



PETRA PLANNING

IN BUSINESS, THERE'S NO ROOM FOR "CHICKEN"



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LIFE LESSONS for BUSINESS OWNERS

Not too long ago, I was enjoying a meal at a high-end restaurant that left a lasting image in my mind. Oddly, the thing that stuck with me most that evening was not the ambiance or the lively conversation. It was the chicken. No, not Hot Chicken or Chicken Marsala – it was the game of chicken I saw played out multiple times between the customers and the wait staff.

For the uninitiated, "chicken" is an ill-advised test of wills, where two people drive their cars directly towards one another at top speed, until one person (the "chicken") swerves out of the way. In a best-case scenario, the two players avoid disaster when one person "chickens" out. Worst case? Both people hold their course – or swerve in the same direction to escape – and ultimately suffer a disastrous, fiery demise. It's confrontation and stubbornness at its worst, and there's no way to "win." So why play at all?

That night, my table had a front row seat to multiple instances where a customer and a harried member of the wait staff found themselves in a sudden face-off. With narrow spaces between tables and limited room to pass in the hallways to the kitchen and lavatories, it was a tough situation to avoid. Like the traditional game of "chicken," who would step out of the way and let the other pass was often a last minute decision.

On most occasions, it was clear that the restaurant team member expected the customer to move out of the way, even when the team member was not loaded down with a full tray of food or drink. As I watched the awkward dance play out time and again, I couldn't help but think that the situation must have made the customer feel undervalued and ultimately made for a poor customer experience. It also made me wonder: How often do we, in business, engage in games of "chicken" with our customers? Like the traditional game of chicken, the outcome is almost always a losing one – unless the team member defers to the customer.

I can't say this is the first business where I have encountered this customer service miscue. What's clear in each case is that the situation exists due to poor planning and execution by management and business owners.

To avoid customer service "chicken" in your organization make sure that you have the following business practices firmly in place:



Core Purpose –

A clearly defined Core Purpose establishes the reason why your organization exists. Often this is rooted in service to others. Ask yourself, how can I help my customers receive more value, live a healthier life, or even have a memorable meal out with friends, where they are treated like royalty? Instilling a Core Purpose in your culture will not only benefit your customers, but it will give your team members a clear mission, and attract the sort of talent who will help keep your organization growing in the right direction.

Core Values –

A living set of Core Values defines the fundamental beliefs of your organization. These Core Values are the backbone of the culture and beliefs your team members leverage to make decisions. In most instances, Core Values also include a belief in service to others. They can be anything from, "make it an 'awesome' day for our others," to "do the 'right' thing." Whatever you choose, make them actionable and hold your team accountable to these Core Values. A team equipped with a set of strong Core Values to inform their daily work decisions is a team set up for success.

Brand Promise –

All organizations should establish up to three Brand Promises that are measurable 'promises' to the customer. These statements clearly define how your organization stands out from the competition, in a measureable way. For example, Starbucks states "Love your beverage or let us know. We'll always make it right."

Ask Your Clients What They Think –

Sounds simple, right? Believe it or not, many organizations don't make this a priority until it's too late. An ongoing process to collect and act upon customer feedback is crucial to the success of any organization. Including both quantitative and qualitative feedback from clients will help capture potential instances of poor customer service, and allow your company to act quickly to solve problems and change course, where necessary.

So, is it possible to avoid games of "chicken" with your customers? Absolutely. With a clearly defined Core Purpose, an actionable set of Core Values, a Brand Promise to hold your team accountable, and a system to collect feedback, your organization should be well on its way. If, however, you find yourself in an unintentional face-off – Slow down. Take a step back. Let the customer pass. You'll both be much better off that way, and you'll each know what to expect the next time around.

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THE PETRA EXPERIENCE

The Petra Experience is like a Mental Marathon of focused effort to create a specific set of priorities and a planned process to achieve them... as a team.

Looking to change your business life - forever?

The daily grind of growing a business is tough... it doesn't have to be that way. We work from our own business experiences while focusing on your business – as coach and an accountability partner. We implement the Petra Process in a way that ensures it "sticks" then we stay engaged to keep you on your path to success and less frustration. We don't want this to be just another thing you start – then it gets ignored and finally dies... let's stop that cycle in your business. The Petra Program 'clarifies' what is most important to be done – by whom, by when – **AND** creates an accountability structure to ensure **IT GETS DONE.**

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