

BOOK REVIEW

HUG YOUR HATERS : How to Embrace Complaints and Keep Your Customers - Jay Baer

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1. About the Author

Jay Baer is an entrepreneur and is the author of six best-selling business books. He is the founder of Convince & Convert Consulting, a digital marketing and customer experience advisory firm that has worked with the world's most iconic multi-million dollar brands such as 3M, Oracle, Cisco, Nike, Hilton, Caterpillar etc., and has helped them gain and keep more customers. He has helped these brands improve their digital marketing, content marketing, social media marketing, email marketing, and word-of-mouth marketing operations. He also provides advice and counsel on online customer service and B2B influencer marketing.

He works as partners with firms to co-create winning content marketing and generate leads for their software solutions. He travels often to give presentations to various business groups around the world.

2. Essence of the book

Customers who complain are your haters because they do not like your product or service. They are really not your problem but ignoring their complaints surely is your problem. Companies are either helping themselves by acting or hurting themselves by ignoring the complaints; there is no third option in business. Proactive measures to deal with irate customers will give companies a chance to recover and retain customers, create an opportunity for customers to be advocates of the brand, gain valuable insights and

intelligence about products, service processes and inputs for policy decisions which act as powerful differentiators for positioning the brand.

3. Introduction

The Present Digital Era has changed the way companies do business. The intense competition in any kind of business requires companies to sustain their customer base. Customer service has become a very important factor which differentiates a company from the rest and in maintaining this customer base. The introductory chapter in the book starts with the most important message – answer all your customer complaints, whatever be its nature. Customers who complain are telling you their problems and are probably willing to give you a chance to put things right, and will possibly continue their patronage provided the problem is addressed to their satisfaction. Use of Internet, smart phones and social media has fundamentally altered consumer behavior. When consumers dislike your product or service they are your critics or your haters. They often vocalize their displeasure rather generously faster and more publicly in all the available electronic media. In Hug Your Haters, the First Chapter talks about why you should embrace these haters, and how you can handle these complaints. All dimensions of dealing with critical customers are discussed in the first seven chapters in the book. The eighth chapter talks about the evolving nature and future of customer service and why companies need to be in line with the changing trends in customer service.

4. Classifying the Haters

Baer divides haters into two categories in the Second Chapter – onstage and offstage. The onstage haters are those who like to take to social media and public forums to make complaints, while the offstage haters choose more conventional means such as telephone or email. Onstage haters are those who are more focused on instant gratification, while offstage ones are more measured and patient. Onstage ones seek an audience for their issue, while the offstage ones simply want their problems to be resolved. The author reiterates, in this chapter, the importance of identifying the category of your haters. The Third Chapter is an analysis of who complained, where and why. This section includes remarkable consumer research on response expectations, satisfaction with response time and the impact of customer endorsement on the support provided by the firm in solving the problem. Chapter Four deals with transparency in customer service support while Chapter Five discusses the obstacles to overcome in providing a great service.

5. Dealing with Haters

Baer discusses elaborately in Chapters Six and Seven strategies for dealing with both onstage and offstage complaints. For offstage complaints, he advocates the need to use the same channel the customer contacted you on, resolve the issue as speedily as possible with minimum number of responses without losing the human touch. For onstage haters, Baer suggests using the appropriate software that focuses on finding the right keywords related to business that brings up all mentions on social media comments and criticisms. He cautions to display empathy and swiftness in the response and emphasizes on the importance of answering publicly. Baer voices his common concern about those haters who are there for attracting attention, rather than for getting their issues resolved. For this, Baer advises a simple strategy: reply only twice to the same customer about the same issue in a public channel. Any more, he warns, and the conversation often shifts out of focus and degenerates into non-issues. The last chapter in the book, Chapter

Eight, deals with the future of customer service. Baer says this would involve providing the customers with self-service options and designing an FAQ page based on past experience with customers, as a way to reduce complaints. He reiterates that technology would continue to play an important role and companies may be required to develop Mobile Messaging Apps as well as customer based service platforms such as forums which are likely play an enormous role in serving customers better. He recommends companies to closely watch the trends in customer service and customer relationship management and be swift in adopting to these changes in order to gain first mover advantage and be market leaders in their line of business. The book is loaded with many examples of well-known and lesser known companies making determined efforts to embrace these concepts and often meeting with success in building a loyal customer base which is the main aim of successful customer service providers.

6. Conclusion

The well-known marketing concept which states that it costs more to acquire new customers than to keep existing ones seems like common sense but many companies fail in this at the implementation stage. To win as a company and be a market leader in the industry, a company needs to be a winner in customer service. Nothing emphasizes this better than the way the author engages the reader in driving home this point. In addition, the live examples quoted by the author gives great consumer insights to the reader and makes this book a worthwhile read.