

Transcription - Taking Individual Responsibility

Welcome back, I'm Kim Baillie, she's Fulyana Orsborn and this is Inside Exec. I'm going to talk today about taking responsibility. This is an area that I have had some recent examples given to me and also an area that Fulyana and I talked about while we were waiting for one of our guests to arrive and it was about that issue of taking responsibility, personally, for your actions as they relate to the work that you're doing. When you get something wrong or whether it's, in your eyes, whether it's in the process or whether it's in the client/customer eyes, when it goes wrong, when it's not what is expected, it's about you taking responsibility, personal responsibility, not taking the blame, not burdening yourself with regrets or recrimination, but looking at it in terms of this happened, what can I do to best resolve this situation or to have the best outcome from this situation personally, me personally, not the team, not anyone else, this is on me and I have to wear it and I have to do something about it.

Now, this has been brought home to me on a regular basis because I have an association with someone who has moved out of working on his own, isolated online all the time, to go back to what he loves, which is public interaction, interaction with people at a music venue and he is doing front of house, maitre'd activities and so he is the face of this venue, he's the one that works directly with the people, brings them in, gets them seated, but he's also the one who has to fix things when stuff goes wrong and whether it's his responsibility or whether it's someone else, he's actually doesn't care because his focus, and this is what I find most interesting, his focus is on making sure that the people who have paid to be there, have the best possible experience that they can. He will say that to people when something goes wrong with a meal, order isn't right or it gets delayed or gets forgotten, whatever else it is, he will put his, you know, physically put his hand on his heart and say, I am going to take care of this for you. He injects himself personally into the situation so that, as a customer, as a client, people feel like they have a reference point, they have someone who is going to fix this for them. There are those who will want to labour the point of why it happened and it should never happen and it's this and that, he has all the answers for those things, he doesn't get upset, he doesn't take it personally and I think that's been the area that he's most surprised at because he has got a bit of a temper, he can be volatile, but he in this situation he firmly believes that his responsibility, his personal responsibility, is to ensure that these people have the best possible time. He will do anything, these the words he says, I will do everything I can to make this as right as we possibly can for you so that your experience is one that you will remember as a positive activity.

It's also about, very much in his mind, and this is something that he used to do online as well and still does, is about that last touch. The last touch, in terms of customer interaction, is the one that people remember the most. You think about your own experiences when you've gone somewhere or done something, what you remember about the whole activity is the last touch, is that last interaction that you have with an organisation. So he's ensuring that there is that positive outcome for everyone because it's good for the organisation as well as good for the business to know that regardless of what happens and for whatever reason it happens, that it is an educational activity. He talks about that as well, he says that every time something goes wrong, he learns and people invariably, every shift he does, they will say

we've never seen anyone like you, never experienced that kind of, level of, customer care.

That's a worry to me because really that should be the level, everyone who is within the customer care, customer interaction, whether it's internal or external, the focus should be making it the best experience possible, not making it a transaction. This is something that we also talked about, is that too many businesses treat customers, their customers, as transactional. All they're looking for is the transaction, they're not looking for longevity, they're not looking for return business, although they think they are. They think that if they do well at the transaction that the transaction itself will be something that makes people come back. It might be if they're "price" clients and you've got the cheapest price but it also might be that they won't come back, whether you've got the cheapest price or not, because the experience, they felt, was not about them, it was just about the business getting the money or getting the quote or getting whatever else it might be.

So a few things to think about in that scenario. It's about taking personal responsibility for things that don't go as well as you would have hoped, but making it a learning experience and making it known that it is a learning experience, not just internalizing it and say well, you know, now I have learned from this, I won't make this mistake again. We all say that, we all say, well I've learned from that but we say it in a negative way, as though that's the only good thing that's come out of it is that I know I won't do that again. It's a bit like cutting your finger, yeah I know not to use the knife that way so that doesn't happen again, but it's it is a learning experience and it's a positive experience because you're never going to go through that pain again that you went through when you cut your finger. So we do it in some fashion, but not in others. This comes back to things we've talked about before, we do have behavioral aspects that we don't transpose into the business field and we should because we should be the same across the board.

It's about taking responsibility, as I said, making it a learning experience, a positive learning experience and making it a positive experience for everyone that is involved, so that that last touch, that last interaction, is the one that people remember and that you remember, because you remember that it was a good outcome. They'll remember that that they were looked after, that that their needs were met, that you didn't view them as just the dollars or the service and that's done and dusted and move on to the next thing. If we are serious about customer service, customer retention, customer interaction, we have to start looking at individual responsibility because individual responsibility, when you're in a team, will create synergy so that there will be more responsibility than the sum of those individual parts.

Let's hear what Fulyana has to say about individual responsibility.

Thank you Kim. In relation to individual responsibility, I absolutely believe in the examples that Kim just gave which is the focus is on making sure the customer has the best experience. No matter where in the organization you work, whether you're directly interacting with the customer or you're doing anything behind the scenes that would enable the customer to interact with us, it's absolutely vital that you put them at the front of it. How are they going to receive it, are they going to have a good experience, will they remember the good experience?

Now as we know, with all the good will in the world, things will go wrong. The individual has to

step up and not think, oh that's not my area of expertise, that's not my responsibility, this is technical or this is operational or whatever excuses. It's my responsibility because I work here and everything that affects this organization, the customer view, does matter. Now what's in it for you to act like that? To act like that, what you're doing is you're protecting your own reputation because you will stand out in the customer eyes as the person who helps them, the person who solves the issue. Your reputation is tied to the organization reputation, so if people say I hate what dealing with these people because x and then you say, I work there, how does that feel compared to the alternative which is (the customer saying) this is a great organization to deal with and some of their people, and then maybe even mention your name. That's awesome.

The other thing is, it is actually a gift if you've been, you know, faced with a situation, whether it was your area or not, and you step up and you try to find the solution. That's where innovation comes. It comes because, at the end of the day, what happens is that we have a process and we thought of all sorts of things, but when we learn from experience and how it's received by the customer, we can come up with better ideas and solutions, so it helps your career growth, it helps your ideas growth, and it helps you, in general, feel good about it. So there's many many good things about taking responsibility, whether it's your area or not and making things better for the customer and the organization. As well as that, there are a lot of really bad things that you don't want to face by seeing all the negative things that experience, negative experience, come with.

In summary, I'd like to end up with a statement that we've all heard for many many times and it's been around a long time - "Think as a customer and act as an owner."

There we have our quick views on taking individual responsibility. As you probably guessed, we recorded it at two different locations so I apologise for the quality of the audio, it's not quite up to what we would usually do. Join us again next time for another topic, for now I'm Kim Baillie, she's Fulyana Orsborn and this is Inside Exec.