

## **Don't censor your critics, thank them!**

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One of the key steps to deliver a better Customer Experience is to listen to what the customers have to say and, on top of that, be responsive.

Today, social media is the main location for complaints or praises. And it has been, without any question, the most potent amplifier of customer voicing in recent years. Customers go to Twitter, Facebook, Blogs or review sites to share experiences.

Things that before would require loads of power, people, money, media lobbying, and huge marketing campaigns, are now created, organised, amplified and spread much more efficiently and quickly by the use of a #hashtag.

And it does not matter how insignificant is the customer and how big is the company. Everyone, including the media, loves a good David vs Goliath story. By default, everyone is sympathetic with the weak customer and distrusts the powerful company.

Companies cannot afford to ignore this explosion and this change. And today's hyper-competitive and hyper-connected world demands presence, monitoring, accountability and responsiveness.

Customer's feedback, either positive or negative, is invaluable, as it offers companies a veracious and real sense of how they are performing. And it is also one of the main ingredients of the perception that others (potential customers) have of the company in question.

But more importantly, customer's feedback offer companies the possibility to turn around a bad experience, or to thank and amplify a praise for a good experience.

If companies do not listen to an unsatisfied customer, they are not only losing the opportunity of making it right (and most likely lose the customer forever), they are also letting the customer damage the company's image and influence other's perceptions.

And remember that the new world of media has shown us that truth is many times less important than people's perception of the truth. A person or group can create a crisis over a false issue or an issue that no one has never thought about.

On the other hand, if companies do not listen to a loyal customer, they are losing the opportunity of capitalising on a good story, making the customer feel valuable, integrated in the process and part of the company, and possibly turning this customer into an advocate.

Voice-of-the-customer when captured, reviewed, analysed and evaluated, helps companies to identify trends, business opportunities, service needs, and sometimes even innovations for its products and services.

It is much faster to discover faults or bugs in a product from immediate customer feedback, than waiting for the poor quarterly sales results. Contrariwise, positive feedback gives potential customers a validation for their decision.

Take the example of two beloved companies, that score very high in Customer Experience rankings. Southwest Airlines and Dell. They don't censor critics, they thank them.