

Saving a Brand

By Ed King - Corporate Rejuvenation Specialist, Turning Point Strategies

This article is NOT about saving a company from bankruptcy. It's about the little things that happen every day with customers, and how easy it is to “save” a bad brand experience. One bad brand experience will not ruin a company. One bad brand experience per day, however, can ruin a company over time. Do the math. If one person receives a bad experience with a brand, they might tell 10 people. If one person gets a bad experience per day times 365 days per year, that's 4,015 potential customers that have a negative perception of your brand. Not good at all.

So, how can your employees save your brand on a daily basis? It all lies in training. It's one thing to educate your staff (especially customer service reps) on your products or services, but even more importantly, knowing how to deal with upset customers and potential problems is vital. This is known as soft skills training. Let me give you an example.

My wife and I returned to the local airport from our honeymoon. We parked at an off-site parking lot. There are shuttles that pick customers up at the airport and return them to the lot to pick up their car. Not knowing where to get the shuttle, we wandered into an area we thought we should be. Seeing the shuttle, we raced over to get on board. Evidently, this was the place to drop customers off, not to pick them up. The driver said, “you'll have to go over there (as he pointed about 500 feet away). That's where I pick people up.”



Now, if this were the end of the story, it would not have a happy ending. It is not the end, however, as the driver put himself in our shoes for a moment. He then proceeded to tell us why he couldn't pick us up there. He said, “I can get fined \$500 if I pick up anybody over here. I'm sorry.”

That statement was enough to curb our anger, but he even went a step further. After walking the 500 feet to the official “pick-up” space where the shuttle now was, the driver jumped out of his seat, grabbed the bags out of my hand, and proceeded to apologize even more.

He said he was sorry that the person that dropped us off when we arrived at the airport didn't tell us where to pick up the shuttle on the way back. His overall tone was that of empathy for our situation. This driver saved the brand. If he had not gone the extra mile to put himself in our shoes, we would have had a bad brand experience. We would have not used that company again, and we would have probably told everyone we know not to use their service. (Since this experience, I have been tirelessly loyal to this particular company...PreFlight Parking.)

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So, was his behavior the result of soft skills training or just his personality? We'll never know, but if I'm the owner of a business, I want that to happen ALL the time. The only way to achieve consistency like this is through training. Even simple soft skills training will help retain customers (and employees), and help a business grow. Whether it's instructor-led training or computer-based training, putting new employees through different scenarios (and putting themselves in the customer's shoes) can prove invaluable to the long-term viability of your company's brand.

Turn your company into one of brand savers.

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