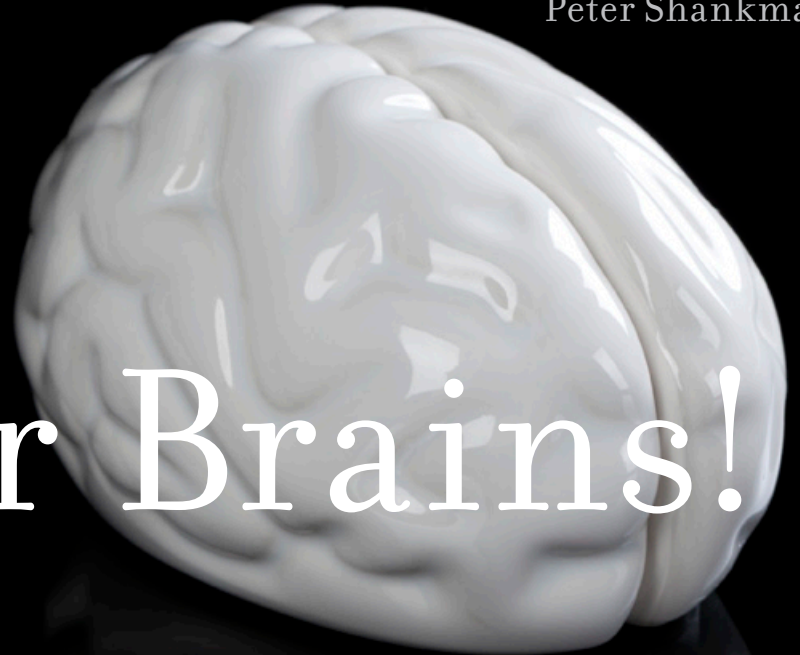


(Why Customer Service
Will Drive the Economy
of the Next Fifty Years
and Beyond)

Peter Shankman



Out for Brains!

A Customer Service Constitution

WE, THE PEOPLE OF THE CUSTOMER ECONOMY, IN ORDER TO OBTAIN A MORE PERFECT CUSTOMER SERVICE EXPERIENCE, DO ORDAIN THIS CUSTOMER SERVICE CONSTITUTION FOR NEW CUSTOMER SERVICE WORLD ORDER:

ARTICLE ONE: The “Network” knows all, and will share all experiences, both positive and negative.

ARTICLE TWO: There shall be the court of public opinion to determine which companies deserve customers’ business. This court shall convene online, offline, and in real-time, at all times. It shall be based solely on the experiences any given customer has had with your business.

ARTICLE THREE: Every CEO, Business Owner, and Entrepreneur pledges to put customer service before profits, before revenue, and even before fiduciary responsibility, because they understand that when customer service is tops, that profits, revenue, and, yes, fiduciary responsibility will all work out better than before.

1 } In this new, more perfect customer economy, every business understands that it's no one's fault but theirs if their brand isn't perceived the way they want it to be, and no amount of lying, hiding, or faking will get their brand to where they want it to be.

ARTICLE FOUR: The time, place, and manner of providing amazing customer service shall be up to the individual company. But, in this new, more perfect customer economy, the brand will understand that simply saying "We're awesome! Buy from us!" is equivalent of saying "I'm awesome, you should leave this bar and come home with me," at last call, and will not implement such tactics. Instead, the brand will put forth their best effort to provide amazing service to each customer from the beginning of each encounter even if it's nothing more than just a smile, and in turn the customer will turn to their network and share the positive outcome of their experience.

ARTICLE FIVE: Each company will need judge of their own current service, and decide whether they need to improve for the greater good. As the new Customer Economy expands, customers will be in charge, and the companies and brands that come out on top will understand that and never think that "eh, we'll get by," is enough for their customers.

1 } No company, house, or brand, shall adjourn from their good customer service for more than never, lest their customers go somewhere else.

ARTICLE SIX: Each company and brand shall receive compensation for their service. Such compensation includes increased revenue, happier customers, and higher levels of brand awareness.

ARTICLE SEVEN: All new ideas for great customer service shall be formulated by the brand, but approved by the customers, understanding that the customers, and only the customers, control the direction of the company.

ARTICLE EIGHT: No company or brand shall enter into any treaty with any other company or brand to deceive, confuse, lie to, or in any other way disconnect from their current customers. Such actions shall be construed as ruining the company or brand's goodwill, and will lead to their ultimate downfall.

ARTICLE NINE: Every company and brand shall realize that at the end of the day, customers rule, customer service determines the future of the company, and the sentiment of every customer's tweet, post, or the like, will determine whether or not said company or brand will survive in the new Customer Economy.

I, Peter Shankman, wrote these articles out of a very basic, fundamental belief...

The economy of the next fifty years and beyond will be driven by customer service.

How's that for a bold prediction? But, it's true.

The age of “buy from us because we say we're awesome” is over, and has truly been replaced by the age of “I'll buy from them because someone I trust says they're awesome.”

