

What can your scale business learn from Domino's Pizza?

By Robert Sombach

OK I realize it sounds like an outrageous comparison, but give me a minute to explain how a national pizza franchise can give us some understanding about how people are changing their definition of customer service. In the scales industry, we're all familiar with measurement. If our customer's equipment is not providing accurate readings, we have the equipment to fix or recalibrate it. The equipment may be technologically advanced and quite expensive, but as we all know, over time it can become less accurate.

The same thing can happen to your business image. Over time and despite your best efforts, customers formulate a feeling about your business. Your brand has little to do with a logo. Here's the best definition of brand that I've heard: your brand is what your customers say about you when you're not there. For our industry, our brands are closely tied to customer service. They are

almost the same thing.

Increasingly, the way customers measure your brand is changing. Service and professionalism are still important and your service technicians are the face of your company. As more and more millennials take up jobs at your client sites they are raising the bar for expectations. How customers interact with you is becoming almost as important as the interaction itself. Now back to Pizza.

Take the simple example of ordering a pizza. We pick up the phone, order a pizza, hopefully it arrives fast and its hot! How important is taste? When it comes to Domino's? You be the judge—I'm not saying—but it's public knowledge that Domino's Pizza, itself, took a hard corporate look into the mirror and decided that their brand was suffering. They then did the unprecedented and announced their findings to the world through commercials, explaining that they knew they had a prob-

lem. Amid this, they launched an application to order pizza either on your phone or PC—without even talking to an operator! How did it work?

Domino's sales increased by 19 percent in one year. Three quarters of their sales now come from online orders. The pizza itself is still... well, I'm still not saying, but the Domino's sales increase came at the expense of competitors.

Domino's didn't change the recipe, the product, or the service. The only thing they changed was the customer interaction. They improved the transaction, but not the product. They didn't wait for a competitor to lead the way.

We have entered an era where companies are rewarded for providing less human interaction, and penalized for offering more.

What might have been considered good customer service is no longer viewed that way. An example of this is telephone com-

munication. In the '90s when voicemail and auto attendants were new, there was a backlash against it, the simple act of having a *live* person answering the phone became a hallmark of good customer service. Fast forward to today—where a call from a customer is often seen as a last resort—not a first response.

How can we change our customer experiences in the scales industry? It's not pizza! The actual product and service matter—and the government does not regulate the pizza industry (*though that may not be a bad idea*). Let's look at some typical customer touchpoints in our industry and how we can approach them today. How can we target some of these processes for future automation?

Devices need to be maintained properly and customers will continue to expect the same level of service excellence. If these tasks could be automated it would offer customers faster access to their information and a higher degree of accuracy. It would also lower your costs, as there would be less labor associated with the process of scheduling, billing and information retrieval.

To move toward future automation, dealers need to re-imagine their workflow. Many dealers have used the same paper-based workflow for over a decade. So much is tied to the traditional three copy work-order. Paper certificates may be required, but even those can be electronic forms that prepopulate most fields based on information pulled from the database (devices, serial numbers, dates locations). Imagine the confidence the customer will have in your company when a service technician takes out a tablet, during a call, inputs the reading, along with other information, then instantly uploads it to an online customer portal?

The first necessary step to improve your customer service and automate your workflow is to invest in a dealer management system that puts all customer records, transactions and certificates into a database. That database can then be

web-enabled so customers can be provided with a portal to view information about their account, equipment and certificates. Nexent offers two unique products that help dealers in this regard.

By the way, Domino's had no idea their online system would increase sales—they did it to lower their costs. I guess they'd

ended up with the ultimate 2 for 1 special.

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