



Take Your CIO to Lunch (And Four Other Things You've Meant to do for the Last Year)

Jan 22, 2016 By John Goodman

We all have New Year's Resolutions that would have huge payoff if we actually executed on them. The majority of gym memberships are sold in January, but most are not still being used in April. Below are five low-effort actions that are guaranteed to give you immediate payoff, if not help you lose ten pounds. If they don't have an impact, I'll buy you a gym membership.

1. Take your CIO to Lunch

As a service executive, one of the most critical actions you can take is inviting your CIO to lunch. Why? If you want to make any tangible improvements to your CRM, operations, voice of the customer or web service functionality, it will most likely include a technology component. This lunch, which you should gladly pay for at a nice restaurant, will be a win-win for the following reasons:

- You need IT support just to fix the top three timewasters and customer points of pain that exist in your department
- Almost all CIOs really want to be helpful. I recently spoke to 200 insurance company CIOs on customer experience and one came up after and said, "I know my department is hated because we seem to be obstructionist, but if service will tell us what they need to accomplish, I'd really like to help."
- The lunch will get your projects a much more favorable allocation of scarce IT resources
- You can create a communications and cooperation bridge that will pay off – your managers should take his/her managers to lunch and continue building the bridge

Show the CIO your customer journey map and circle the three areas where an improvement in IT would lead to less work and or greater customer satisfaction. Tell a story of one customer for each of the three areas – that humanizes the data. Ideally, have a note of how many customers are impacted each month by each of the three areas. Ask the CIO if they could help in at least one of those areas. You'll be amazed at how engaged they become.

2. Measure contact center satisfaction by type of issue

Your supervisors and CSRs live and die by their customer satisfaction survey scores. The problem is that their efforts are not the only factors that affect customer satisfaction. The type of problem and whether the answer is yes or no often have more impact than the CSR performance. If the complaint is about a problem with an auto that is in warranty, the CSR can schedule a no-cost repair for the customer and maybe even throw in a free oil change to compensate for the inconvenience. On the other hand, if the car is far out of warranty, the answer will probably be no and that the customer is

stuck paying \$2,000 for the repair. In many cases, the issue drives 70 percent or more of the resulting satisfaction.

Analyze satisfaction for the top 20 types of customer contacts. You will find that almost all CSRs achieve high satisfaction on 15 of them but almost none gets consistently high scores on the other five. Those are the hard issues where you need better responses or better response processes if you are to raise satisfaction. Beating on your staff will not lead to improvement on those types of issues and will just create frustration. Do the analysis to separate out those hard issues and fix the process, not the CSR.

3. Ask your front line what three things you tell them to say that they cannot defend

When CSRs give the customers bad news or have to say no, the next thing many customers ask is why? Why is that the policy or why did this happen? If the CSR does not have a clear believable explanation they cannot adequately defend themselves and they end up giving one of two answers;

That is our policy – that is just the way we do it, or worse,

The CSR sides with the customer and says, “I agree, it is a stupid policy, I work for a stupid company!”

If you ask your front line what statements, actions or policies that they cannot defend, you’ll tap into a major source of their frustration as well as a source of customer dissatisfaction. That which cannot be explained often sounds arbitrary. In one transportation company, customers were told they must mail in their original ticket to get a refund. When they asked why, CSRs said it was a law. In fact it was an audit requirement which was changed by the CFO on the spot.

4. Analyze your failed website searches to identify what is missing or unfindable on your website

Eighty percent of customers go to your website prior to calling your service center. In most cases, they search and, if not satisfied, then either call or drop out, remaining dissatisfied. If you look at the last month of searches and search failures you will have an almost complete list of those items that customers looked for but did not find on your website. That list will be strikingly similar to your call workload. Add the top twenty of the failed search topics to your website and the website map and you will see at least a 10 percent drop in your call center workload.

5. Publish your IVR menu where you publish your 800 number

The 2015 CCMC National Rage Study found that phone trees, also call interactive voice response systems, were one of the top points of customers pain.

Phone trees need not be an aggravation. The problem is that customers dial the number and then start listening to options. However, most options use terminology or phrases that are not familiar. The customer then focuses on the phrase and thinks about, “Is that the option I want?” while the IVR goes on and states the next option. But the customer was still thinking about the previous option and misses the next one and becomes confused and angry. This is when everyone says, “The heck with it, let me speak to a human!” and starts mashing “0.”

The solution is to print at least the first level of the IVR menu where you print the 800-number. Organizations like USAA and AARP do this with offers, service instructions and FAQs. You'll see a 20 percent increase in customer satisfaction and a 20 percent decrease in opt outs to a human.

The above five actions will take no more than two hours each but each can have a dramatic impact on your unit and staff performance. If you do all five and don't see a significant improvement in your service, contact me and I'll buy you six months at your local gym so you can lose those ten pounds.

About the Author

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