

Willies way book review example

[Business](#), [Customers](#)



Introduction

In “Willie’s Way: 6 Secrets for Wooing, Wowing, and Winning Customers”, Philip Van Hooser discussed six secrets of persuading and drawing the interest and loyalty of customers. Van Hooser based these secrets on his interaction with Willie Watson, a taxi driver that drove him from the airport once. Van Hooser was impressed by Willie’s service and considered it as a standard that service professionals should follow. Since Van Hooser discussed six secrets or guidelines in persuading and satisfying customers, the following discussion will be divided into these six. Each ‘secret’ will be discussed thoroughly and will consequently be linked to theories in organizational communication.

Acknowledging Customers and the LMX Theory

The first secret, according to Van Hooser, is to acknowledge customers immediately. According to Van Hooser, Willie strongly believed that the business or service provider’s attitude towards the customer significantly affects the latter’s experience, and therefore, view or perspective about the business providing goods or services. For this reason, developing a good relationship with customers has become one of Willie’s priorities because he believed that this relationship sets the stage for positive experiences that would be satisfying to customers. Anyone can build a positive relationship with customers.

Various businesses, for instance, can develop good relationships with their customers over time. Nevertheless, one of the factors that would affect this is competition. In a competitive environment, businesses that will make a

good first impression and consequently provide positive experiences for customers will more likely attract customers. In other cases, businesses can miss the opportunity to make a good first impression and lose the chance to build relationships with customers. Van Hooser argues that Willie is aware of this, which is why he acknowledges customers immediately. Willie did not waste any time waiting for the customer to reach out and make the connection. Willie immediately acknowledged his customer without wasting any time by asking the customer if he can be of service and by introducing himself to Van Hooser.

The need to acknowledge customers is grounded on the idea that they are valuable to any business or organization. For this reason, businesses should immediately acknowledge customers not only to lose the opportunity to do so but also in acknowledgment of the customer's value to organizations. This idea relates to the theory of Leader-Member Exchange (LMX). Similarly, the LMX theory values relationships, specifically the relationship between the supervisor and the subordinates in the organization. Essentially, the LMX theory claims that outcomes of processes, operations, transactions, or collaborations in the organization relies on the quality of relationship between leaders and members of the organization.

Subordinates, for instance, would be more likely to be good and effective team players if supervisors develop a good and respectful relationship with them from the start, and this must be in acknowledgment of the value or importance of subordinates or employees as the lifeblood of any organization. Consequently, the quality relationship between supervisors and subordinates and good outcomes that result from this will eventually

manifest in the organization's success. In an organizational task, if supervisors and subordinates share a good working relationship, they would work well together. Without conflicts or issues between them, they can fulfill their tasks, which will benefit the organization as a whole.

In the book, Van Hooser argued that businesses can develop a good relationship with customers by reaching out in various ways, such as making eye contact, or introducing themselves to customers, and getting to know the customer in order to personalize services based on their needs, demands, and interests. The LMX theory similarly explains ways that supervisors can acknowledge subordinates, specifically during the role-taking process when managers can get to know their subordinates better through communication and assessment.

Redefining Routine Activities and the AST Theory

The need to redefine routine activities is based on the idea that positive routines reflect the type and quality of service can affect customer satisfaction. Van Hooser further explained the need for redefining routine activities by describing how Willie paid attention to details, even the little ones. Apparently, routine activities in providing services is one of the cornerstones of customer service and satisfaction. Willie followed routines but he redefined it by using routines in order to provide satisfying customer service. Simply put, Willie made customer service his routine. Van Hooser noted some of Willie's routine such as greeting customers or showing concern for the customer by asking questions.

The good thing about redefining routine activities and doing them with the goal of providing good service and satisfying the customers is that the latter

becomes part of the service provider's DNA, so to speak. Customer service becomes the outcome because the service provider has made it a practice and a desired result. Consequently, the business or organization will satisfy all customers - big time or small time customers - because of the quality of services they provide. Hence, redefining routine activities, specifically by reconstructing these activities as customer-oriented will result in customer satisfaction.

