Delight customers and increase first call resolution by empowering reps to be adaptable when solving problems

One way to improve the customer experience is to let customers think that you are breaking the rules for them.

“TARP has found that one of the primary ways to create delight in a customer is to reinforce the feeling that he or she is unique,” says John Goodman, vice chairman of TARP Worldwide, a leading customer experience research consultancy. “In an environment where, increasingly, customers view themselves as ‘simply a number in a queue,’ this approach creates the impression that the customer service rep is breaking the rules ‘just for you and your situation,’ thus creating delight.”

And delighting customers creates loyalty,” Goodman says.

You can’t empower every rep to break the rules at will, says Goodman, that will only result in weak policy and an inconsistent customer experience. “But by focusing on key problems that cost money and reduce customer satisfaction, and creating a range of possible solutions that are available to reps, organizations can create adaptable responses for multiple situations and outcomes,” he says, “thus empowering the rep to gauge the customer and situation and provide resolution according to pre-set parameters.”

By using an adaptable approach, Goodman says, service organizations can achieve the following outcomes:

**Increased first call resolution.** “When reps are empowered to offer a range of solutions, the likelihood that one will satisfy the customer increases,” Goodman says.

**Consistent experience.** When each rep has the same range of solutions to work with, the likelihood increases that your customer will receive the same solution regardless of what channel they contact or how many times they make contact.

**Increased customer satisfaction.** “A customer perception that you are breaking the rules doesn’t only create delight,” says Goodman, “When you create different solutions for different scenarios, customers also feel as if they have received the right solutions for their circumstances.”

**Increased employee satisfaction.** “Rather than creating an atmosphere in which reps are expected to provide rote, robotic answers to customers, reps are allowed to examine the facts of the case and find the right solution, thus creating not only satisfied customers but also variety in their work day,” Goodman says. “There is also a relationship between a happy customer and a happy employee. Nobody wants to deal with unhappy customers all day.”

An adaptable solutions approach isn’t right for every organization. “It only works when an organization has a stable workforce, the organizational structure to support customer experience initiatives, the right tools and training for CSRs to meet defined customer issues, and a well-defined communications infrastructure,” Goodman says.

In particular, you have to have a firm, baseline understanding of what is important to your customers and where you might be underperforming. “A baseline survey will help to identify issues that customers care about and are most likely to raise, thus allowing you to prepare for issues that matter most to your customers,” says Goodman.

It’s also important that reps get the training they need to be adaptable. In particular, reps should:

- Have customer profile training. Giving your reps a guide to who your customers are and how to respond to their individual needs will create competitive advantage.
- Master the interaction. “Do your reps understand the goals of the company?” asks Goodman. “Are they empowered with the right product knowledge? And do they know
how to handle all types of customer interactions, even the difficult ones?"

• Have high morale. “Few organizations take advantage of morale-building techniques to keep their workforces engaged and motivated,” Goodman says. “Morale boosters improve satisfaction and reduce attrition and, ultimately, improve the quality of interactions with customers and customer satisfaction.”

• Be offered product or program promotion and training. “Effective adaptability programs are customized and interactive,” Goodman says. “When turnover is under control, product or program training helps get reps up to speed on your organization, thus increasing confidence and proficiency.”

A final step, Goodman says, is to understand that: “Each customer communicates with you differently, through different channels, at different times. It makes good business sense to be adaptable by listening to all of your channels, both internal and external, before painting a picture of who your customers are. Once that is completed, you can then design adaptable solutions to create the perfect fit for each customer.”