of customer service.

I invested \$1,000 in each of the below-named service leaders, buying their shares. I wanted to prove that service leaders continue to grow because they focus on the service strategy. Following is proof that a service culture will increase the value of a firm by way over 25 percent and much more if you concentrate on service. **This shows the increases/decreases over a 13 year period. *It's a game changer!***

Amazon is now worth over **\$21,000**, an increase by **2,000 percent!** Amazon has a set of practices that helps them manage customer experiences in a proactive, disciplined way. They allow their employees to assist in creating new and innovative approaches that have a profound impact on the customer experience.

Home Depot is now worth **\$6,030**, an increase by **503 percent**. The Home Depot is passionate about the Customer experience. They are the world's largest home improvement retailer. They feel their single greatest asset is their more than 385,000 associates. They remain committed to helping customers by providing an excellent customer experience.

Costco is now worth **\$5,400**, an increase by **440 percent**. Costco explicitly targets customers with more money and locations in more upscale shopping areas. Costco is committed to low costs and high wages.

TD Bank is now worth **\$3,218**, an increase by **222 percent**. Formerly known as Commerce Bank, they were the leader in increasing the value of their company when **Vernon Hill** was CEO before selling. Their focus is no longer solely on the customer as much as it is on processes and procedures.

Southwest Airlines is now worth **\$2,883**, an increase by **188 percent**. **Herb Kelleher**, the company's cofounder, had a relentless emphasis on internal customer service that showed in their interaction with their customers. They have taken all the 'fun' out of Herb's original intent and it shows in their financials.

Note: For the firms named below. *focusing on a service strategy for the past 13 years has proven difficult.* They redirected their focus to the bottom line instead of fanatically improving and focusing on the customer experience.

General Electric is now worth **\$1,665**, an increase by **67 percent**. **Jeffrey Immelt** is no **Jack Welch**. His focus is on his personal compensation. The more he gets paid the worse they do. This proves that *losing your focus on customer service is devastating to your bottom line.*

Wal-Mart is now worth **\$1,552**, an increase by **55 percent**. **Sam Walton** built Wal-Mart on customer service and price. They're now known for price only. While revenue has increased over 400 percent the value of their company

as a service leader has dropped dramatically. When Lee Scott took over in 2000 as CEO they lost their focus on customer service, proving that sometimes bigger is not always better!

JetBlue is now worth **\$1,425**, increase by **43 percent**. When they had *passengers stuck on a plane for 13 hours they lost their value and brand*. They did not have empowered employees that could make decisions to service customers and they ended up with less than stellar improvement.

Dell is now worth **\$465**, a **decrease by 54 percent**. Dell lost their brand when **Kevin Rollins** took over as CEO and eliminated the customer experience. This is a sad story to impart. Dell at one time was such a leader and moving in an upward direction. They lost their focus on customer experience and service.

New Battleground: Customer Experiences

The new battleground is all about experiences. Some companies do customer experiences better than the majority. I believe most executives do not understand the service strategy. They do not realize how money falls from the sky. It takes a lot of effort. It takes a relentless commitment from top management. It means you're creating a service culture. The results are...huge increases in revenue!

In today's fiercely competitive world companies spend millions on the land, building the store, and stocking it full of product, all for one thing—the customer. But, when the customer actually appears, they fall down on the job. All that time, thought, and money is wasted if the customer walks out, never to return.

There is a direct connection between customer service, or lack thereof, and money made and lost. Do not lose money because you did not invest in developing superior customer service skills for your entire workforce and building a customer-driven organization. You cannot just sit around hoping the next big thing will work magic. Not today, especially if you have not been building a culture of customer service.

Note: **Jeff Bezos** at Amazon is now the fourth richest person in the world with a net worth of \$59.2 billion. Most CEO's just do not understand the power of delivering great service. Or maybe it's too much work. Sales last year at Amazon increased over 20 percent to \$107 billion. They are rated number one in the world for customer service.

Customer service is the only strategy you can implement anywhere in the world and your competition will not copy you. I'm not sure why CEOs do not follow some of the top companies in the world. Maybe it's just too much work, or the strategies are a bit too soft for them to deal with.



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John Tschohl is an international service strategist and speaker. He is founder and president of the Service Quality Institute in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Described by Time and Entrepreneur magazines as a customer service guru, he has written several books on customer service including Moving Up.

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