



# PRIMER: CREATING THE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

## Essential Question

*How do you create the desired customer experience?*

According to American business author and former management professor Michael LeBoeuf, “A satisfied customer is the best business strategy of all.” This makes sense; a satisfied customer is more likely to be a repeat customer, tell others to become customers, and ultimately enable the business to profit and grow.

But how do you satisfy a customer? What makes other customers dissatisfied? A great product or service at a fair price or the lack thereof? Certainly. Cleanliness and efficiency or the opposite? Maybe. Convenience or inconvenience? Possibly. Good or bad *customer service*? Definitely.

Maya Angelou, a renowned American author, is often credited with a comment that gives further insight to the answer.

*I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.*

How someone makes us feel, whether in a classroom, in a family, on a team, at work, or as a customer, is very powerful, and the impact is lasting. Has anyone ever made you feel unworthy, special, included, or proud? These are strong feelings that we don't easily forget, and these feelings color our perception of the person who made us feel them.

What made you feel the way you did? The way the person spoke? How you were treated or ignored? The way the person listened or the *body language*? All of these can be factors affect the quality of our relationship with other people or businesses. The way a customer perceives and interprets the words and actions of a business is known as the *customer experience* which is directly connected to the quality of a business's customer service.

### VOCABULARY

#### *Customer service*

The support a company provides to its customers from the time of sale on, to ensure satisfaction, to increase brand image, and to provide ongoing value to the customer

#### *Body language*

A way of communicating without spoken language using posture, facial expression, head motions, gestures, and eye contact (or lack thereof)

#### *Customer experience*

Encompasses all interactions a customer has with a company and its products or services beginning before a purchase is made and continuing through and after a purchase. Customer experience is tracked as part of customer relationship management to identify how customers feel about the company and its offerings. Surveys, feedback forms, and other data collection techniques help a company to determine the customer experience.



Creating a good customer experience requires the same skills that are needed for any good relationship. All humans have basic emotional needs that must be met. We all want to be accepted, to belong, to be listened to, to feel significant, to feel competent, and to feel connected. When a business is attuned to this reality, in addition to having a quality product or service, customers are more likely to have a good experience and become repeat customers or develop *customer loyalty*.

This sounds easy enough, but the human element is so complex and subjective. For example, what one person might perceive as “efficient” may be interpreted by someone else as “abrupt” or “cold.” Humans all want attention, but we don’t all want it in the same way. For example, one person who walks into a store might prefer lots of personal attention right away while another may want to be left alone until he or she has had a chance to look around. How is a business to know what to do?

The best thing for a business to do is to communicate with their customers and potential customers to find out what the customers perceive as good customer service and to find out what they want. Businesses who want to improve their customers’ experience solicit feedback and conduct ongoing *market research* to find out how to better serve them.

These same concepts apply to personal relationships. No, you probably aren’t going to hand your friends a survey or walk around with a suggestion box strapped onto your back, but you can gather information in many ways. Having honest conversations, asking for feedback, and observing how others respond to you are all ways of finding out how others perceive you. Being attentive to how others perceive you can be critically important for having better relationships at school, home, and work but also for reaching your goals. A business that doesn’t care about or is oblivious to how customers feel is not going to be successful and the same is true of a person who doesn’t care about or is oblivious to the perceptions of others.

### WHAT DO YOU THINK?

1. Consider yourself as a business. How is your customer service and how do others perceive you?
2. What could do to find out more about how others perceive you?
3. What particularly good or bad customer experiences have you had with a business? What influenced your experience?
4. When a customer has a bad experience, how do you think a business should respond? How might they save the customer relationship?

#### VOCABULARY

##### *Customer loyalty*

Customers continuing to believe that the business’s product or service is their best option

##### *Market research*

Gathering information on competitors and customers