

WOW OR WOAHH FACTOR?

Andy examines quantity versus quality, and asks why your garage might make customers say “WOAH when you want them to say “WOW!”



Do you work in a quality business? Or a quantity business? Is it possible to have a garage business that has both? How do we define quality for that matter? You see everyone’s perception of quality is different, which makes it difficult to work towards a particular grade of quality.

If you examine the excellence and quality movements in detail as I have in the last 15 years or so, you will see that what they really offer is to turn back the clock, applying the standards of bygone days to today’s profit-based material age. The premise is that if you get back to product or service supremacy through quality you cannot fail. Sadly, it is an entirely false premise.

Customer satisfaction is no longer enough. Satisfied customers are not loyal customers. They shop around –



BY
Andy
Savva

they may like you, but not enough to resist the temptations of your competitors. Truly loyal customers can’t imagine doing business with anyone else. They become advocates for your garage.

Companies who have such customers have managed to create a customer experience that is consistent, intentional, differentiated, and valuable. To do this they use all aspects of the business, marketing, operations, and the most important factor the human element.

Superior service

You could have a quality product or service but if not matched with a superior WOW factor service experience you have no hope in succeeding. Let me give you an example, Curry’s sell quality products, yet the service in most cases and what I have experienced is really

lacking. These stores are huge, selling hundreds of lines yet hardly anyone works in them, and if you do find someone to assist you they have very little product knowledge.

Now, take off your business hat and ask yourself, as a consumer, how many genuine quality businesses do you know? If you can think of one, perhaps even two or three, where you are constantly and consistently super-impressed, not just with what they do but how they do it, you are doing well. You have seen the WOW factor at work. You may even have glimpsed a miracle. My guess is that you will be thinking of a business that puts its relationship-building substantially in front of making the next sale.

These are the kind of businesses that share one of my philosophies about customers: that it’s far better to concentrate on what you do for

customers than what you do to customers. Despite all the new technology, and the mind-blowing rise of call centres which in my view do very little in increasing the customer experience and other magic customer service-enhancing devices, companies still frequently fail their customers.

The reason is not so often that the computer system has gone down, although that happens frequently enough!) it is mostly because the culture, philosophy and ideals do not exist. When this happens, it's a people issue.

People power

For those involved in selling, and that's what we do in our garage businesses, this is a mammoth task. Selling has, it seems, been quantity-driven since time began; but, in the last 20 years, it has become quantity-obsessed. This obsession has, in my view, led to practices and standards in our garage sector that can barely be justified. There is no mitigation. We are all to blame. We have all seen the £99 service, MOT, three-course meal and the kitchen sink deal. Someone please explain to me how anyone can charge so little and offer a quality WOW Factor experience?

Given the choice – and they will be – no customer in their right mind would want to deal with a person driven by quantity objectives. Customers already know that, so often, quantity objectives work against quality objectives. Look at the classic high-commission businesses and the reputation they have: double-glazing or perhaps even office equipment. There are many more, including, sadly in our garage sector.

What next?

Find where you and your business are, and remember it well. If you do nothing to give your customers the WOW Factor, the future has some difficult and frightening times ahead, times of uncertainty and high risk.

Far be it for me to put the fear of God into you about the future, but that's exactly what I think might need to happen. I, and many others before me, have pointed to change being the cause of this fear. Not just change itself, but its rate and frequency and scope. In such circumstances you must look to make yourself and your business stronger, more resilient. I have two suggestions for this.



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The first lies in your business process, I witness so many garages lack of processes that do not consider the customer journey and the impact it has on them.

The second lies in the quality objectives you need to create that are understood and breathed by everyone in your business. For one aspect of the quantity/quality discussion we have not considered is this; quantity only builds immediate sales; quality builds friends. Friends, in the long term, build greater quantity, which

yields the miracles that create the WOW factor.

Lastly, just before I end this article, I'd like to point something out. It may seem obvious, but don't look for a switch. There isn't one. You can't turn a miracle on. There is nothing anyone can flick to change your environment from quantity driven to customer driven. It is truly a pendulum. The only thing you need to know about this pendulum is that its relentless: It was for me running my last garage business it was actually unstoppable.

There are major benefits from becoming a customer driven business aiming to provide the WOW factor each time:

Improved customer experience: increased customer satisfaction; increased customer loyalty; increased marketing effectiveness; increased brand stability; increased profitability. It may help you look at your possessions and set your quality objectives by answering the questions listed below?

- Do you feel as if you are constructing the future of your business; or merely tinkering with the present?
- Are you and your team more worried about what you can make happen this time next year – or even the year after; or about your present problems?
- Are you truly giving your competitors something to think about; or are you just another business following along with the crowd?
- Are you dedicated to redesigning your business to have a strategy that leaves your competitors on the starting blocks; or are you trying to fix the old problems, breakdowns and failures?
- Are you perceived by customers and competitors as ground breakers or followers?
- Among all the employees in your business does there exist commitment, energy, belief and excitement; or stress, anxiety, uncertainty and a sense of being out of control of their own destiny?
- Do you face most days with a smile and look forward to the years ahead running your garage; or is work quite often chore, and are you thinking of selling or doing something else?