

IDEAS + INSIGHTS

'Perception Governs Behaviour' - #2 - Moments of Truth

In the preceding 'Ideas + Insights', we discussed how our businesses continuously create impressions; and how impressions inform perceptions that govern client behaviour, for better or for worse. In this follow-up piece, we focus on key 'moments of truth' that are essential to get right in any business. While we would all like total perfection at all times, the fact is there are around 10 'must-haves' that underpin all the rest. We discuss some of them here.

A fair chunk of my life has been spent travelling, sometimes for pleasure but mostly for business. Travelling is not only a journey from one geographical location to another, it is also a voyage that give us an opportunity to test the marketing realities of airlines and hotels against the promises they make to us. In short, we come up hard against key moments of truth when we embark on any journey.

Far from being exotic, travel now parallels many other lines of business that have become commoditised (especially the financial services industry).

While airlines compete heavily on price, and nearly all of them have frequent-flyer loyalty programs, some try to attract passengers prepared to pay a premium for 'a better experience' (that is, differentiation' in the form of pre-flight lounges, wider seats, more leg-room, and so on). But there's one moment of truth that all airline passengers can test, regardless of the price of their ticket, or how many points they have racked up, and that is: *punctuality*.

Like most people, I accept that departure delays can be caused by unavoidable events (e.g. bad weather) and, of course, operational safety concerns; however over the last 46 trips (most domestic, some international) the airline to which I have been loyal has departed on-time on just four occasions. Perhaps they just can't organise to get it right, or they don't really care. Either way, the experience is expensive and the perception not a good one; as a consequence, I've already begun to plan my next trip with a different carrier.

Once the air trip is over, the hotel is the next opportunity to face another moment of truth. This one is the check-in. My experience is that irrespective of how many stars the hotel boasts, check-in and check-out procedures have not changed in the last 25 years: for the most part, they are slow, arduous, and

incredibly frustrating. Why? Surely there's a better way; in fact, I *know* there is. On a recent trip to Singapore I was transported from the foyer to the hotel room in less than ten minutes. An extremely positive perception means they'll get my business next time, and I'll recommend them to others.

Almost all moments of truth occur where the consumer's experience intersects with the business's delivery of basic service; and again the perceived reality trumps the advertised promise.

Our respective businesses bears witness to this every day: clients' experiences intersect with the promises we have made. Some examples: what do they experience when calling by phone, how are

they greeted, what sounds do they hear when put on-hold? (It amazes me how many financial practices feature heavy rock music - that might, *might*, appeal to very young people but to few over age 45: the ones with the money).

What about the promise made to 'get back to you shortly'? And the experience when they arrive for an appointment? Is everybody punctual, is everything prepared, is there a welcoming cup of tea or coffee? Are the magazines in the foyer current, or do they reflect those at my dentist's, where one tattered copy of *Time Magazine* headlines that WWII has been won.

If it's been a while since you checked on *the ten most important moments of truth* in your business, we suggest you might want to get a third party to do some anonymous 'reality shopping'; you can then act on the feedback to guarantee you are creating positive perceptions.

It's incumbent for us all to remember that when our clients intersect with our service delivery, they are on a journey of experience, so let's make it *insanely great*. If you need help, let us know.

