

The customer experience ripple effect

 By [Mareli Smit](#)

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In celebration of Global CX Day today, 5 October 2016, it is perhaps time to look at customer experience with a different lens on...

Almost daily, we hear: “I hate calling call centres, they are useless” or “Don’t even bother going to that shop, the queues are horrendous”. We sometimes see customers lose it completely (it happens to the best of us!) – throwing a temper tantrum with the person in the firing line in most instances an innocent bystander. Sound familiar?

Customer experience is an amazing concept. It focuses on people first rather than on processes or products, it preaches that we should start with the customer as the focal point. We should focus on their needs, their desires, their customer experience journey maps, serving them as best we can. I want to challenge this and ask, don’t we also need to place some form of responsibility on customers? Should it all be on the business and employees of businesses alone?



We’ve all heard the phrase ‘the customer is always right’. We focus on customer needs every single day in every single scenario, whether at a burger joint or a financial services office. But, what employers do not focus on is how to equip employees with the tools to protect themselves from abuse. There is a difference between demanding good service and being abusive and rude. We tell employees to be customer-centric and instil fear in them if they dare to not meet customers’ needs. But, the need of customers to blow off steam should not be one of them...

The Carlton Ritz hotel group is in the service industry and came up with an amazing way to deal with staff members who might not have felt empowered or who might have felt less worthy than the customers they served. Today, they are geared to serve people, to anticipate the possible needs of their customers and are encouraged to take responsibility to really look after customers as best they can. What sets them apart is the fact that they call all their staff members 'ladies and gentlemen'. They are ladies and gentlemen, serving ladies and gentlemen. This has made being of service to someone something to aspire to and, in turn, to be treated with respect.

Customers do expect a level of service they don't always receive. In fact, I've also been in situations where I wanted to kick and scream like a toddler, but if this happens, you need to remind yourself that the people serving you are not servants, they are not your punch bag and have their own life (at home and work) to deal with – they got up like you, sat in traffic to go to work for a salary and they are there trying to sort out your problem if you allow them to.

What can we do to turn negative ripples into positive ones?

Employers – teach and empower your employees to treat customers with respect and to demand respect from customers in return.

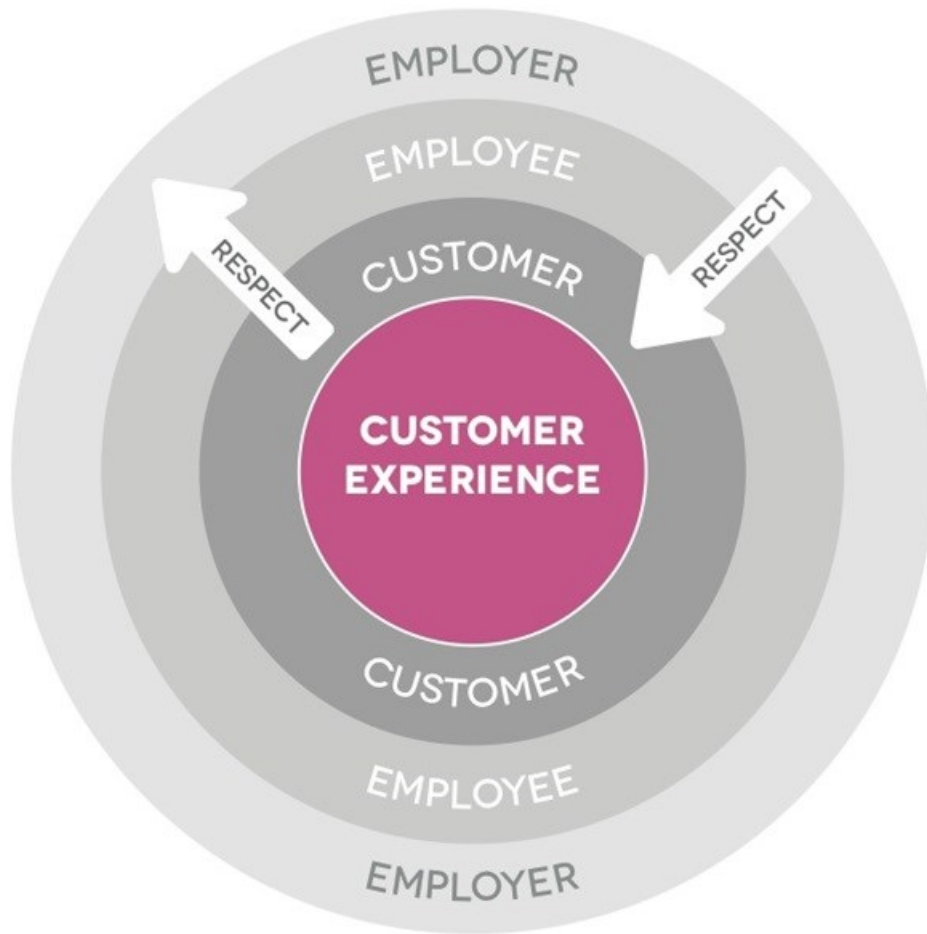
According to Alexander Kjerulf, author of *Happy Hour is 9 to 5*, happy employees render the best possible customer service: "Believing the customer is always right is a subconscious way of favouring the customer over the employee, which can lead to resentment among employees. When managers put the employees first, the employees will then put the customers first. Put employees first and they will be happy at work."

Employees – understand that the person screaming at you is no longer thinking rationally. The screaming is also not aimed at you – you merely represent the situation that has created such frustration. Stay calm and ask the right questions to solve the problem. Show that you are really listening to them and hearing them – and take action to sort out the problem. Go that extra mile. Own it. Kindness and gratitude will bring you far.

Customers – stop, breathe... and ask yourself what you would like to happen next – articulate your needs clearly and be reasonable. Acknowledge that when you kick and scream, your reptilian brain, which controls the body's vital functions such as heart rate, breathing, body temperature and balance, has kicked in and unfortunately you will get nowhere in this state of mind as you cannot think rationally. Continue to demand good service, challenge companies and employees, but remember to do so in a respectful manner!

Join me and other like-minded customer experience proponents in celebrating Global CX Day. Visit www.cxindaba.com to connect and share in relevant local customer experience content!

The customer experience ripple effect:



ABOUT MARELI SMIT

Creative, focused, goal driven, loyal and a team player with a passion for relationship building through targeted communication and networking - with a knack for organising almost anything under the sun!

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