



## It's the Experience Stupid - Whole Beans Please

Starbucks has, in their words created what it calls a "Third Space" between home and office in which to enjoy great coffee and other treats.

They do a great job and we mostly love them, but is there room for even the mighty Starbucks to improve on the customer experience?

Not long ago I waited in line at a local Starbucks to buy a pound of my favourite beans (Verona) and wanted to have them scoop my beans from the big bags they keep behind the counter; the last couple of prepackaged bags of coffee I'd purchased had an over-abundance of broken beans and at \$15 a pound I wanted to assure that I was not getting the dregs.

As I waited my turn in line the cacophony of noise became ever louder with the baristas shouting orders to each other and other liner-uppers trying to talk over each other and the din of the cafe.

When it was my turn a barista made eye contact and shouted, "can I help you?" "I'd like a pound of Verona please." He seems perplexed that I couldn't find one on display and offers, "isn't there any on the shelf?" I said "well, you see I'd like you to scoop a fresh bag for me please" and explained my request.

"Excuse me?" he said. So I repeat my story again, louder this time and felt the eyeballs of my fellow liner-uppers behind me roll in their sockets.

Oh boy, now I'm beginning to feel kinda foolish, and instead of a heartfelt apology for Starbuck's lack of quality control, the young man mutters something to a fellow barista and they both raise their eyebrows without making eye contact. He grudgingly turns and staring blankly through me, his body language speaking volumes as he goes about his unobserved task of weighing out my coffee beans.

My thoughts stray to a scene from a recent movie I'd watched where some guy sent his steak back to the kitchen to be cooked to his liking. Uh oh, not good.

Eventually he returns to the counter with my beans and asks the requisite, "will there be anything else?" By now my desire for a fresh, hot, cup of my favourite brew had quickly dissipated and I wanted nothing more than to retreat from the judgmental glances I had attracted from my once comrades in line.

Now I know that this sound pretty silly, but at \$15 a pound shouldn't I be entitled to get the top quality product that Starbucks is famous for without feeling embarrassed or shamed for asking? In the back of my mind I'm thinking, "was it actually worth feeling this way for something I'm going to grind up anyways?"

What really happened is that my expectation of a polite, attentive barista concerned with my Starbucks experience was instead impatient, almost rude and caused me embarrassment for expecting a quality product.

Using the simple 3 P's approach (people, process and product) it's easy to identify the breakdown in my Starbuck visit:

The primary element is people: I expected a polite, considerate barista and instead I got an impatient, resentful, overworked and underpaid teenager.

Second is process: I expected an uncomplicated, concerned response and I got an uncomfortable, embarrassing encounter.

Third is product: I'd grown to expect a superior caliber bean based on brand and instead I got a less than top-notch product for the same premium price.

Maybe Starbucks is an easy target, but if you really want to make your company exceptional or remarkable, being good or delivering satisfactory customer service is not going to cut it. (That's 1980's)

Great customer experiences will determine who wins and who loses and here's why:

- People find remarkable experiences so unusual we can't stop talking about them. We want to share with everyone.
- WOW experiences with your company will go a long way toward value justification, when you introduce a new product or service. Trust and anticipation of your next WOW! (Check out your local Apple Store)
- A stable base of fans breeds loyalty. (Look at Tim Horton's; the fortune that is their base comes from loyal customers who visit them multiple times every single day).
- Buying decisions are 99% emotional in nature so the more emotionally rewarding the experience the more they'll willingly pay more for it. (Study the buying habits of the "13th Generation", alias Gen X. They're the ones dropping a \$5 minimum at Starbucks every other day).

My point? 80% of customers who change suppliers say they were satisfied with their previous supplier. (Forum Research)

To quote Jeffery Gitomer, "do you want your wife to be satisfied or loyal?"

Do you want your customers to be satisfied or loyal?

Customer experience is beyond customer service. It requires no less than total focus on your company delivering on your promise through every sales and service contact every day.

An experience we just can't stop talking about; the key to faithful raving fans.