The Difference Between Customer Service and Customer Focus Training

When most people think of customer service training, they usually target the training needs of their customer-contact employees. After all, these are the people who are interacting directly with customers. Makes sense right? They invest time and money developing the capabilities of these folks in the hope that they will apply what they learn so that they improve the way in which they treat customers.

Now let’s face it, that’s pretty important these days, given the fact that 8 out of 10 customers will look elsewhere if they don’t like the way they have been treated. Not to mention…but I will, that 7 in 10 customers are willing to pay an average of 13% more for products and services if they believe that the service provider will back up these products and services with consistent, exceptional customer service*.

Given these significant numbers, clearly, providing training which maximizes the customer experience is worth the investment. The problem is that investing in developing the service knowledge and skills of customer-contact staff in only part of the equation.

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Ask any of your frontline staff about what gets in the way of delivering exceptional service and they will likely tell you that it’s:

- Inflexible rules, regulations, policies and procedures
- No authority to customize a solution to immediately resolve a customer problem, concern or complaint
- A lack of support, help or urgency from other teams or departments who do not deal with customers directly or who have conflicting priorities which do not include the customer
- Managers who enforce rules rather than look for ways to make it easier for customers to do business

Customer Focus training not only addresses the education and training needs of customer contact staff but also provides strategies for how all other staff maximize their contribution to the
success of the service delivery supply chain. Regardless of the role support employees play within an organization, what they do impacts customers in some way.

Understanding their role, why what they do is critical to the success of the customer experience and what they need to know and do in order to contribute to the success of the customer experience is essential. Particularly since an extremely high percentage of service problems are the result of a lack of communication, cooperation and teamwork between service providers and support staff. But customer focus is a two-way street. As much as support staff need to enable customer-contact people to win with the customer, customer-contact staff need to help their colleagues to partner with them for the benefit of the customer. Customer Focus training addresses this.

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Customer Focus training also addresses what managers at all levels of the organization need to know and do in order to embed customer focus throughout their respective areas of responsibility. Why? The main reason for the failure of most service initiatives is not employees’ unwillingness to deliver exceptional service but managers’ unwillingness to make the changes in their leadership practices, processes and procedures or how they do business to reflect what their customers value.

Managers need to walk the talk, define service performance boundaries and standards, measure service performance, hold people accountable and recognize and reward service excellence. A good customer focus training program addresses these issues as well.

Customer service training addresses the symptoms of the problem. Customer Focus training provides the opportunity for a cure. It takes a commitment and hard work which is a worthwhile investment, that is, if you really want to keep your customers and grow your business.

If you would like to know more about how you can ensure that your training produces customer-focused results, email us at tom@watson-training.com or give us a call at 687-5051.

*Source: 2010 and 2011 American Express Global Service Barometer.