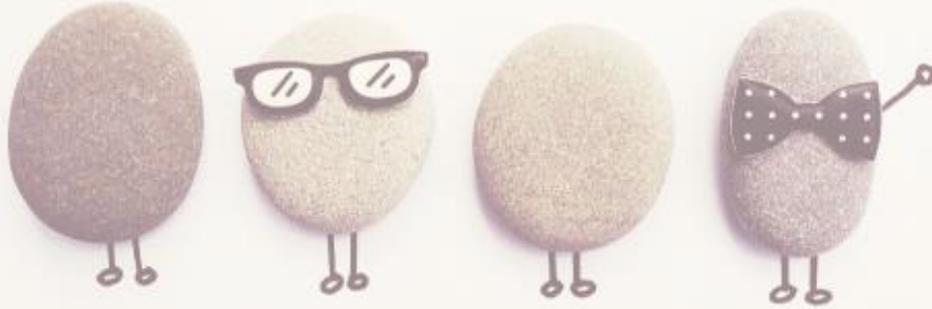

GOOD CUSTOMER SERVICE ISN'T ENOUGH



Customer service has long been shopped around town as the panacea for every business – the unique selling position for everyone that helps you differentiate yourself from the competition. And while we're not arguing that this can be very effective, if everyone is providing good customer service, good is no longer good enough. It's what's expected.

Now everyone has to be great and find moments to delight and surprise people by sending them special gifts just for being them. Then that becomes an expectation too. See the problem?

Our consumer expectations around the importance of personalization have exploded. While there's a plethora of bad customer service, good customer service is our new average.

So what's a business to do?

We're not suggesting you should give up trying to provide good customer service, we're just saying "good" is yesterday's "average." If you want customer service to be your business' unique selling proposition, it needs to be stellar and unable to be duplicated. That's a tall order but you can begin with these ideas:

Customer Service Can Never Overcome Incompetency

First, great customer service will not make up for an incompetent staff. Someone who's exceptionally nice but gives you the run around because they don't know what they're doing won't bring customers in over and over. Train your employees well from day one and remind them not to say, "today's my first day" or offer any other excuses. The customer doesn't care.

Every Employee is in Customer Service

The second thing that's important to note is that everyone is in customer service. Yes, you may have a department or person dedicated to it but your marketing team, your receptionist, your valet, and anyone associated with your business is now in customer service. That's why they need to be trained accordingly.

Customer Service Doesn't Cover a Shoddy Service or Product (or does it?)

This idea is debatable and depends on the customer and what you're selling. There are some products or services that once you're in, it's a real pain to switch so generally people are willing to put up with a lot before they end their business relationship with you. Then there are others where one bad experience means you'll never see that customer again.

Differentiating Yourself Through Customer Service

To truly stand out in this field you must know your service or product. You must train everyone on staff on what it means to delight your customers, and you must understand your industry and how easy you are to leave. The next step between great service and extraordinary service is using data to personalize your approach and meet your customers' needs before they even realize what those needs are.

Remember, you're not shooting for *good* anymore. You're shooting for "share on social media" awesome!