



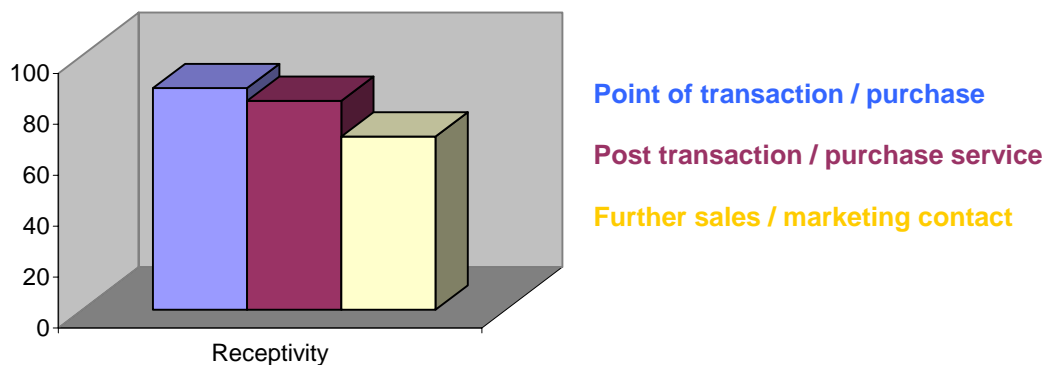
## A formula for supporting differentiated service delivery

Think back over the last week and consider how you've used email, telephone, internet, face to face and text messaging. When you've picked up the phone or walked into a shop you probably haven't given your choice of channel much conscious thought. Your choice is dependent on your feelings and your current situation - the time of day, what you're buying, who you're buying it for, personal or business, complexity of product or previous experiences. Whether you're buying a tin of beans or a mortgage you're the one that makes the choice about how you do it.

So where does that leave all service providers? How are we meant to influence customer habits and loyalty if choice is down to them and dependent on factors we can't control.

The purpose of this white paper is to share some secrets of service delivery using the 2004 research – Up Close and Personal sponsored by The Procter Consultancy and Cable and Wireless. This focussed on emotional receptivity to multi channel contact. 'Emotional receptivity' to your proposition being the most useful measure of how customers feel at any given time.

The good news from the research is that as an industry of service providers we're pretty good at transacting with over 85% of customers feeling emotionally receptive to a company's proposition at the point of transaction or purchase.



While we should celebrate our success, ratings for after sales service are lower and further relationship marketing even lower still. Across all channels we're missing out on opportunities to keep our customers happy and therefore build long term, profitable relationships. In other words – we're great at having a one night stand with our customers however are we doing our best to have a long lasting relationship?

Why is this difficult? At point of purchase your customer and staff share an agenda. If your people are good a balance between product and person becomes a given. However, when you interact with customers through subsequent service or outbound marketing your people tend to move away from your customer's agenda and prioritise your business, product or service.

Text marketing for example is half as effective as a telephone call. Customers recognise its use is driven by cost and find it easy to ignore.

*I get text messages – if I don't know who it's from I delete it*

**Up Close and Personal**

So how do you ensure you continue to match your customer's agenda? It's here we start to share some secrets with you – the three Rs of service delivery. They share a view of the customer's agenda that allows you to match your proposition to it - whatever the service or delivery channel.

### **R<sup>1</sup> is Reassure<sup>TM</sup> – building the right platform**

The responses shared in Up Close and Personal confirmed that customers are more receptive (by 25%) to outbound marketing when knowledge of the brand is high and, it follows, there's a degree of trust.

*I get emails from Amazon and I look at their recommendations; I actually bought a book they recommended that I hadn't heard of. Their recommendations are normally good*

**Up Close and Personal**

To get to this stage customers need to be reassured that your business and your people are on their agenda. You can achieve this through

- Keeping brand promises
- Being effective solution providers
- Using communication skills to build trust

Believe it or not - customers *do* consider what your brand values stand for. How do you feel when someone has made you a promise then lets you down? If your brand values say you stand for something then every channel needs to demonstrate it at every stage of the customer life cycle.

There are mobile phone companies that promise to enrich the lives of their customers, IT companies that help you have more fun, get more done and stay in touch and travel companies that promise to show you the world. What do you promise to do? Do your customers receive that kind of service – across all the channels you provide?

Your brand should be heard on each interaction across all your channels. To achieve this everyone, from your contact centre advisors to web content writers, needs to firmly align their skills and behaviour to your organisation's identity, vision and values. They should be shared alongside practical tips to help your people bring them alive in your recruitment, induction and ongoing

development plans. To reassure customers you need to make your brand genuinely the way you do business.

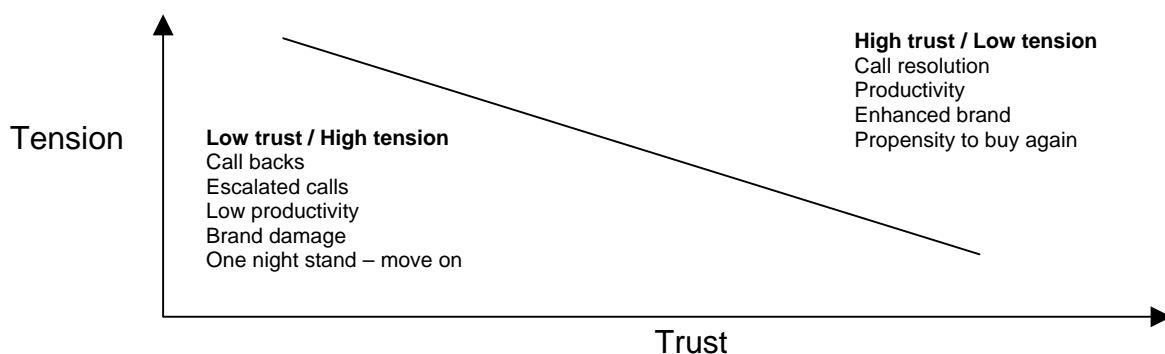
Being effective is not astounding or WOWING customers; it's about being effective and – importantly - being heard and seen to be effective.

