



HIGH-YIELD METHODS

Designing process for service & front/back office environments

Are We Smoking Too Much Social Media?

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I believe social media can contribute to business success. We ourselves have attracted clients through LinkedIn. Organizations are generating web traffic off Twitter. A few silly videos on YouTube have helped fill company coffers. Great. But not good enough to justify getting high off social media – abandoning rationality for dreamy visions of social media leaping over tall buildings, taking us to Mars, and yes, helping companies catapult over competitors to the wonderment of business fans everywhere.

Could we like, get real? People are ignoring business fundamentals while sticking their heads in clouds of social media smoke. And worse yet, the fundamentals are rapidly changing, but rather than worrying about how marketing, sales, service and many customer-affecting back-office functions are going to adapt—it's like, "Take two social media tabs and you won't feel a thing." For a while. But sooner or later, the buzz will wear off and a whole lotta folks are going to drop out of their clouds and break their butts on hard pavement.

Again, I'm not trashing all things social media—or everyone writing about it. Axel really knows his Schultze. And Bob Thompson's feet *never* leave the ground. But everyone responsible for customers can't stop doing everything else and try squeezing every last drop of business value out of social media, while aspects of business worth far, far more go untended.

Here's a tiny portion of the stuff getting insufficient attention:

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1. Improving process to improve customer experience: The vast majority of customer experience is process-driven. We can radically improve experience by implementing customer-centric process. Instead: marketing is still trying to persuade customers they had a better experience than they did; customer service is applying band-aids to problems created by bad process; and sales remains largely disconnected from customer disappointments—only to keep right on promising what the company’s process can’t reliably deliver.

Example: We’re currently working with a company committed to elevating customer experience levels. They’ve created an E2E (end-to-end) customer experience initiative that’s almost entirely process-focused and managed by a work quality expert. What’s wrong with that? Absolutely nothing—except this company’s a near total anomaly for thinking and working this way. We’d give our eye teeth for more clients that understand process, not branding or promotional communication, drives customer experience. But then again, few companies appoint anyone to overall the E2E customer experience, either. They lack the resources because those ostensibly responsible for customer relationships are playing on You Tube.

2. Investing to determine what customers value and how much: We continue wasting research money determining whether we’re doing a good job delivering what the company wants. How about some serious investment (like in Kano studies) to discover what would make customers much happier, rather than running CSAT study after CSAT ongoing NPS monitoring to learn how customers feel after we did much less for them than we could? That’s nuts.

Example: We recently had a client doing an excellent job making clients happy at points of human contact. Their CSAT scores are solid. However, their surveys rate them on secondary issues for customers. If they’d run Kano studies or conduct qualitative research they’d understand customers’ number one priority: “Do it right; do it fast; and do it right the first time.” All the glad-handing they’re doing still leaves customers unsatisfied with their performance—on the core activities customers value most. Essentially, most companies design customer research to make the company or specific functions look good, not get at fundamental

customer truths. But if we hang around LinkedIn or Facebook enough we'll know all about our customers, eh?

3. Taking a hard look at organizational impediments to delivering customer value:

Companies, with few exceptions, are designed to meet company expectations, not customer expectations. As a result, business misses opportunity after opportunity to create more customer value—and in many cases persist in doing work that subtracts value. Reorganizing work around customers not only creates more value for customers but helps companies immensely by breaking down silo walls and removing excess bureaucracy (as in saving lots of money).

We've had numerous clients take risk mitigation measures that: a.) cost far more than the risk they covered; and b.) hurt customers by increasing transaction cycle time. Lose-lose. It got so bad in one case that I slipped a slide saying "You guys are spending millions to save pennies" into a WIP presentation to the COO. My direct client covered his eyes when I showed it. The next day copies of the slide were plastered across the walls of the executive suite. They took the hint and started adopting new process. But unfortunately, situations like this abound, and we're not addressing them. But we can make up for these customer disappointments with a social networking program, can't we?

4. Getting our internal communication act together: Customers hate doing business with companies where the right hand doesn't know what the left is doing or why, but business largely ignores the problem. And when companies do try to remedy poor internal communication, they typically use grotesquely inappropriate tools that cost a fortune and often cause more problems than they solve.

One of our recent clients headquartered in the U.S. is owned by an ex-U.S. parent with a heavy hand. They work in an exacting, high-tech field where even the slightest system glitches can shut down customers. And the systems are so complex and customized that only specific engineers can work on most systems. Problem is that when a system issue does occur, they can't quickly find the right techs. In fact, sometimes they can't find them at all. They need a highly competent field service system (or better yet, EC (enterprise communication) that melds process with an offshoot of contact center software that's just entering the

market. So first, IT decides, on its own, that a traditional CRM system can solve the problem. Utter fiasco. Then corporate weighs in and tells them to wait for a solution until they roll out a global ERP system with BPMS (business process management system) capabilities. BPMS systems cost huge amounts to buy and implement, and BPMS can't address this problem or many other core issues we've identified. They'll be waiting until hell freezes over for solutions to very fundamental customer experience problems. No? They can find engineers on Twitter? Oh, right.

If the people in companies claiming responsibility for things customer would spend their time addressing the issues customers want addressed, they wouldn't waste so much time doodling with social media. But that wouldn't be as much fun, would it? Not for managers in customer-related positions. But as for customers? Let's just get them to take a toke off the pipe we're smoking :-).