Redefining routine activities is related to adaptive structuration (AST), a theory under organizational communication that emphasizes members of the organization's use of rules or resources in production or fulfilling their roles and responsibilities. These rules or resources equate to routines, as formerly defined, and the way that members of the organization carry out these routines affect organizational outcomes. Putting the idea of redefining routine activities into practice involves an evaluation of these activities. First, businesses or organizations providing services should identify routine activities, specifically those that affect the quality of service to customers. Second, these activities must be evaluated not only from the perspective of the business or organization but most importantly, from the perspective of the customer. In this way, the assessment of routine activities will be evaluated based on the experiences of customers.

The involvement of customers in the evaluation process is useful in determining effective or satisfying and ineffective or unsatisfying activities. Changes must then be implemented if some routine activities do not work. Aside from evaluating their own routine activities, businesses or organizations must look into other disciplines or conduct research to identify

other effective routine activities they can adopt to improve customer service. Similarly, AST as a theory observes the same practices in applying the theory's conventions. AST views the organization as a system and the relationships, activities, and resources within the organization affect the system. Hence, it is important that people in the organization create a structure or system in using these resources and interacting towards the goal of accomplishing organizational objectives. For this reason, organizations assess communication, interactions, and resources so they can determine the best way to redefine them in a way that would bring about productivity in the workplace and lead to successful and desired outcomes.

Giving Customers Undivided Attention and the Expectancy Value, Interpretative, and Interaction Theories

Customers need attention because they are the ones in need of services. Van Hooser has established as much by linking good relationships between the service provider and the customer and the attention that the latter needs, which the former should provide. Usually, businesses or organizations would scramble to service as many customers they can even if it means not fully addressing the customers' needs. According to Van Hooser, however, the quality of service is more important than quantity, which is why giving customers their undivided attention is important because this spells quality services. Van Hooser then noted how Willie gave him his undivided attention. Willie could have just simply drove Van Hooser to his destination but he understood the importance of giving customers undivided attention. He did so by directly communicating with Van Hooser and making the latter feel that he is valuable and that his opinion or situation matters.

Giving customers undivided attention relates to two theories under organizational communication - the expectancy value theory and the interpretative and interaction theories. The expectancy value theory is grounded on the gratifications theory, which highlights the importance of gratifying expectations of individuals in developing positive perceptions or evaluations on the part of an individual. Within this context, giving customers undivided attention is one of the customers' expectations. Hence, in doing so, customers develop positive experiences and views of the service provider.

In the organizational setting, addressing the expectations of subordinates through sound and effective managerial practices, specifically by paying attention to their needs and giving them undivided attention, contributes to employee satisfaction, and therefore, employee productivity. Giving customers undivided attention also relate to the interpretative and interaction theories, specifically the theory's description of the nature of relationships and of communication as symmetrical and complementary. Based on the interpretative and interaction theory, communication is complementary, which means that the way that an individual communicates with the other affects the way that latter communicates in return. Therefore, if the service provider gives the customer undivided attention then the latter will do the same, which is characteristic of customer loyalty. In the organizational setting, if the manager gives employees their undivided attention, then it would also reflect on the latter's way of meeting expectations - giving his work and the organization's expectations his undivided attention.

According to Van Hooser, giving customers undivided attention means getting to know them well. By getting to know customers well, businesses or organizations would know what these customers need or want. Consequently, businesses and organizations can give customers their needs. Equally important is that businesses or organizations give customers undivided attention early on. This will show customers that the business is intent or committed to do so and not just because they are done with other customers. Another important strategy is to ask customers how they are or what they need, and to listen to what customers have to say. Within the organizational setting, managers can do so by listening to employees' feedback, ideas, and recommendations.

Listening, Thinking, and Using Common Sense and the Attribution Theory

Van Hooser explained that the core of mastering the business of providing good service is listening, thinking, and using common sense. It is the goal of many businesses and organizations to improve their services and achieve excellence in their field. To do so, service providers should learn not to only 'do' or 'act' but also to listen, think, and use common sense. Van Hooser then described how Willie listened to him. Willie was also in the present, which meant that while he was driving Van Hooser to his destination, he not only listened but also thought about what Van Hooser said. Thinking allowed Willie to respond in an appropriate manner.

Moreover, while thinking about Van Hooser's stories or comments, Willie was also thinking of ways to personalize and improve his services based on his customer's views, perspectives, and situation. Willie also used common

sense by anticipating what Van Hooser would need based on what he learned about his customer. Because Willie was concerned about service, he even asked Van Hooser how he would return to the airport, which reflected his interest in his customer's needs. According to Van Hooser, using common sense means paying attention to one's instinct. Customers are human beings with needs and by tapping into this, service providers can use their human instincts to know or understand what their customers expect and demand from businesses and organizations.

