



Customers Still As Unsatisfied Today As They Were In 1976

By Chris Morran



Before we all get to giving thanks and whatnot, let's have a discussion about the stagnant state of consumer satisfaction. A new study on "customer rage" shows that people are really no more or less satisfied with how businesses resolve complaints.

The study (from the trio of W.P. Carey School of Business at Arizona State University, Customer Care Measurement & Consulting, and NOVO 1) looked at the various ways in which companies respond to complaints and how consumers react. The first study of its kind was conducted by the White House in 1976.

Back then 23% of respondents said that the company's attempt to resolve a complaint had left them completely satisfied, while 44% said the resolution provided by the business was at least acceptable.

And according to the new study, that second number was exactly the same (44%) in the 2012 survey. Meanwhile, the percentage of consumers who are completely satisfied as dipped slightly to 20% during the last three-and-a-half decades.

Thus, the majority (56%) of consumers today feel like they are walking away from customer complaints completely empty-handed.

THIRD TIME IS NOT THE CHARM

While a billionaire buffoon like Comcast's Brian Roberts might think it's a good thing that his company has some billion+ customer interactions a year, he's ignoring the fact that this many calls, e-mails, and chats means that the average Comcast customer has to reach out to the company numerous times during the year.

And as the Rage survey shows, the more times a customer needs to deal with a company to get a complaint resolved, the lower the rate of satisfaction.

Customers who get their issue resolved in one call with the company are 1.5 times more likely to be satisfied than those who require two calls, and more than twice as likely than those with three or more calls. Sadly, the average consumer requires four attempts at contacting the company before reaching some sort of resolution, so the odds of being satisfied are against you.

AN APOLOGY GOES A LONG WAY (ALONG WITH A REFUND)

Over the years, countless readers have said to us, "I don't even care about getting my money back, I just want an apology," or "Getting a refund was fine, but it's a hollow victory without some sort of apology." And the results of a new study on customer rage show just how big an impact a little "our bad" from a business can have.

According to the survey, when a company provides simply monetary relief to a customer, the satisfaction rate is only 37%, which is better than an apology alone. That only works to satisfy around 21% of the time.

But the combination of money and an apology is greater than the sum of its parts, as adding an apology to some sort of monetary relief doubles the satisfaction rate to 74%.

TAKING COMPLAINTS PUBLIC

Many companies offer ways for customers to complain via the brands' websites, and about 19% of survey respondents said that's exactly what they did. But nearly double that percentage (35%) are simply going on Facebook and other social networking sites to vent in a public forum so that not only the company, but all their friends, family, and others can read about the problem.



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Article URL:
<http://consumerist.com/2013/11/27/customers-still-as-unsatisfied-today-as-they-were-in-1976/>