

Run Circles Around Your Competition in 2015

Focus on a Service Strategy

In 1979 I wrote the world's first customer service program. Customer service has not improved a lot but firms talk about it more. What I saw in 1979 I still see today. Firms spend millions on advertising trying to attract customers and then when they walk through the door, phone or Internet they are hit on the head with baseball bats so they do not come back.

It blows me away that so very few firms deliver awesome service. Granted, it takes a lot of work. Service leaders always focus on keeping customers. They value customers because they know how critical loyalty is to their success. They know that trained and empowered employees create customers that wouldn't dream of leaving. That's why I have created programs that train everyone in an organization on the skills of customer service with something new and fresh every 4-6 months.

I have seen so many companies (the majority actually) that focus on fixtures, new store design, pricing, advertising to do what the competition is doing. They are simply playing the same game and are spending their money on trying to outwit the competition instead of focusing on a Service Strategy. We can focus on fixtures, new store design, pricing, advertising but the key to a great customer experience is built around making it easy to do business with your organization. There are so many things that can go wrong.

A few months ago I called a firm caller Renters Warehouse to see if they would manage 4 of my rental duplexes. They must spend at least \$20,000 a month in the Twin Cities on advertising. They never returned several phone calls and it took them over a week to return emails. I see this behavior a lot. I have no idea why firms are addicted to advertising but have trouble spelling...customer service.

Advertising is very expensive. It only brings a customer in the door the first time. Great customer service is what keeps a customer loyal and coming back.

Many firms are run by financially driven numbers people. The numbers to them are always more important than the customer experience. My research shows you can run circles around your competition and gain market share and market dominance.

In order to make this happen you have to VALUE EMPLOYEES AND CUSTOMERS. Almost all organizations believe they do this but few do. When you develop your employees to deliver great service you need more than one magic program. In January 1980 I introduced Feelings the most successful customer service program ever created (I am biased). The problem is after 6 months many employees forgot about the concepts. It is a little like higher education or high school. Do you graduate because you took one course and do you take the same course with the same instructor over and over? NO!

SQI is the only firm in the world that has a 3 year service culture plan where you can have 2-3 new programs introduced for all employees every 4-6 months. We are helping firms create a service culture

Advertising and renovation are very expensive. In 2015 focus on word of mouth advertising. Invest in your total staff. Spend at least \$100 a year developing your employees to deliver great customer service. It's a small price to pay for increased market share and market dominance over your competition.

John Tschohl, the internationally recognized service strategist, is founder and president of Service Quality Institute in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Described by USA Today, Time, and Entrepreneur as a "customer service guru," has written several books on customer service **including Moving Up**, and has developed more than 26 customer-service training programs that have been distributed throughout the world. John's strategic newsletter is available online.