



Customer is just another c-word

Last week, I was chatting to a CEO of a large recently merged organisation. He said that he was speaking to the receptionist at their head office – which is open to their customers. He asked how many customers had been in that day. The receptionist replied and the CEO said – ‘That doesn't seem like a very high number’. The receptionist replied – ‘I know, right? Let's hope it stays that way!’

We could of course, take the receptionist aside and remind them that ‘our customer pays our wages’ but that's not really the issue. The issue is that in many organisations, customers are associated with problems, or more specifically, complaints. They are likely to think ‘no good thing ever came of a customer contacting us’.

If organisations are serious in their intent to become customer-centric, they must rehabilitate the idea of customers in the eyes of their colleagues. This means drawing attention to all the positive things that they do for their customers and proactively encouraging customers to offer positive feedback and genuine compliments. These need to be shared far and wide and indeed far more so than complaints.

Neuroscience tells us that we hold onto negative stories 5 times longer than positive stories – so unsurprising really that colleagues tend to think of customers through a prism of negativity.

If we are expecting proactivity or any sense of discretionary effort, we need to reframe the image of a customer in the minds of our colleagues. Otherwise, they will always be the ‘friend’ who only rings when something's gone wrong. We

know we should be nicer to them, but they don't half make it difficult to love them.

Take action by:

- ◇ Listening to what customers say about you on social media and amplifying the good news internally. (Without ignoring the bad of course!)
- ◇ Humanising the customer more with posters, stories, podcasts, videos – that show how what you do fits into their lives.
- ◇ Implementing a positive recognition scheme for customers to recognise colleagues and identifying which other individuals and teams enabled that colleague to rise to the occasion – and recognise them as well. (Helps non-customer facing teams see how they fit in.)
- ◇ Dropping us at line at hello@signal.cx. We'd love to bounce some ideas around with you.