



## BUILDING A BRIDGE TO YOUR TARGET MARKET CUSTOMERS

How Total Customer Satisfaction at all levels can positively influence your client relationship, price and profits.

The first question must be: What does history tell us about what really generates customer satisfaction?

Studies show that customer satisfaction is broken down into three segments:

1. **Product-Service Solution Performance Outcomes** – The product or solution must work in accordance with the promises made by your company to your customers. Nothing else means much if your product fails to provide the solution outcomes that the customer thought they purchased to meet their needs.

**Note:** Major league teams in all sports have learned over decades that you can reduce the price of tickets, give away free hotdogs and offer free parking at the ballpark, but if the team doesn't win over time, attendance goes down. The outcomes of your product-service solution must meet the expectations you have set with the customer or nothing else matters.



### YOUR WEB-BASED BUSINESS ADVISORY BOARD

All content is intended for use by active YourBoard.US members only. Any representation or re-use of this content outside of the YourBoard.US, LLC, membership terms and conditions is strictly prohibited by law.

2. **“Customer Service Attitudes” and the Quality of Service and Support** that surround the solution outcomes provided by the supplier, contractor or vendor are the next most important part of your customer’s experience with your company. It is human nature to want to do business with companies and people you like, trust, and respect. If a customer feels they are important to your company, (almost to the point they believe they are your only customer) with demonstrated friendly and courteous communications and actions, backed by a sense of urgency and priority, they will want to do business with you. In addition, that personal-business relationship that you develop at all levels with superior service will overcome many of the historic issues that arise from time to time in normal business relationships.

If your company does not have associates in all “customer contact” positions that have a completely positive, outgoing, embracing and caring attitude toward the customer in everything they say and do, there either needs to be a philosophical discussion and training on the proper “pro-active service attitude” or there needs to be a change of personnel at the customer contact point.

3. **Price:** “Customer Satisfaction” achieved by meeting performance expectations for the product-service solutions, along with overwhelmingly positive and caring service and support, a sense of urgency and also an attitude of gratitude, does overcome some premium in pricing. You will never be told that . . . but it is a fact. It is difficult for a company to separate from a supplier or vendor who is a little bit higher in price, if everything else is close to perfect and as a result things are running smoothly.

### **A Basic “Absolute” in Business**

Price is generally the key differentiator for most purchasing influences. This is especially true in the construction industry and anyplace where you are strictly dealing with commodity oriented products. “Low bid takes all” is an incredibly stupid practice. In the eyes of many purchasing influencers, most if not all suppliers, vendors and contractors are created equal, will have equal product and service performance and will provide equal service and support with the only difference being price. While this practice seems incredibly stupid, it is prevalent in many industries. **It is up to your company’s team to create competitive separation with differentiation of both products and services.**

Most of us who have been around for a while, understand how absurd it is to consider price only, but this ugly syndrome has repeated itself time and time again.



#### **YOUR WEB-BASED BUSINESS ADVISORY BOARD**

All content is intended for use by active YourBoard.US members only.  
Any representation or re-use of this content outside of the YourBoard.US, LLC,  
membership terms and conditions is strictly prohibited by law.

When the “user influencers” who have to live with the poor performance of the “lowest priced” product or service, and begin to make a point to management that, the low-price savings is absorbed quickly with poor productivity is sometimes the perfect opportunity to graciously re-present your product solution with the hope that the customer’s initial bad decision based solely on price might be reversed. Make it easy for a customer in that predicament to reconsider an earlier decision without having to eat crow.

Unfortunately, there are two separate budgetary influences; one being acquisition cost, and one being operational or ownership cost. Great companies, and great sales professionals, work to make sure these lifecycle cost advantages are understood by the budgetary and financial influences within the customer on a very factual basis.

Generally speaking, over time and with proper relationships, great product-service performance outcomes, wrapped within a good relationship built on positive attitudes and great service and support, will overcome moderate price premiums.

While products and services with consistent high performance outcomes can cost more to produce, demonstrating great customer service and support attitudes is close to free and generally sets the tone of the relationship that allows your organization to work through minor pricing issues. There is no substitute for a great service attitude at every customer contact point. There is also no excuse for not having it. None.

Your job as good communicators is to always be able to sell “the total value” of your “value proposition.” Convincing the customer that there needs to be a balance between acquisition cost and the total operational lifecycle cost impact to the operations is very important. When this concept applies, the customer must be gently taught that “total cost” considerations are critical for them to achieve the margins required to sustain financial performance over the long haul. Unfortunately, purchasing by its sheer nature is a tactical function that desires and actually rewards its people for immediate savings. When you market a product that provides lifecycle savings over a longer period of time, it is important that you have the ability to develop a relationship with a buying influencer who has some “strategic” responsibilities toward long term cost reduction and sustainability. In large customers, you may find a “strategic” purchasing influence. My experience is, however, is that the only place that you generally find a person with some strategic purchasing influence is in the office of the CFO.



#### YOUR WEB-BASED BUSINESS ADVISORY BOARD

All content is intended for use by active YourBoard.US members only.  
Any representation or re-use of this content outside of the YourBoard.US, LLC,  
membership terms and conditions is strictly prohibited by law.