

Business Sculptors

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Learning Byte 252 **The Luxury Touch**



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The Luxury Touch

Superb service is the indispensable ingredient of successful high-end brands. Follow four principles to deliver customer satisfaction year after year.

There is no single process for achieving high levels of customer satisfaction. There are, however, four common principles followed by top-performing luxury brand companies:

1. **They create a customer-centered culture** that identifies, nurtures, and reinforces service as a primary value.
2. **They use a rigorous selection process** when employing sales and support staff. The impulse to care about accommodating customers cannot be taught to people who are not predisposed to it.
3. **They constantly retrain employees** to ensure that organizational values are maintained and to help them attain greater mastery of products and procedures.
4. **They systematically measure and reward customer-centric behavior** and excellence in sales and service to enforce high standards and reinforce expectations.

Following these four principles results in a highly integrated business model that combines a superior product line with outstanding sales and service quality, driving strong growth and profitability in the process.

None of the four principles can be omitted or glossed over without jeopardizing the entire effort.

Values First

Companies that achieve high levels of customer satisfaction display a zeal for superior service from the very top of the organization chart. Without the values and culture that leaders inspire, none of the other principles can be effective for long.

Leaders should:

- be responsive to the expressed and unexpressed wishes and needs of clients.
- seek opportunities to innovate and improve the business's experience.
- immediately resolve client problems.
- be prepared to continuously learn and grow.
- be involved in the planning of the work that affects you.
- be proud of your professional appearance, language, and behavior.

Rigorous Selection

Successful brands give the same attention and care to selecting employees that they put into nurturing them.

Company research has shown that "mis-hired" employees, those who leave within a year or two because they are uncomfortable with the work environment, are expensive.

When hiring new staff ensure that the candidates carry the personality traits and abilities that you require from your staff.

demanding application process that required extensive customer satisfaction surveys and related data.



Training and Heroics

The continuous training required of high-performing luxury brand employees includes training in new products and sales procedures as well as constant reinforcement of the company values and heritage.

The fourth essential principle in ensuring high customer satisfaction is measuring and rewarding performance. The top-performing brands all have elaborate procedures to measure both customer and employee satisfaction, and they reward high-performing staff with extra recognition and superior compensation.

A Virtuous Circle

Companies not originally built around a customer satisfaction framework can change. Use the four principles to re-energize employees, establish new levels of customer loyalty, and drive superior growth and long-term profitability.

If your company sets out to make tangible shifts in each of these domains, you will find they reinforce one another in a virtuous circle that allows the company to change with increasing momentum.

The details of implementing and overseeing these principles will vary from one company to the next. Some employees who have been successful in an environment where other goals were paramount may be slow to embrace customer satisfaction initiatives. When company leaders begin emphasizing new, customer-centric values, some employees may react skeptically and need to be won over; others may resist and need to be let go, even at the cost of losing high producers.

You will know you have set that virtuous circle in motion when you recognize one day that customers are coming to buy your product at a premium price, expecting superior service and getting it.

Before they walk in the door, they probably won't know precisely what superior service means; but they'll know it when they see it.

This is a précis of an article adapted from an article by Robert Reppa and Evan Hirsh:

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