*Sorry - there is no way we can track an order – there's nothing we can do*

*Oh the system's slow today - I can't find your postcode*

The above are examples of behaviour patterns that can destroy trust. The same can happen with a poorly written email or difficult to use website.

There are very clear business benefits behind reassuring the customer, building trust and lowering tension on every single interaction. Any training and development your people receive should aspire to deliver this.



Can you plot your interactions on a similar graph? Is there a way you can include reducing tension and raising trust into your training and development plan?

### **R<sup>2</sup> is Resolution <sup>TM</sup> – giving our customers what they want**

*“It might be useful if they sent me a text message on the morning of the flight to let me know everything is OK”*

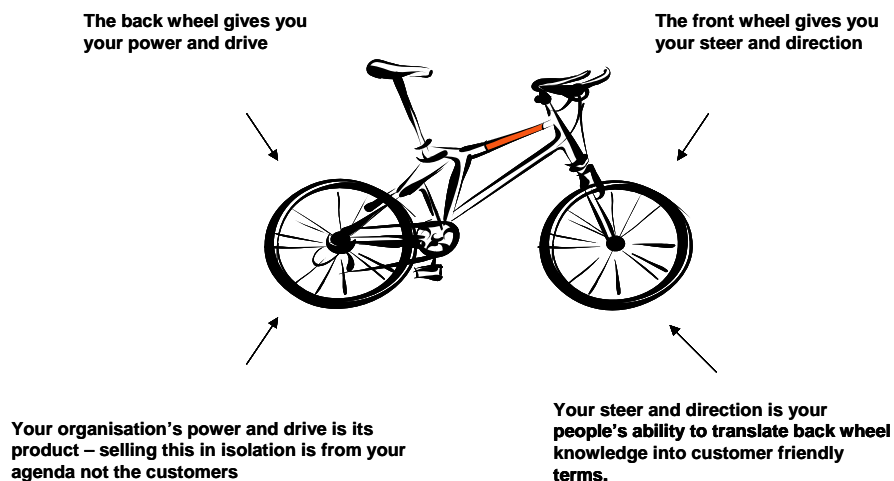
***Up Close and Personal***

Knowing that everything is OK is a key driver of customer behaviour. With this in mind it's important to ask how we know we've resolved a customer query. The order arrives? The guest leaves the hotel? The caller puts the phone down? Does your e-business team consider an issue resolved if an email has been dispatched within the allotted time for example – without considering the possible reply?

Maybe everyone in your organisation has a different answer. This is the kind of resolution that can lead to an effective transaction – however misses the boat when it comes to relationship building. For that to be successful resolution needs to be measured in one way – and that's from the customer's agenda not yours.

This means that your recruitment and development strategy should be focused on identifying people who have the capability to shape interactions and make them customer focused. Often recruitment and development is business focused – putting bums on seats and maintaining operational efficiency. While we acknowledge we have business driven targets we're advocates of a more balanced approach. This is illustrated below.

**Think about when you ride a bike.....**



To achieve customer-focused resolution we need to keep interactions front wheel focused and avoid a back wheel driven 'dump' of information. In this way we can be confident customers continue to get what they need – not just what we might want to tell them.

**Finally R<sup>3</sup> is Relate <sup>TM</sup> - adding value for our customers**

This reminds us that purchasing is an emotional decision as well as a practical one and, if we can tap into that we have a better chance of changing customer behaviour.

A common mistake is to relate to customers too soon. Offering car insurance simply because you know someone has a car doesn't count. Customers recognise that's not coming from their agenda.

This is illustrated by the success of opt in compared to blanket marketing opportunities.

To relate properly its essential that your company infrastructure is suitably prepared to help your people reassure, resolve and then *and only then* relate your products and services to customers as individuals.

The secret to achieving this is to successfully reassure, resolve and relate to your staff before you ask them to sell the same to your customers. Do your staff feel reassured by your actions? Do you do what your staff want (resolve) on their terms? How do you relate and grow relationships with them – one size fits all or a more tailored approach? Get this right and they'll be able to confidently relate and grow relationships with your customers.

In conclusion, by thinking of the 3 Rs we've described when we recruit, train and manage we can give point of purchase, service and further sales contact across all our channels a similar set of customer driven goals. The result is a powerful seamless customer experience that levels out the downward trend our research has identified. We can then truly support the long-term and profitable customer relationships we all aim for.

To help make this happen remember

- customers always choose for their reasons not yours. Be on their agenda.
- think beyond the transaction. We can easily measure the results of transactions – however customers don't view them in isolation. Value is derived from all touch points.
- knowledge and positive experience of brand builds trust. Live your values on each and every transaction.
- shift focus from attempts to WOW the customer to doing what you'll say you will effectively.
- train in communication skills that reduce tension and raise trust.
- measure resolution from the customer's agenda.
- balance your approach between the back and front wheels of your organisation.
- finally - fight the temptation to sell on relationship until you are confident you've 'reassured' and 'resolved' both your customers and your people. Use the positive brand experiences you create to your advantage by relating them to the customers as individuals.