

Book Review: The Customer Service Solution: Managing Emotions, Trust, and Control to Win Your Customer's Business by Sriram Dasu, Richard B. Chase

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For the past few decades, improving quality of services has been recognized as a critical issue in many countries, especially in developed economies. Operations Management (hereafter OM), the field which has been mainly concerned with quality improvement, has been leveraging concepts from the old total quality management programs to new six sigma programs. The focus has been on metrics such as speed of service, errors, and other process variables. Despite growing evidence of the economic value of delivering memorable customer experiences, there has been very little research in OM on how to design service processes that influence customer's perceptions during a service.

The book "Customer Service Solution: Managing Emotions, Trust, and Control to Win Your Customers' Business" offers very well organized and systemic approaches to design service operations that impact the experience. This book not only presents fundamental psychological principles that have a bearing on perceptions but also gives methods for designing service processes that are in accordance with these concepts. Examples from the industries such as e-commerce, sports, healthcare, hospitality, and financial services, ground these concepts and make them accessible to a wide audience.

This book is written by two researchers in service operations management, Sriram Dasu (Associate Professor) and Richard B. Chase (Justin Dart Professor Emeritus) at Marshall School of Business (University of Southern California, USC), and is the first book that systematically studies the dynamics of customer psychology in service operations.

The book contains eight chapters. The first chapter begins by emphasizing how implicit outcomes in a service encounter are important. Service organizations have been focusing on improving explicit outcomes, and explicit outcomes are significant because they are measurable and they secure specific levels of the qualities in the service. However, the authors argue that explicit outcomes cannot solely guarantee the satisfaction of customers. The first chapter lays out a framework for shaping the implicit or psychological outcomes. They identify six factors that shape consumer's perceptions: emotions, trust, control, sequence, duration, and attribution. Deeper descriptions of these six factors constitute the subsequent chapters.

Chapter 2 and 3 contain discussions of what is important (customer's emotions) and why it is important (for customer's trust). Chapter 2 introduce the concept of 'emotional intelligence,' a capability of perceiving, assessing, and controlling emotion, and outline techniques for systematically deal with emotions. The authors emphasize the importance of designing customized emotional theme and offer various management tools to assess emotions customer experience at each stage of service. Chapter 3 illustrates the authors' in-depth insight about the fundamental issue (information asymmetry and bounded rationality) about customer's trust. This chapter provides several principles and techniques to build trust.

In chapter 4, the authors claim that service providers need to maximize customer perceptions of being in control. This chapter identifies the types of control and how and when to share control based on required knowledge and significance of the service.

Chapter 5 and 6 covers two traditional concepts of OM, sequencing service delivery and perceptions of time. Chapter 5 introduces a way to organize the sequence of events in order to enhance the experience during and after the service. Based on the finding of behavioral scientists they argue that memories are collection of snapshot and not movies. Hence it is important to identify moments that matter. The authors discuss the types of moments during a service that will impact the perception of customers. They conclude with a number of methods to design the sequence. In chapter 6, they remind us that what matters is perceived time not actual amount of time passed. Depending on whether the customers are waiting or engaged, the time is wasted or results in value. Providers may want to dilate the perception of value-added time while shrinking the perceptions of wasted. They present factors that influence duration judgments and discuss how to frame service encounters in order for good times to be remembered and for bad time to be forgotten.

Chapter 7 covers the issue about how customers make attributions of the outcomes when a service encounter is completed. Building on previous chapters, the authors propose methods for structuring the service encounters to enhance customers' positive reactions instead of the negative. Overall evaluation of the service,

analysis of the cause of the outcomes – good or bad, and assignment of credit or blame are all subjective. Once again the authors present a range of theories that influence how subjects attribute blame or credit. They close the chapter with a collection of principles for managing attribution. Chapter 8 wraps up the book by presenting approaches for organizations to implement their ideas. They present two projects, “Improving the experience of online computer purchases” and “Improving interactions between nurses and chronic care patients” as examples of implementation plans.

Overall, this book is very well written and all the chapters are constructed and linked in a sophisticated manner. It gradually translates fundamental concepts of behavioral sciences and social psychology to service system design principles. One of the interesting parts of this book is that there are many examples that were carefully selected to clarify the concepts and to make the readers reflect on their own experience. Therefore, once the readers get the idea they stick. This book is accessible and useful to both scholarly audience and practitioners. To scholars, the book provides great potential for the new avenue for study in multiple areas such as OM, Management Science, Marketing, and etc.

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