



For Managers, Principals, Team Leaders and Internal Consultants
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Issue No 10: How to enhance your clients' experience and have them keep coming back

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How to enhance your clients' experience and have them keep coming back

I recently caught up with Tom, the managing director of a large women's shoe retailer. I had deliberately sought him out for research to write this report as I knew he had endured a number of major challenges in recent years and went from the brink of collapse to now being one of the top two retailers of women's shoes in this country. I was curious about his story and hopeful that he would provide me with some insights from his journey.

Tom offered many insights into his success. One of the things that struck me was how Tom and his team focus on every detail of the offering to their customers. He admitted to this being a great contributor to his success. Tom spends a great deal of time ensuring that the tissue paper used in the shoe boxes is of the right quality and that an additional pair of shoe laces or plastic heel caps comes with every pair of shoes sold.

Tom recognises that he is not just selling shoes - he is offering a total experience to his customers. The same is true for, for example, accounting practices. Whether firms are conscious of it or not, clients are judging their accountants on their overall experience of them.

A recent client survey that I conducted for an accounting practice highlights some of the things that these clients value:

- "(My accountants) are always available and accessible"
- "I would like them to deliver on time and keep me informed"
- "(I would like them to) ... give me more pro-active advice - don't wait for me to ask"

These comments are all about the 'experience' of the service that these clients expect to receive.

Clients may not understand how to prepare a tax return or, indeed, to manufacture a shoe, but they do understand if their experience of these services matches, exceeds or doesn't live up to their expectations. Customers look for value and many will pay for service and an experience that 'feels' valuable. It is often when they don't feel that they are getting a 'valuable experience' that they will come back to price as a sticking point.

Business is competitive and there are many different channels and options for your customers/clients to do business. So the question you need to ask is 'how do you want your clients/customers to experience your business?' Is the process of interaction making it easy for you and at the same time making it difficult for the customer/client? Have you asked your clients or customers what they think of the experience and what they might like you to do differently?

How to enhance your clients' experience

Step 1 - Find out what your clients want

Understand how your customers currently experience you and what it is that they want from you.

This can easily be done informally or formally, for example, conduct a survey of your clients; conduct focus groups or discussion forums; have interactive feedback sections on your website. Make your website more than a company brochure. (*Yes and my new website is coming -watch this space*)

Step 2- Benchmark your client experience

Seek out top performers in other industries. Be curious. Be open to new possibilities.

Too often we have a view of our business that is restricted to the best performers in our industry in Australia. Expand this view to other industries and other countries.

Step 3 - Focus your efforts

It's important to keep the day-to-day fires burning so strike a balance between working on what produces income now and what will in the future. Decide on 1-2 key areas of improvement and work on these (don't be too ambitious and try to 'boil the ocean'). Decide which activities will give you the most return for your investment of resources. If you can't decide seek some assistance.

For example, you might decide that for 6 months you will focus on how your organization maintains contact with clients and prospects. You might look at a range of solutions including new technologies such as 'webinars' (*see end of this article for more information*).

Step 4 - Design your customer experience with intention.

For the past eight years I have been using a process called *Performance Packaging*, which focuses on the performance of everybody within the business, as well as the performance of the business itself with the clients. As one client commented, "...this is great stuff (*performance packaging*) as we finally got a process that gets all the stuff out of our heads and onto paper. Now we feel like something is happening."

Performance Packaging creates an opportunity for the people in the business to become creative (and they do) about the process of delivery rather than locked into a particular way of doing things. Most importantly, it's a process that focuses on action and with action, things can change and improve.

Main take aways:

- The clients and customers have an experience dealing with your company. It's much more than the actual product or service they are buying.
- Successful businesses pay close attention to the smallest detail of their clients' experience.
- What that the customer experience you create does not make it easier for you and more difficult for your clients.
- If you want to find out how your clients experience your business use surveys, focus groups or blogs.
- Look to other industries and other countries for inspiration.
- Focus you efforts on those activities that will give you the greatest return for your investment.
- Use *performance packaging* to focus everybody on enhancing your clients experience and make it happen.

"If everything is important then nothing is" Patrick Lencioni

Further information and fact sheets

-If you would like information on how to set up a webinar or blog I can send you details of how I am going about it. Just reply email with Webinar/Blog in the subject.

-If you would like a fact sheet on surveying your clients or customers then please reply to this email with Survey in the subject.

-If you would like a fact sheet on performance packaging then please reply to this email with Performance Packaging in the subject.

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