

Disruptive Service Today Is Tomorrow's Competitive Advantage

BY JOHN TSCHOHL

With all the new technologies bombarding us every day, it's become more difficult to decipher a steady path for not only companies but individuals to see what's ahead. How do we guide employees through this new technology and look for the competitive advantage? How do we create a platform for excelling at different levels in companies to ensure success and endure the growing pains we all have to go through to get to the next step? How do we compete?

As our understanding of the makeup of humans increases, so does our ability to create opportunities to improve our performance and create high value to everyone we come in contact with every day. It's called disrupting the normal way of doing things, or in Jeff Bezos' words... "If you wanna do more of something, make the friction less. If you wanna do less of something, make the friction more."

Clayton Christensen's book, *The Innovator's Dilemma: The Revolu-*

tionary Book That Will Change the Way You Do Business, talks about disruptive technology. It's an enormously influential business book whose principles Amazon acted on and that facilitated the creation of the Kindle and AWS. Some companies are reluctant to embrace disruptive technology because it might alienate customers and undermine their core businesses, but Christensen argues that ignoring potential disruption is even costlier.

Disruptive technology is staying



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faithful to your principles and core values but includes a willingness to try a lot of things and make many mistakes. Jeff Bezos included both in Amazon's corporate values. His number-one core value is to be fanatical about customer service. Interesting, because that's not what we think about when talking about dis-

Disruptive technology is staying faithful to your principles and core values but includes a willingness to try a lot of things and make many mistakes.

“The battle for repeat business is critical to long-term success in today’s intensely competitive marketplace. Customer service is not just a competitive edge. In many industries it is the competitive edge. Service is the new standard by which customers judge performance.”

— William Band, partner with the strategic management practice, Coopers & Lybrand Consulting Group, Toronto

ruptive formats. To be “disruptive” is to cause disorder; to interrupt the normal course of things.

Some great examples of disruptive technology are:

- **The personal computer (PC)** displaced the typewriter and forever changed the way we work and communicate.
- **Cell phones** made it possible for people to call us anywhere and disrupted the telecom industry.
- **Cloud computing** has been a hugely disruptive technology in the business world.
- **Social networking** has had a major impact on the way we communicate.
- **E-mail** transformed the way we communicate, largely displacing letter-writing and disrupting the postal and greeting card industries.

- **Smartphones** largely replaced cell phones and PDAs and, because of the available apps, also disrupted: pocket cameras, MP3 players, calculators and GPS devices.

Disruptive service is what I focus on and have for the past 40 years. I have such a passion for taking any company and introducing them to the power of delivering quality service. It is my guide to delivering exemplary service to every person that walks through your doors resulting in overall corporate success in terms of customer retention, new sales (via word of mouth), market share, financial vitality and positive reputation in your community.

I refer to this as “disruptive service” because one of the greatest

“Disruptive service changes the game to your advantage.”

— John Tschohl

problems in companies today is a reluctance of managers to look at service as a marketing strategy. Too many of them see it as an after-sale service, something relating back to a previous sale rather than a “disruptive service” — one they didn’t see coming.

It makes me cringe to see companies wasting their potential on ineffective advertising, ineffective marketing strategies, along with ineffective customer service. When a company makes the momentous discovery that customers are really “people,” and when they give customer service at least as much power and influence over

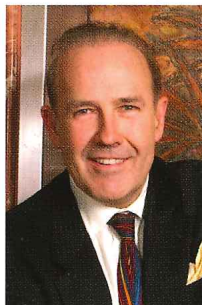
decisions as they give financial considerations, then they are well on the road to achieving a competitive advantage and even market dominance.

Just ask some of the top companies:

- Amazon — has a set of practices

that helps them manage customer experiences in a proactive way.

- Home Depot — is passionate about the customer experience.
- Costco — is committed to low costs, high wages, and excellent customer service.



John Tschohl is an international service strategist and speaker. He is founder and president of the Service Quality Institute in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Described by *Time* and *Entrepreneur* magazines as a customer service guru, he has written seven books on customer service. The Service Quality Institute (www.customer-service.com) has developed more than 26 customer service training programs that have been distributed and presented throughout the world. His monthly strategic newsletter is available online at no charge. He can also be reached on Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter.

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