

THE BEST SERVICE IS NO SERVICE

How to Liberate Your Customers From Customer Service, Keep Them Happy & Control Costs

BILL PRICE and DAVID JAFFE

BILL PRICE is president of Driva Solutions, a customer service consultancy firm. His customers include Dell, Hyatt, McDonalds, Microsoft and TiVo. Prior to founding Driva Solutions, Mr. Price was vice president of global customer service for Amazon.Com. He has also served as a vice president of MCI and as a senior consultant with McKinsey & Company. Mr. Price is a graduate of Dartmouth College and the Stanford Graduate School of Business.

DAVID JAFFE is consulting director of LimeBridge Australia, a consulting firm which specializes in customer experiences. He is a graduate of Oxford University. Mr. Jaffe has more than twenty-two years experience in customer service industries. He was formerly a partner with Accenture with responsibility for the CRM practice in the Asia-Pacific region. He also worked as a principal for AT Kearney in their Financial Institutions Group.

SUMMARIES.COM is a concentrated business information service. Every week, subscribers are e-mailed a concise summary of a different business book. Each summary is about 8 pages long and contains the stripped-down essential ideas from the entire book in a time-saving format. By investing less than one hour per week in these summaries, subscribers gain a working knowledge of the top business titles. Subscriptions are available on a monthly or yearly basis. Further information is available at www.summaries.com.

MAIN IDEA

Customers buy your products and services because they want to enjoy or use what’s offered to achieve their own goals. They aren’t generally seeking to form a “relationship” with your service department. That only needs to happen if things go wrong. Therefore, instead of measuring how effective your customer service department is at dealing with problems and other issues, a much better idea is to do everything feasible to eliminate entirely the need for customers to seek service help at all.

In other words, change your metrics. Don’t measure how many customers you provide service to. Figure out what you need to do to eliminate altogether the demand for customer service. Adopt the mantra the best customer service you can deliver is none at all because your customers are happy with what they’ve purchased and don’t need any more help. There are seven principles you can and should follow to lead to this “no service” ideal:

How to achieve “the best service is no service at all” ideal

- ▶ 1 Reorient – make every contact with your company “smart” rather than “dumb”
- ▶ 2 Make it easy for customers to help themselves – provide engaging options
- ▶ 3 Don’t be always reactive – also be proactive when occasion demands
- ▶ 4 Open the floodgates - make it so easy to contact you customers relax
- ▶ 5 Don’t shoot the messenger – own the actions of your company every time
- ▶ 6 Listen to what customers are saying – this is a great source of new ideas
- ▶ 7 Deliver exceptional service experiences – by aligning your metrics correctly

“We have been building the seven Principles for many years, frustrated both as consumers and as customer service practitioners. Our goal is to raise the bar for customer service while reducing the need for customer service, no less. We present a new approach for companies to take: that the Best Service companies can provide to their customers (and to their prospects) is to ensure that everything works so well and is so clearly laid out that customers do not need to bother themselves to contact customer service.”

– Bill Price and David Jaffe

Principle #1 – Reorient – make every contact with your company “smart” rather than “dumb” Page 2

Instead of gearing your company up to cope with the demand for customer service, challenge why those needs are arising in the first place. Progressively eliminate all situations where there are “dumb contacts”, then go after the cause of “repeat contacts” and make it easier for people to do obvious things.

Principle #2 – Make it easy for customers to help themselves – provide engaging options Page 3

When companies get self-service right, customers love it. To achieve this in practice, you’ve got to put the customer in the driver’s seat, design highly effective interfaces which are usable and engaging, and then ensure the customer service channel is integrated with everything else that happens in your organization.

Principle #3 – Don’t be always reactive – also be proactive when occasion demands Page 4

Rather than always being strictly reactive, be proactive when occasion demands. Advise customers of progress. Anticipate needs and notify customers of upcoming events. Surprise them with new and useful information. Find the triggers that create satisfied customers and get busy hitting those key points.

Principle #4 – Open the floodgates - make it so easy to contact you customers relax Page 5

Don’t try and dodge the bullet. Make it downright easy for customers to contact you. Then use that data to figure out why people are unhappy and do something about it. Apply the information you gather to address the root causes of ongoing customer dissatisfaction and get things right.

Principle #5 – Don’t shoot the messenger – own the actions of your company every time Page 6

Always remember your customer service people are not the cause of your problems. They lie elsewhere and they need to be addressed. Identify the real owners of the ongoing problem and make them accountable to set things right. Empower your customer service people to do the right thing for customers.

Principle #6 – Listen to what customers are saying – this is a great source of new ideas Page 7

Don’t simply look at customer service needs as an irritation. Look at each contact as a chance to listen to and learn about your customers. Listen to the feedback they give and see whether there aren’t some hidden gems embedded in there. Let customers teach you the best way to grow your business.

Principle #7 – Deliver exceptional service experiences – by aligning your metrics the right way Page 8

When customers do have to contact you, provide them with a great experience. Never rest on your laurels because your competitors won’t be doing that. Keep removing the roadblocks and getting the basics right. Align all your metrics in this area to be customer facing and deliver great outcomes.

