



LEADERSHIP EFFECTIVENESS: ARE YOUR EMPLOYEES EMPOWERED TO GIVE TOP-NOTCH CUSTOMER SERVICE?

Empowering your front line to make just-in-time decisions on customers' behalf will transform your business. Last month, we told the story of a delicate vase that was shipped from Italy to the United States and then not delivered because no one was home. Due to astonishingly poor customer service, when the purchaser sent her representative to pick it up, she was informed that the shipping company's policy was to send the package back. The ample evidence indicating the purchaser wanted the package to be released to her representative didn't matter. It's hard to understand a company implementing policies that alienate customers. It was obvious the purchaser's representative was trustworthy and not leading an international vase stealing ring.

Finally, an employee listened to the customer, trusted her, and acted on her behalf

An employee who cared about ensuring a positive customer experience became aware of the matter. She wanted to get the vase delivered so she found out *how* to get it done. A day later, she contacted the customer and the vase was delivered.

Empowered employees can increase customer loyalty

Empowering employees to make critical decisions that improve the customer experience is an excellent and effective way to strengthen customer (and employee) loyalty. Customer loyalty has a direct effect on the bottom line. When corporate policies empower employees to "do right by their customers," word-of-mouth and social media comments spread quickly, and recommendations from happy customers grow and multiply.

The employee who delivered good customer service knew that delivering packages on time in the highest quality manner appropriate is part of her company's mission, and that flexibility and honesty are two of her company's values. Once the matter came to the attention of someone who cared about honoring the company's values, appropriate action was set in motion.

We recommend that every leader identify any possible "hot spots" where employees can be empowered to make a positive difference for improved customer experiences, and eliminate disempowerment. This will improve loyalty and reduce operational costs. One place to start is ensuring that the corporate mission and core values are woven into the framework of your business. We recommend that you:

1. Instill your organization's mission and values in the whole company through ongoing oral and written communication.
2. Ensure that your leadership team has a solid understanding of why the corporate values must not be compromised. Demonstrate through action and communication that the mission and values are the guardrails that guide decision-making and leadership behavior.
3. Empower your employees to use their judgment to make just-in-time decisions that enhance the customer experience and build customer loyalty.
4. Be sure that those closest to the customer are empowered to make speedy decisions that enhance the customer experience.

Does your corporate culture empower or disempower your employees' decision-making? You may want to ask them.

Additional Resources

- [Leadership Effectiveness: Do Your Policies Alienate Customers « Executive Coaching Network](#)
- [Don't Alienate Customers; Welcome Them: Three Steps To Infuse CX With Inclusivity « forbes.com](#)
- [Bad Customer Service: A Success Or Failure Of Strategic Business Thinking? « forbes.com](#)