

THE IMPORTANCE OF DELIVERING AN EFFECTIVE B2B CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

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When business owners and senior management hear the term customer experience, some tend to regard it as the ‘touchy-feely’ stuff that is applicable only for the likes of hotels, restaurants, and airlines. Today’s business environment is characterised by tough economic conditions, increased competition as well as more informed and demanding customers. This has resulted in the need for all businesses to raise the bar with respect to the customer experience they provide.

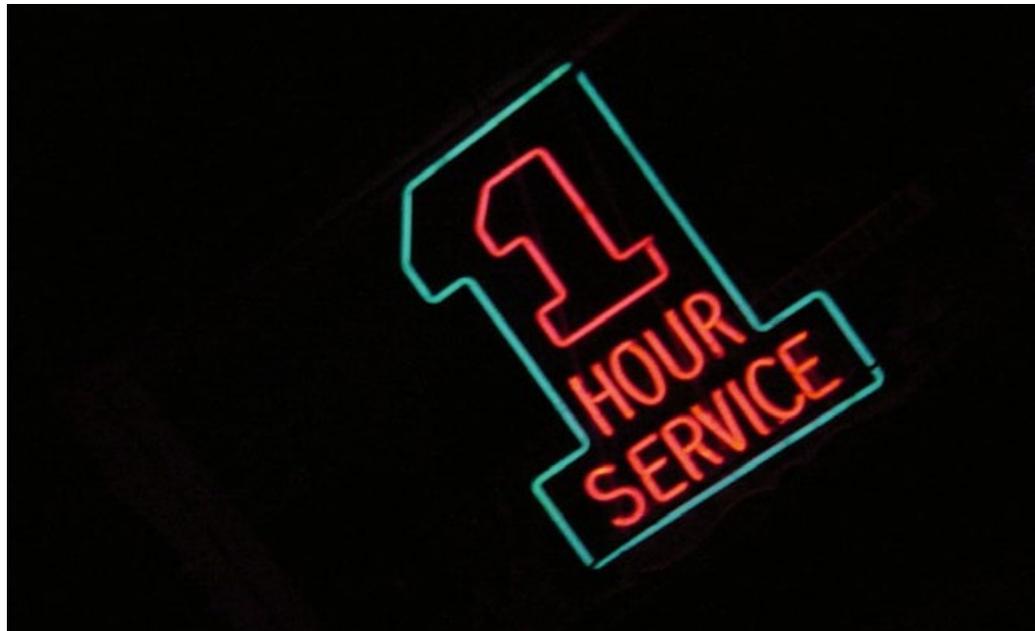
However, customer experience is extremely important in a business-to-business (B2B) context. B2B markets have several unique characteristics that necessitate that delivering excellent customer experience must be a key priority.

First, most B2B companies have a small number of customers accounting for a large portion of their revenue. In some instances, a single or a few customers determine not only the success but also the very existence of the business. Therefore, your company must deliver an excellent customer experience or risk these customers taking their business elsewhere.

Second, in B2B there is frequently little difference between the products and services being offered. After all, you are often talking about providing raw materials, component parts or equipment to create a final product. Hence, business customers will likely have a number of suppliers to choose from.

Third, the products and services supplied are often critical to business customers providing their offerings to their own end users. By delivering a positive customer experience, your company will instil trust and confidence in your customers that you provide them the quality and reliability essential to the survival and success of their business.

Providing a positive customer experience will create a number of benefits for your business including:



Increased customer loyalty and spend

- Business customers will spend more from you and sometimes even exclusively.
- Studies conducted by global consultancies such as Forrester Research have found that B2B organisations that have effectively used customer insight to develop and improve customer experience received significant increases in revenues.
- Increased word-of-mouth advertising.
- Referrals and recommendations are now an important part of the B2B buying decision process. Studies indicate that 60% of B2B buyers will engage with a peer before making a decision.
- Hence delivering a positive customer experience will help generate the referrals and recommendations to help generate new business.

Lower customer service costs

- Fewer complaints, rework, ‘customer fixes’ required.
- In order to create a positive B2B customer

experience, companies must do the following:

1. Identify your target customers

You should only be targeting those customers that are profitable and are aligned with your company’s capabilities, product/service offering and strategic intent.

2. Understand your customers’ needs

Have a very detailed understanding of your business customers’ objectives, priorities, requirements and preferences—not just in terms of the products and services required, but also where and how they want to interact with your company.

As this is B2B, you must understand the buying decision criteria and requirements of decision makers and influencers, as they are the ones who will make the decision as to which suppliers they will use.

These insights can be obtained through the use of effective engagement techniques