To support the launch of my new book, *Zombie Loyalists*, my team and I commissioned a survey on customer service, and the results will shock you. (More data below.) 25% of customers report an instance of poor customer service in the past two months alone! Each instance is estimated at resulting in over \$700 in lost sales from that customer—and then spreading the word to an estimated 700 additional people on social media!

However, the overwhelming majority of businesses think that their customer service is superior. There is a huge disconnect.

Because of this reality, businesses can create fanatically loyal customers just by giving customers service that isn't even great, but just one level better than the garbage they've come to expect in a consumer transaction.

Here are just a few pieces of customer service survey data from 72POINT:

- 25% of customers in the US have had a bad customer service experience in the past two months alone.
- 80% of businesses believe they deliver “superior” customer service, yet only 8% of their customers agree.
- 77% of customers in the U.S. reported at least one instance of rudeness from a customer service representative in 2012.

“Every company and brand shall realize that at the end of the day, customers rule ...”

The result? Companies lose tons of money.

- An overwhelming 78% of respondents said they told people other than the company about their bad experience
- Among those who shared their bad experience, more than half say they reached upwards of 500 people via social media; the average number of people reached is 751.
- The average amount of money respondents said the company lost on their business is \$723.17/year.

That's almost \$1000 per year per upset customer!

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CASE STUDY IN POINT: A man and his chicken, and why they'll change how you think of promotion.

Imagine a scenario, if you will. You run a restaurant in Seattle. You serve chicken. All kinds. Fried. Breaded. Boiled. Souped. You name it.

One morning, a potential customer, let's call him "Joe," leaves his apartment in Manhattan on a business trip to Seattle. Joe loves chicken. All types of chicken. If it clucks, Joe wants to eat it.

Now... In the past, perhaps you'd advertise to get Joe to your restaurant—but how, specifically? I mean, Joe lives in NYC, and it's not your target market. Which is a shame, really, since Joe really loves Chicken, and happens to be in charge of finding a restaurant for his 20-person meeting in Seattle, the one for which he's flying out today.

Let's now take a different tack on this story.

Joe has obviously made his love for chicken known in the past. He's told friends about his best chicken meals. He's taken tons of Instagram photos of his various chicken adventures, including the best kinds of chicken he's ever eaten, where he's eaten them, and what made them so great. On the flip side, however, he's also recorded the worst chicken experiences he's ever had. All public, all for anyone to see.

Now then, follow me here... When Joe gets to the airport and checks in for his flight, Facebook quietly takes notice. (Joe bought his tickets online, and logged in through Facebook's one-login process.) As Joe's flight chugs across the country, Facebook rearranges Joe's friend stream so that the first people he'll see when he turns his phone on upon landing are those in Seattle.

Here's the best part: When Joe lands, he'll be asked if he wants to try some of the best chicken in Seattle—as chosen by those in his network, those people he already trusts.

Of course he will, and he'll book all 20 people in his meeting there for dinner that night. Not bad for a company Joe didn't know existed six hours before.

How will this all be possible? Simple: The information already exists, and we're already sharing it. All the network is doing is bringing it to us when we need it most.

When I search on Steakhouses in any city today, Google Maps shows me the closest ones, but also highlights the ones my friends have already been to and enjoyed.

So what's going to power this new engine of recommendation? Customer Service and Trust.

To put it another way, there's no need for review sites anymore. If I have people in my network, and they have people in their network, chances are I have more than enough people (thousands upon thousands) who can tell me whatever I'm looking for—automatically, as I'm looking for it.

Imagine planning a vacation to Bali. You search “flights to Bali” and a popup window appears, telling you that your friend Mark went to Bali last month. His tweets and posts about his flights were positive. Would you like to see the flights he took?

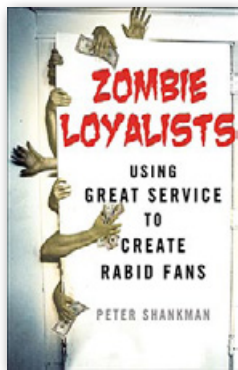
Since you and Mark are good friends, and you trust his judgment, why wouldn't you?

What does this mean for businesses? Customer service. It has to be about customer service 100% of the time. At the end of the day, customer service will rule the world. If your service sucks, if your product sucks, the sentiment will be neutral to negative, and you simply won't show up when people go through their network to find the best of anything.

This isn't futuristic; It's already happening. It simply has to be about customer service. There's no other alternative. If you're not focusing on customer service, and being better to your customers than anyone else, then you'll be out of business soon enough. That's never been more true than it is today.

Think about that the next time you pickup some fried chicken. 🍗

Info



BUY THE BOOK | Get more details or buy a copy of [Zombie Loyalists](#).

ABOUT THE AUTHOR | Peter Shankman is best known for founding Help a Reporter Out, which changed how journalists and sources interact around the world. His new book, *Zombie Loyalists*, is his fourth book, and is the follow-up to his best-seller, *Nice Companies Finish First*. He blogs at [Shankman.com](#), and tweets random hilarity at [@petershankman](#).

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