

## Transcription - Communication and Customers

Welcome back. I'm Kim Baillie, she's Fulyana Orsborn and this is Inside Exec. Today, we're going to talk about communication and its communication with your customers, whether they're internal or external. It comes from some experiences I've had in the last two or three months and they seem to be a repetition of experiences that I've had previously in other industries in other situations. And it's about the way you communicate to your customers, when they're in a process of yours. Bottom line, I have to say and I've said it before, is that and you would know it yourselves if you put yourself in the position of being customer, you don't care what the organisation's processes is, you don't care what slang words or what jargon they use, you want a result. You want what you want and you don't care how they do it. All you need to know is what you need to do to fit into that process and it's not about you understanding the process. It's not about the process being explained to you. It's about how you fit in that process and what you need to do.

The prime example, I will say comes from the real estate industry at the present time in terms of rental accommodation. I would have to hazard a guess and say that, for as many estate agents groups that there are out there, there is a process and they're all different. Some are marginally different, some are very different. Every single one that you go to expects you to know their process, understand their forms, understand their timeline, all of those things. From a customer point of view, I don't care what your process is and I don't care what you have to do, or how you have to do it. I just want the end result, and I just want to know what I have to do to get to that point. Solve my problem for me.

In so many organizations, we'll move away from real estate now, organisations in general, because I can make a blanket statement and say that too many organizations rely on automatic email responses. They don't read them, they don't go through the process themselves to see that it works or to see how it happens. Now I, on a semi-regular basis, get an email that says in the subject line "Dear First Name Fix". First Name Fix is a phrase in html where the email takes the first name of that client contact from the details in a database. So something has gone wrong in the system where it's not picking up the name. I know that but someone who doesn't know that that's the case will look at email and say "don't they even know my name, can't they even write to me in English in a civil manner".

Think about an interaction with a customer being 100 points. Every time you don't meet their expectations you're losing points and so when you get to about

80 points they're going to say "I don't want to deal with this person, I don't want to deal with this organization". In fact I did just that yesterday, I withdrew something because I thought, no you're not listening to me, I don't want to give you my business. It's about looking at your communication, testing the system and process from a customer perspective so that you see what the customer is seeing. In some cases I would suggest that you have someone who doesn't know what's been written, read the e-mails, read the interactions that you have, listen to what your customers doing. Now, I know that a lot of organizations record their customer service calls for training purposes, but they use it for training purposes to reinforce what they want done and they're not doing it from the customers point of view, very often they're not hearing what the customer is saying, it's more about you should have said this. It's about following the script rather than listening to what they think the points the customer was making which could be developed into a better script in some cases.

It's about having someone independent or yourself looking with an independent mind. Don't read between the lines if you wrote the email, the script, don't read what you think you wrote. Read it out loud, what's on the screen out loud, so you hear what's actually on the screen rather than filling the blanks with what you wanted to say but maybe didn't get the wording right. That will give you a better indication of how someone else is actually seeing it, reading it, hearing it.

One of the regular items is going to a customer satisfaction survey. A very, very important one that comes out often is, make it easy for me to do business with you. And what we just heard is, that's not making it easy, that's making it difficult. It's giving the impression I don't care about you and I care more about my process and about following it, even though I can't even explain it to you. Making it easy does not mean don't have a process in place. On the contrary, have a process in place but do not bother the customer with it. Just make it very easy, very easy to follow short, sharp from customer perspective. Behind the scene, what you need to do in your organization is a different matter.

Another point is, if you're looking at the customers how much to communicate and how. The current situation and whether you're pro Australia Post or anti, doesn't matter. They did warn they were going to have very high volumes in December and to put your deliveries in earlier and now they have given statistics in the new year to say yes, what we guessed was right, volumes were up by 20%. In that sense, that communication was important. I know a few people might have been critics and say put on more people, why don't you try that. They demonstrated they did a lot of that. To me, it's the communication piece that I want to flag and they did say there might be delays and what the new expected

timeline would be.

The same thing happened over all orders and buying because a lot of people have ended up doing things differently because of the last 12 months, for example, home improvements, furniture and all of that. A lot of furniture comes from offshore, again that communication is not what you have to do and how and my process and then I have to order it. Don't talk about that, we don't care. What we care about is that you're now saying, it used to be up to 14 days, now I don't have any stock, I don't have any space in the warehouse or in the country and this has happened overseas. So now the best estimate is three months or whatever it is, I'm making it up but I think that communication is important and the reason. The reason is we already know it's manufactured overseas. Similarly, you can have Australian made, is that faster? I want to know that, to give me choices and in that example it might and it might not. There's nothing available. It's more money that way. So it's good to know that but don't burden me with you have to order it, then it has to go through this step, this step, this step. Be honest about expectations.

The important part of that is yes, you can communicate reasons. You're communicating reasons, not processes. Yes, and from customer perspective, not yours.

My other big bug bear and I have mentioned it I don't know how many times, is industry jargon and acronyms. You don't say "we need you to fill out the TMC". I don't know what the TMC's are or I can't find out easily what the TMC is. Certainly you can tell me what the TMC is in your communication and then put it in brackets if you want to refer to it. Just because you understand it and it's easy and you think of it and how you refer to it, it doesn't mean that I know or I care.

So think as a customer. You really do have to take yourself out of the process. Take yourself out of the role you're in. Look at it from the customer's point of view, follow the process itself from the customer's point of view, be independent about the review of any communication that you're looking at and make sure that it still portrays the message and the action that you want them to take in a simple, pleasant format.

In terms of customer/client communications, it does have to be continuous review. You do have to look at it all of the time. You do have to take the good with the bad. You do have to listen to what a customer is saying in those recorded calls. I had a call selling me something a little while back and the person was

very good. She was really listening to what I was saying and she answered some of the questions that I was almost thinking about, so she answered. Her training to that point had been excellent and at the end of it I said look I appreciate the time that you've taken and I know that you've been recorded, so I want you to understand that, although I'm not going ahead, it's not because of anything you said, or haven't said. You've answered all my questions, even the ones that I was only thinking about that. I simply don't need the product at this point but I want you to know that you're good at what you are doing. You should know and people listening to this recording should know, that you're good at it and the script works. On this occasion I simply don't need it but I listened because I wanted to be able to say this at the end of the exercise. Well, I got a reaction that I completely didn't expect. She burst into tears. She said I've never had anyone tell me I'm good at this. What I want to highlight is that if you are recording these calls and you are using them for training purposes, tell the people that they're good. If they are following the script, if they are doing all the things that you've trained them to do, tell them that because someone has to and it's not always going to be and probably not very often, the person on the other end of the phone.

Good and bad, customer communications I think we've covered it for today. I'm Kim Baillie, she's Fulyana Orsborn and this is Inside Exec.