

# Engagement: The Secret to a Superior Customer Experience

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# *Exceed Expectations* Is a typical customer care goal

While it sounds good, there is a better, more achievable and profitable goal: meet the expectations communicated by your brand and marketing and established by your customer's last experience. This involves no more than consistently providing the customer experience that your brand promises. Interviews with several CEOs indicate that they would be very happy with a customer experience that is "consistently executed to standard." What they are confirming is that gaining customer, and employee, trust in the brand is the real goal.

Tactics such as teaching the steps of service, using shopper's reports to provide feedback and giving employees an occasional pep talk can help, but a permanent solution demands actions that acknowledge the fact that, in many situations, customer-facing employees play a major role in determining the customer's experience.

When Jack Welch listed the most powerful factors for organizational success, he named employee engagement as number one, with customer satisfaction second. The fact that he mentioned these factors in this order isn't coincidental – it has been shown that employee engagement is a key contributor to customer satisfaction and, ultimately, organizational success.

# What exactly is *Employee Engagement?*

While often viewed as a somewhat ambiguous term, at its core, engagement refers to employees experiencing an absorbing and meaningful relationship with their work. This matters because meaningful relationships positively impact the work environment. If people feel that their work doesn't make a meaningful difference, encounter daily barriers to success, and lack the preparation and support needed to do a great job, there will be a limit on the quality of the products, services and experiences that customers receive. It follows that your team's level of engagement directly impacts the execution of your brand and business results.

## So, what is the relationship between employee engagement and the customer experience?

**Engaged employees are committed to customers.** An example of a company taking meaningful action to improve employees' level of engagement and commitment to customers is luxury retailer Saks Fifth Avenue. They surveyed all employees to identify obstacles that prevented their full commitment to customers and discovered that outdated computer systems, restricted access stairwells and other management-related issues had placed a ceiling on the employees' level of engagement.

As Saks Fifth Avenue learned, employee engagement strongly predicts customer engagement, as indicated by repeat sales and positive word of mouth. One reason for this is because engaged employees are more likely to build relationships with customers and treat new customers as though they were repeat customers. Customers can easily see when employees are inspired, committed and passionate about their work. This, in turn, increases the positive emotions they feel about their experience.





**Engaged employees are more resilient.** Engaged employees are more likely to bounce back after a difficult customer interaction and less likely to sabotage the customer experience when they feel mistreated, a risk that further decreases the longer engaged employees stay with the organization<sup>4</sup>. After experiencing a failure or difficulty, engaged employees are more likely to pursue self-improvement by proactively seeking out opportunities to learn from senior coworkers and leaders. They also report a greater willingness to adapt to change: an essential trait as companies evolve products and services to better engage customers. As a result, employees will continue to go above and beyond to deliver the intended customer experience despite setbacks and changes.

**Engagement strengthens your consumer brand.** The way you convey your brand to your employees profoundly impacts the way your brand is understood by consumers. Fewer than half of managers (46%) and only about a third (37%) of non-management employees strongly agree that they know what their company stands for and what makes their brand different from their competitors, a Gallup study shows<sup>5</sup>. This is troubling, given that an employee can't be engaged and certainly can't deliver to the consumer if he or she doesn't understand the companies' priorities. As a result, a precursor to engagement is effectively sharing and teaching what your brand is and is not to your employees. You must have answers to the questions, "What key messages and values should guide our employees' behavior?" and, "What are we doing to ensure it is learned and rewarded at every level?" Zappos consumers know that they are going to get extremely great customer service, because Zappos employees are clear that customer service is a company priority. Likewise, the Mayo Clinic brand communicates patient satisfaction and healing because the employees are dedicated to providing industry leading, patient-centered care. These core values and beliefs are conveyed at each and every TouchPoint™ of the hiring and onboarding process, as well as the employees' daily experiences. This not only ensures that employees are likely to be a good fit, but sets them up to deliver a remarkable consumer experience that is aligned with your intended consumer brand.

# About Corvitus

Corvitus provides a range of innovative, science-based measurements and services that tie a company's culture and core values to talent processes. Corvitus solutions have enabled hundreds of companies to strengthen and scale their corporate cultures, and to identify, develop and retain those employees with the characteristics and capabilities essential for business success and customer satisfaction. For more information, visit [www.corvitus.com](http://www.corvitus.com) or schedule a demo by using this link:

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