

## **Mulberry Consulting Practitioners calls – 29 September 2009 Featuring Jane Read from O2 Telefonica**

On 29 September 2009 Mulberry Consulting held two practitioner calls. The calls were attended by a great many practitioners from around the world from the financial services, publishing, telecommunications, and IT services sectors.

Both calls started began by Jane Read describing the key things that had contributed most to improving the customer experience in O2. Jane described those as having an inspirational CEO to drive the core values, a strong brand that allows employees to rally behind it, and drives the business culture, and having customer experience embedded in employee objectives. “That’s not O2” is a common refrain within the organisation if an idea is mooted that doesn’t fit with the company culture, demonstrating buy-in from colleagues to a set of values; common goal, common brand, common belief and passion.

Jane was asked for her advice on how to take customer experience activity forward within an organisation. Her thoughts were to do the customer research (ideally yourself), understand the customer journey and where there were key “moments of truth” and key “moments of pain”; to listen to both customers and colleagues within the organisation and to understand that it is very often the little things that count..

Then, during both calls, practitioners had a discussion session with David Hicks, CEO of Mulberry Consulting, and Jane – the main themes were as follows:

- ***How to empower and ensure buy-in from colleagues***

Key to achieving buy in was that the customer experience activity was driven from the top. Successful CEOs articulated a very clear vision of how the customer was at the heart of everything they did through championing key initiatives, demonstrating the desired behaviours and clear, often personal, communication.

An employee proposition and plan was agreed to be at least as important as the customer proposition as it was employees and colleagues who would be relied on to deliver to the customer. Organisations had a number of strategies for achieving this depending on their particular circumstances but examples given included provision of benefits such as healthcare, making it attractive to buy and use the company products to ensure employees understood the experiences of the customer and creating a culture of openness within the organisation.

In addition inclusion of the most appropriate customer service measure in the calculation of bonuses was agreed to be important in driving the desired behaviours. Jane described how O2 had included customer experience expectations for everyone whether or not they had direct customer contact (e.g. including IT and Finance colleagues). Everyone in the organisation had shared in a reward of the same amount regardless of role or seniority when O2 had achieved a key target.

In addition, how measures were used and the results communicated were agreed to play a major role. This varied from organisation to organisation but one key strand was in bringing the Voice of the Customer directly to the attention of colleagues at all levels whether that was through making call recordings available, distributing postcards with customer comments on them or communicating the verbatim comments from NPS surveys.

- *How to maintain focus on the customer agenda*

In the light of the current economic climate there is a need to work hard to maintain focus on the customer agenda within organisations. There are pressures on businesses from the expectations and beliefs of both customers and employees that have changed over the previous few months as well as cost and revenue pressures. Customers are demanding ever greater value for money and want to be treated more and more as individuals.

A strong brand promise was seen as being key to maintaining behaviours within an organisation. One key role of the customer practitioner was to translate the customer agenda into approaches that would articulate how this helped contribute to achieving other business priorities; for example demonstrating that costs could be reduced by getting things right or that sales could be increased through increased customer advocacy.

A final point was that there were now opportunities for the customer agenda to get a new lease of life as companies are begin to prepare for economies to grow again. Some examples were introducing new products or testing new customer experiences.

- *Customer Experience and Outsourcing*

The key lesson in managing the customer experience when parts of that experience were outsourced was agreed to be taking time to ensure that the most appropriate performance measures were in place and that these were monitored to ensure that they were not driving inappropriate behaviours. One example was of a customer experience measure which led to customers not being given vital information as it would have compromised performance against that measure but which led, in the longer term, to unsatisfied customers.

Jane summed up the call by expressing her view that bringing together people with a shared passion from different organisations around the world was invaluable in sharing thoughts and ideas and encouraged participants to “keep the faith” that improving the customer experience will improve the bottom line as well as to keep talking and listening to their customers.

### **Practitioner calls from Mulberry Consulting**

Mulberry Consulting holds monthly calls exclusively for practitioners interested in customer experience issues. The calls are usually focused on a topical issue and participants are also able to suggest areas that they would like to discuss. The calls are a great way to learn about best practice, to identify and address common challenges – and to make new contacts. And on each call Mulberry Consulting is on hand to offer its unique perspectives and expertise.

Participation in the calls is by invitation only. To register an interest in joining future calls please [contact us](#).

Mulberry Consulting  
September 2009