

Think about what the customer really wants

By Jeffrey Gitomer

You have opportunities to think every day. The big questions are: How do you do it? And, once you've arrived at a particular thought or idea, how do you deliver it? Everyone will tell you to think things through. But the secret is to think things through to the desired outcome the customer wants. Here's a real-world scenario:

1. Someone calls and presents you with a complaint, a problem, a question, a service call, an order or even an idea.
2. You pause and think.
3. Now it's time to respond. You present your reaction, your ideas, your solution.
- 3.5. The question is: in terms of whom? Is it, "Here's what we can do"? Or is it, "Here's what we can do to get you what you really want"?

The goal is to flesh out the idea all the way to the end -- in terms of what the customer really wants.

Here's how to think it through to a win for everyone:

- Listen to the situation.
- Discover the symptom and the problem.
- Communicate the action.
- Reassure the customer you know what he really wants.
- Look for an opportunity.
- Create an add-on idea.
- Wow the customer.

Here's a real-world example: Let's say you're in the lawn sprinkler business. Your customer calls and says, "My sprinkler is broken. I need it fixed."

If you think, "Service call -- go fix the sprinkler," you're thinking wrong. You should think: This is not a problem; this a symptom. What the customer really wants is a green lawn.

Here's the opportunity: Fix the sprinkler, but also give the customer a bag of fertilizer branded with your company's name to help the customer achieve what he wants: a green lawn.

Note: Don't focus on what's wrong. Focus on what your customer wants. Focus on the customer's desired outcome.

If you just fix the sprinkler, you get a thank you. If you help the customer get what he wants, and add a wow, you earn a referral and word-of-mouth advertising.

Another example: Ever make an airline reservation? Do the airlines know your problem? Your desired outcome? No. They make your reservation and hang up.

Except one airline -- Richard Branson's Virgin Atlantic. It asks you where you'll be going when you land. Virgin arranges limousine transportation to your destination as part of its upper-class fare. Wow!

Think about the 10 prime reasons customers call you. Figure out the symptom, the problem, the customer's desired outcome, and then discover the opportunity to wow them. Then act.