

# Moments of truth

Defining your company's service excellence requires looking at your business through the eyes of your customers. **By Pamela Schuck**

**I**f you're committed to service excellence within your business, develop an ability to look at yourself as your customer does.

Looking at your business through the eyes of the customer sounds easier than it is. It's akin to trying to see your children the way their teacher does. Because you are so close to your children, it's easy to assume everyone sees them the same way you do.

It's the same with your business. As a former teacher, I can assure you, teachers see your children differently than you do — just as your customers see your enterprise in ways you can't.

**Business owners live their companies**, and understandably, find it hard to see their business from the perspective of their clientele. The best practice to overcome that is to develop an ability to identify "moments of truth," when a customer comes in contact with any part of your organization and uses that contact to judge its quality.

Simply put, it is a first impression. The first moments of truth are the most critical because your customer can only have them once.

So when do these moments of truth happen? Only you and your business can answer that. Dissect everything the customer experiences, from the beginning to the end of a typical encounter. Each contact with your organization is a moment of truth, from the greeting and smile in person or by phone to neatness of your office or working through the process of giving an order. Even the janitorial staff emptying your trash contributes.

Once you have identified your customers' moments of truth, it is your job to **influence positive moments** and work to make them productive for your company. One key is to know your customers' needs and provide them without requiring customers to ask.

Remember this: Each moment of truth contributes to the total experience. As your customers continue to do business with you, they build on their chain of experiences, and transform anything into a moment of truth.

Think of the chain like the paper chain we all made in first grade. We pasted each "experience" together to make the chain as long as we could,

and we thought our chain was very strong and would last forever. But pull slightly on the chain, and it broke.

*As your  
customers continue  
to do business  
with you, they  
build on their  
chain of  
experiences,  
and transform  
anything into  
a moment  
of truth.*

So it is with the customer's chain of experiences in doing business with you. A negative moment of truth can be the tug that breaks the chain, and then you have to start all over building a new chain of experience for your customer.

Don't just look for the big moments. Focus on the little things as well. Ask yourself what little things your customers expect and what little things you can do to wow them. Constantly develop new things that will show them you know who they are and that you care. Those little things make you appreciated by your customers.

Know what customers want, what they need, what they think, what they feel, whether they're satisfied and whether they'll return. If you know the answers and provide them before your customers ask you to, you'll be one step ahead of your competitors.

More important, you will build positive moments of truth that benefit your business.

**Pam Schuck (pschuck@strivetraining.com)** is president of STRIV=E Training, which specializes in motivating customer service excellence for businesses. She can be reached at (330) 273-8790