

Do the right thing in an extraordinary way



When last were you airlifted away from a car breakdown site, with no injuries? Well, I for one, never! This is a story about customer experience that grabbed my attention. Even for me as a customer experience professional, my initial reaction was one of disbelief! This cannot be true.. Well, you be the judge of it.

How far will to go protect and preserve your brand reputation?

Last year, during the December holidays, Land Rover launched the 4th roadside assist programme to support breakdowns of their vehicles. But, the support is not what one would expect! It includes stationing helicopters at strategic points, to respond efficiently to any incident. Overhearing a story of a family on route home from their holiday in KZN and how they were “rescued”, it needed to be shared!

So, with a breakdown just past Pietermaritzburg, and contacting the road assist, our unsuspecting travellers found themselves at a rather interesting start of an experience, one they will certainly

never forget. They were duly told that the vehicle was out of the motor plan, but to wait while they see what can be done. Unbeknown to them, the family (6) were soon to be supported in an extraordinary way. A flatbed arrived, transporting the Land Rover to the closest town (including all the family members, and the trailer). There, the family were provided with refreshments and soon airlifted in 2 helicopters (one based in Nelspruit, and the other at a closer Shell Ultra City) to Wonderboom Airbase in Pretoria. Upon boarding, each one received their own “cool bag” with refreshments. They were transported to their home from the airbase. The very next day, his Land Rover and trailer were delivered to his home! Now that sounds really like a scene in a Hollywood movie, doesn't it? Well, this was all true!

The following four key lessons from this customer experience are worth highlighting

Lesson 1 – Focus on customers' entire experience when there is a product failure

The Land Rover brand suffers from a past reputation of frequent breakdowns and being unreliable. Their response... create a campaign, “Customer First” that focuses on addressing product failures by putting the customer first - not the repair, but all that goes on around the customer, when a breakdown happens. “The campaign is aimed to get travellers safely to their homes or holiday destinations as soon as possible, without needing to worry about their vehicles. We take care of all the logistics: from getting eligible customers into a loan vehicle to reuniting them with their repaired vehicles.” Dawie Olivier, National Aftersales Manager, Jaguar Land Rover South Africa (<http://motor-monthly.co.za/feature/jaguar-land-rover-goes-extra-mile/>). The approach to include the experience design when addressing product failures, proved to be the key to the success of this story.

Lesson 2 – Do the right thing

In reality, most companies would have followed the policies that prevent them from extending the benefit to the “out-of-plan” customer. Instead, not only did they override the exclusion clause, they offered two helicopters to transport the entire family (not enough space for the whole family in one heli)! The benefit was unlocked in such a spectacular way, in full view of all motorists on the N3, during the busiest time of the year, creating a talking point! Apart from that, securing the loyalty of the owner, and probably all other owners hearing the story, for life!

Lesson 3 - Empower staff to make decisions

In reality, most agents dealing with these type queries at call centres, will not be empowered to make the decision to go over-and-beyond the service delivery framework. In this case, the agent had sufficient resources and support to reach out to for final decisions that extend beyond the policies and procedures (and during a holiday period).

The agent was furthermore either trained or recruited for his or her emotional intelligence and ability to listen actively...to “hear” the customer’s need and not focus or be limited by the system limitations.

It required the agent to...

1. **ASSESS THE PROBLEM:** hear the customer’s request for assistance AND understand underlying NEEDS
2. **EMPATHISE:** put context into the customers’ predicament
3. **INDIVIDUALISED SOLUTIONS:** consult with decision-makers and present a solution based on the customer’s case merit
4. **EXPERIENCE-ENHANCING RESPONSE:** provide agent the opportunity to respond with exceptional and unexpected service recovery

It is very clear that the agents knew the framework and objectives of the campaign. They understood the motivation and intention of the campaign. They were able to review and translate the circumstances of the specific case into the brand and campaign’s essential purpose, identify the most appropriate response and adapt their response. The agents did not use a “scripted” response, but were able to think, evaluate, be creative in their service delivery

Lesson 4 – Turn a moment of misery into a moment of amazement

Thinking about the story, the surprise elements were just so epic. If the agent proceeded to follow the policies or protocol, the customer would have either not been supported or more likely, they would have had to pay for the service recovery (and made their own way back home). Not only was the “out-of-plan” clause waived, but the transportation was arranged with helicopters, not one, but two, to accommodate the entire family. The trailer was also transported to the customer’s home. To sweeten the experience, they were treated with refreshments at their 1st stop, as well as individual snack packs for the flight! Understanding that customers have been stranded at the roadside, probably tired and frustrated, shows a true understanding of customer empathy! The family was also transported home from the airbase! Finally, as a crescendo to the opus, their repaired Land Rover and trailer, were delivered on their doorstep, the very next day!

These customers NEVER expected any of these initiatives, and therefore the surprise elements truly created an amazing experience! They were totally unaware of the campaign, so the entire experience is a great example of doing the right thing in an extra-ordinary way. A moment of misery turned into a moment of amazement!

For me as a CX professional, these stories really resonate with the essence of what we preach... empower employees to understand the customer experience essence and provide the tools to deliver service recovery in a way that turns customers into brand advocates!

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measuring emotion. Our highly skilled psychologists interview customers about their experience and provide our clients with deep insights into consumers' experience and behaviour. We are also passionate about equipping companies with the most suitable CX tools and skills.

