



THE TIMES 100

BUSINESS CASE STUDIES

Customer service - TNT

The reputation of a business may be affected by what its customers think and say about its products or services. High quality customer service will encourage customers to become regular or repeat users or purchasers. On the other hand, a poor customer experience may damage a business through loss of consumer confidence. The process of providing customer satisfaction is based on an understanding of what customers want and need. Aspects which underpin customer satisfaction in a business include:

- ease of use – educating customers so that they know how to get the best from the service or product and designing services that are easy to use and access
- personal relationships – building a rapport with customers to make them feel valued and that their needs are important, so that they develop an attachment to the service
- appropriate payment systems – enabling customers to pay in ways that are convenient to them and at appropriate time, such as on satisfactory completion of service
- an effective complaints process – dealing with any problems or complaints promptly and making sure customers know of the outcome
- after-sales service – checking that customers have had a satisfactory experience and offering other potentially relevant services to extend the customer relationship.



TNT is a global business and the market leader in business-to-business (B2B) express delivery services, delivering up to 150 million items per year. The various elements of providing a satisfactory customer experience should relate to customer needs. Relevant factors for TNT customers involve:

- on-time delivery – TNT aims to deliver all documents, parcels and freight to the customer's required timescale through its door-to-door integrated air and road network
- 24/7 tracking – TNT's sophisticated online technology makes it possible for customers to track where their consignments are at any time of day, giving them reassurance
- personal attention – TNT can accommodate specific customer requirements for safe delivery of unusual or fragile items. For example, on one occasion, the company transported a life-sized fibreglass Friesian cow from Scotland to a farm in Northern Ireland!

TNT's market is highly competitive. In TNT's market there are at least 13 direct competitors. TNT's Customer Promise is designed to deliver a competitive advantage, something that competitors will find hard to copy. As well as providing a 'superior customer experience', the Promise:

- supports TNT's market-leading position
- helps to retain existing customers and attract new ones
- motivates staff by demonstrating their valuable input
- provides a means of differentiating the business.

TNT claims: '*Actions speak louder than words and that when we say "Sure we can", we mean it*'. This 'can-do' attitude and positive mindset affect all aspects of TNT's business. The Customer Promise highlights the expertise and positive mindset behind TNT's strapline 'Sure we can'. It shows that TNT listens to customers and can add value. For example, TNT promises a '*friendly voice at the end of the phone*'. To ensure this, TNT's own knowledgeable people deal directly with customers. Its promise '*to resolve problems promptly*' is demonstrated by how it intercepts and repackages damaged parcels to avoid goods being damaged and customers disappointed. Employees are instructed to be honest with customers – even if there is a problem. This fulfils its promise '*not to over-promise*'. TNT aims for its drivers '*to do you proud*' by training them so there is the same focus on quality customer service throughout the whole process. Its promise '*to look after you*' is demonstrated in a variety of ways: by offering a range of delivery options such as door-to-door delivery as well as online booking which allows customers themselves to reschedule deliveries where necessary to make things easier. TNT monitors and reviews regularly all activities relating to the customer experience, both internally and externally, to ensure it remains fresh for both customers and employees.



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Questions

1. What is customer service?

2. Describe what customers expect from a delivery organisation like TNT.

3. Explain some of the factors that firms consider when developing a customer service strategy.

4. Analyse how TNT benefits from delivering its Customer Promise.

Task

Think about two customer service experiences you have had – one where you received good customer service and one where you received poor customer service. List the factors that made the experiences good/bad and identify the differences between the two. Feed back to the rest of your group.

What have you learned?

Make an information leaflet for a new entrepreneur, explaining the importance of good customer service and the factors that contribute towards providing customer satisfaction.