



DESIGNING STRATEGIES

Business Strategies for the Design Industry

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Designing Ways To Survive These Turbulent Times

Are you looking for ways to survive these turbulent times? Trying to get designers into your showroom, or help a distributor attract new customers? We have a number of continuing education programs on a variety of business topics specifically suited for the issues we're all facing. New topics now being presented include "Develop Your Online Presence" and "Moving Your Customer Experience to WOW!" Presentations on industry trends and topics like *generational diversity – designing for the generations, marketing and selling to the generations or recruiting and retaining an age-diverse workforce* are also available. For a complete list of programs, please contact me directly at 330.666.0802 or tmaurer@maurerconsultinggroup.com. Please remember to email me your business strategy questions. If space permits, they will be answered in future issues of *Designing Strategies*.

Terri L. Maurer, FASID

Are you driving customers away? I've been developing a customer experience seminar. Since it is top of mind with me, my radar is on High for recognizing bad...no, miserable...customer service and experiences. I wish I could say there are equal amounts of good and bad service and experiences, but sadly, the *bad* greatly outnumbers the *good*, and even the *mediocre*.

Everyone says they have excellent customer service and provide exceptional customer experiences, but it isn't true by a long shot. A friend recently went out to a family style restaurant with a colleague for a late lunch. They walked in the door only to be met by the top of the hostess's head, looking down at something. The restaurant was virtually empty with more than a few open tables where they could have been quickly seated. After standing in the lobby several minutes, unacknowledged, the hostess finally looked up. My friend said: "Two, please." The hostess responded: "Name, please?" to put them on a list! No one else was waiting, plenty of tables were available, but the hostess felt compelled to put them through the paces of a customer walking in on a busy Friday evening. Her actions made absolutely no sense at all. The important point is: what impression did this experience have on the customers? Needless to say, it was not a good impression. Clearly, the customers' experience was not exceptional or even mediocre.



Visualize

Do you still feel your customer service and experiences are excellent? Do you let your company's policies and systems get in the way of making a customer's experience dealing with you positive? When you wrote policies and procedures, were they focused on making things easy for you and your staff to get jobs done, creating a necessary paper trail, or focused on making it easy for customers to do business with you? My guess is that your focus was on the internal, not the external...the much more important customers' point of view.

Visualize - Analyze - Strategize Plan for success!

The purpose of business is to create and keep a customer.

Peter Drucker

Often a customer walks through your door, set on making a purchase. Unfortunately, these willing customers, ready to buy, encounter roadblocks to making it happen. Or, even after a sale, the customer has a question or problem which can be easily dealt with, still saving that excellent level of customer service. Plenty of time left for a save; even making the customer pleased enough to share their experience with a few friends. How are you doing so far?

Analyze

When you opted for that automated phone answering system, who did you do it for? The customer, who has nothing better to do with their valuable time than sit on the phone listening to option after option...push 1 for...push 2 for...push 3 for...? All they really want is to make contact with a live human being who can help them. Do you offer that company directory of names without titles or job descriptions that are useless? My guess is that like most, you put in that system to save a few dollars you'd have to pay a warm, friendly human being. That human life line who could actually be helpful and attentive to your customers, quickly resolve their issues and make their customer experience positive.

Start looking at your policies and procedures from your customers' point of view. Without satisfied customers, you won't have a business or policies to worry about. Peter Drucker once said: **The purpose of business is to create and keep a customer.** Keeping a customer waiting, either in person or on the phone is not going to keep them coming back. Nor will taking days to respond to e-mail or voice mail inquiries. It's time to look at company policies and procedures from an outside point of view. Make necessary changes that will improve your customers' experience and set you apart from competitors. In today's tight economy, differentiating yourself through exceptional customer service and experiences is not just something to do; it is **THE** thing to do.

Strategize

Maurer On The Move

June 9th

ASID New Jersey Chapter – Morristown, NJ
"Moving Your Customer Experience to WOW!"

June 15th

NeoCon Chicago
"Move Your Firm's Customer Experience to WOW!"

June 16th

NeoCon – Chicago
"Develop Your On-line Presence"