

How to be great at customer service

By  Jessica Taylor

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Put your hand up if you've ever bought something on Yuppiechef.com. Chances are your hand is raised and chances are you had a positive experience as a customer, even if it happened to be a turnaround experience.

Quite simply, the online kitchen store aims to be great at customer service, and not surprisingly, it was runner-up for Best Customer Service at the 2013 South African E-Commerce Awards. CRM is its core marketing strategy and comes out of an appreciation for and in valuing the people on the other side, but first and foremost, its employees.



Sam Sabbagh, Head of Customer Service and Logistics at the company's HQ in Cape Town and a keynote speaker at the Customer Experience Management (CEM) Summit that took place at the Westin on 9-10 July, presented a talk on *Laying foundations for customer service greatness*. For her, these are compassion, empathy and genuine care.

Here are some of the stories she shared on how Yuppiechef.com does things to delight its customers.

Happy teammates = happy customers

We all know customer service is about people and trying to please them, but it begins with the employee, not the customer because "happy teammates equal happy customers", said Sabbagh.

If you've ever applied for a job at the company, you'll know very well that it has an intensive interview process. A successful candidate would have gone through a group interview, a more traditional interview, perhaps a one-week stint at the office and a lunch or coffee date with the specific team.

This is because there needs to be a culture fit. On a visit to the Yuppiechef HQ in 2013, Ian Young, MD of Saatchi & Saatchi, made this comment: "One gets the feeling people here don't work for Yuppiechef. They are Yuppiechef."

The power of gratitude

The company has become well known for its cards, to the extent of doubtful parties on its sustainability losing bets.

Denise Gunner was the first customer who was a 'stranger' (i.e. not family, friends, or pity parties) to make a purchase. After the order came through, they just couldn't send the package without writing a thank-you note. Now, eight years later, they still send handwritten cards with every order - from having a dedicated card writing team to everyone at Yuppiechef.com now writing messages and even drawing dinosaurs.

They view their cards as a personal link to their customers. At the end of the day, it's about building trust in an online space.

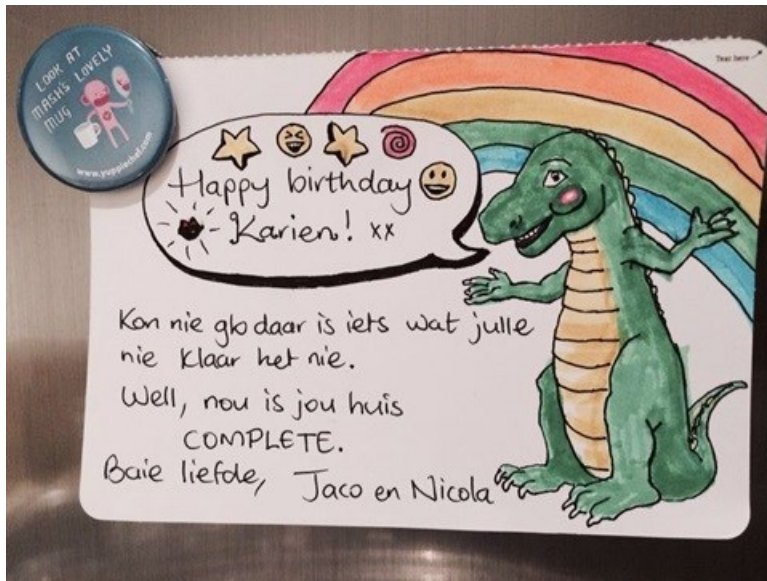
The other side of the internet

The employee and the customer are basically "people dealing with people", said Sabbagh.

"The customer is a human being." Stating the obvious, but important to acknowledge if you're to treat the person on the other side with genuine care.

In order to establish and maintain the people element, Yuppiechef.com share things about themselves and life at the company HQ by posting images and funny, sometimes ridiculous things that have happened on their social media. "It's about doing things that make people smile."

When placing an order, you'll see a special instructions section. This is the result of a request that came through, and weirdly, the woman who asked for a dinosaur and rainbow happened to be in the audience:



Well, they not only honoured Karien's request, they also wrote the card in Afrikaans. So it's also about speaking the language of the customer, in more ways than one.

Feedback is golden

"You were absolutely not helpful. You obviously did not read my earlier request. Thank you for nothing!"

This is an example of what you don't want to hear, right? Not [Yuppiechef](#) - it wants to receive this kind of feedback if that's how the customer feels because they see it as an opportunity to solve the problem. Instead of responding negatively, they explain what they're going to do to resolve the issue and avoid it becoming someone else's.

Sabbagh said, "We believe you can't move forward if you don't know where you are." So feedback, both positive and constructive, is essential to any business endeavouring towards customer service greatness.

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