Listening, thinking, and using common sense relate to the attribution theory under organizational communication. The attribution theory relates the way that individuals think attribute to their needs, desires, and expectations. Hence, people tend to make decisions and act based on how they think. By listening, thinking, and using common sense, service providers should know how customers think, and consequently acclimate their practices and services based on these needs. Listening to customers will also allow service providers to know what they need. In the organizational setting, the attribution theory concerns the understanding of its members. Managers listen to what employees have to say and think or use their common sense to understand how or why employees behave the way they do. In doing so, they can match strategies and practices to unique behaviors of their employees so they can motivate them and drive them to perform better.

Bending the Rules, the Enactment theory, and the Attraction-Selection-Attrition Framework

Van Hooser argued that sometimes, it is best to bend the rules. It may be true that businesses set policies that service providers should follow in order

to provide assistance to customers equally. Policies are set not only to establish the kind, quality and standard of service but also to make sure that the customers fairly receive the same kind of goods and services. In some cases, however, Van Hooser argued that strict compliance to these policies prevent businesses or organizations from providing quality services to customers. When Van Hooser climbed into Willie's cab, the latter made him feel that he was willing to bend the rules just so he can provide a good service for his customer. This made Van Hooser feel important as a customer, and consequently, made the experience unforgettable for him.

In the organizational setting, managers must also be willing to bend the rules to accommodate the urgent needs of employees. To do so, the management should identify rules or policies that can be adjusted to ensure that employees work in a favorable environment. We can apply the enactment theory under organizational communication to the idea of bending the rules. Enactment theory is concerned with the development of rules in the organization based on the behavior and needs of its members. Hence, adjusting the rules when needed is a process of enactment for the purpose of addressing the needs of members of the organization, and in the process modifying the structure of the organization to fulfill needs and demands. The attraction-selection-attrition framework also relates to bending the rules. The theory of attraction-selection-attrition argues that people in the organization 'make the place'. Hence, the structure of the organization, including the rules and guidelines are based on the needs, demands, and ways of thinking of its members. In the same way, bending the rules will depend on the needs

and demands of members of the organization and when the situation calls for it.

Making the Last Few Seconds Count, Elaboration Likelihood Model, and Planned Behavior Theory

According to Van Hooser, what happens last is usually as important as first impression. Sometimes, events that happen last can be considered as game-changers because it affects the next transaction or dealing between the service provider and the customer. After driving Van Hooser to his destination, Willie asked him how he can be of service later on. By communicating with Van Hooser, Willie has expressed his availability and willingness to continue servicing Van Hooser as a customer. Van Hooser argued that in doing so - making the last few seconds count - Willie gave him a choice or an opportunity to be serviced again and to receive the same type of quality service that Willie gave him while he was driving Van Hooser. Van Hooser felt appreciated as a customer and that Willie will try to give him what he needs the next time around.

In the organizational setting, the idea of making the last few seconds count relates to the elaboration likelihood model and the planned behavior theory. The elaboration likelihood model prioritizes persuasion as a means to motivate individuals. Moreover, the model emphasizes the importance of attitude in influencing the decision and actions of others. The way that individuals phrase things and the exhibited attitude during the interaction would affect succeeding interaction. Hence, in the organization, if the manager communicates with subordinates properly until the end of the conversation, then he could be effective in persuading the latter to fulfill

roles and responsibilities. The likelihood of the latter happening depends on how the manager communicated or interacted, which is why making the last few seconds count is important. The way that an interact ends between the manager and the employee also reflects planned behavior, specifically the intentions of the manager, which similarly affects or influences the behavior of the employee.

Conclusion

The foregoing discussion shows the six secrets that Van Hooser described as effective strategies in wooing and satisfying customers. In the book, Van Hooser not only described them but also discussed how they apply in real life through time-tested strategies and examples from his experiences with Willie. These secrets, however, are not exclusive to the relationship between the service provider and the consumer but also the manager and the employees in the organization. Each secret or guideline relates to different theories in organizational communication, which means that they also apply in developing good supervisor-subordinate relationship in the organization that contributes to motivation, productivity, and efficiency.

References

Van Hooser, P. (2005). *Willie's Way: 6 secrets for wooing, wowing, and winning customers and their loyalty*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.