
10 WAYS
TO AVOID A
CUSTOMER
EXPERIENCE

HORROR
S T O R Y

Do you always deliver a great customer experience?
Looking for new insights into effective practices?
How can you solve customer experience challenges?

Improving customer experience is a top priority for today's executive because of the impact it can have on the bottom line. With the variety of communication methods now available, managing the customer experience is more complex than ever before. For today's contact centers, it's vital to study customer service best practices from a variety of verticals to learn and adapt your strategy for success — which is why we're looking to help out.

Read on for some harrowing tales of terror from prominent customer service experts, and find out how they were resolved — or how they could have been avoided in the first place.

"Make sure employees feel pride in their work."



Mike Wittenstein
Managing Principal
Storyminers

Connect:

Twitter: [@MikeWittenstein](https://twitter.com/MikeWittenstein)

LinkedIn: [linkedin.com/in/mikewittenstein](https://www.linkedin.com/in/mikewittenstein)

Check out Mike's blog on
[Where CX Meets Tech.](#)

Share This

About once a week, after a muscle-burning workout, I'll get a protein shake from my local smoothie store. The brand I visit has been great and I love them. Today was a different story, however.

There were three high-school guys tending the store. When I walked in, not one of them looked at me. Two full minutes went by (I watched my phone's clock) without a look, without a smile, without any kind of acknowledgment. The guys made three smoothies for the drive thru. They talked amongst each other and one even told a joke to his co-workers. Finally, the guy by the cash register asked me, "What did you order?" I told him, "I haven't ordered yet. And, by the way," I added, "did you notice I've been here for two minutes and you didn't notice?" "No," he responded. "What do you want?" That was it. No look of surprise. No apology. Nothing to let me know that this kind of behavior wasn't normal.

"Make sure employees feel pride in their work."



Mike Wittenstein
Managing Principal
Storyminers

Connect:

Twitter: [@MikeWittenstein](https://twitter.com/MikeWittenstein)

LinkedIn: [linkedin.com/in/mikewittenstein](https://www.linkedin.com/in/mikewittenstein)

Check out Mike's blog on
[Where CX Meets Tech.](#)

Share This

This store and the brand have been great — and they still are. Obviously this team hasn't been trained. I get that. For me, it's not a big deal. But what about all the other first-time customers or customers giving this store and brand a second or third try? Disaster! The legacy of 10-15 mystery shopping awards hung on the wall of this store can evaporate in several hours or days if the customer experience isn't maintained.

Building enthusiasm for, and adoption of, your business's best practices needs to be continuously communicated. If your employees don't feel pride in their own work and in themselves, your customers won't feel anything at all for the brand you've worked so hard to create!

"Think about ways to really hear your customers."

Your customer's experience is difficult to understand. As much as we want to, when we are inside an organization with deadlines, demands and departmental disputes, we can't see from the outside in. This leads to frustrating experiences for your customers, who have to deal with fractured experiences!

In one such case, customers were calling into the company's call center several times a day with similar complaints. They couldn't find the right way to access personal accounts online. The call center reps were great at walking them through the somewhat outdated and cumbersome process to get to the right place. This happened several times a day, and the call center reps were well-prepared for it. But the customers were calling at a point when they were already very, very frustrated. But that's where the experience got stalled.



Jeannie Walters
CEO
360Connex

Connect:
Twitter: [@jeanniecw](https://twitter.com/jeanniecw)
LinkedIn: [linkedin.com/in/jeanniewalters](https://www.linkedin.com/in/jeanniewalters)

Read why Jeannie thinks [employees are the answer](#) to the customer experience question.

Share This

"Think about ways to really hear your customers."

The reps used a system to record what kind of issue a customer had, and there simply wasn't the right category for this particular situation. Each rep came up with their own way to classify these calls, using codes like "wrong login information" or "online tutorial." Since the information wasn't passed on to the digital team, they never redesigned this part of the process, leading to frustrated customers and many unnecessary calls.

Finally, in an effort to get to know customers better, a new executive decided to sit in on a few hours worth of customer calls. She heard this same scenario over and over and realized quickly it was an issue that could be proactively addressed. By learning what the root cause was, she directed the digital team to design a better process and test it quickly. Within just a few weeks, the issue was resolved and customers were accessing their accounts without a problem. This also led to fewer calls and happier customers. It was a win-win-win!

Processes and categories only go so far when dealing with human beings. Humans are irrational, emotional and constantly changing! It's critical to think about ways to really hear your customers, and not just in ways that help you categorize them.



Jeannie Walters
CEO
360Connex

Connect:
Twitter: [@jeanniecw](https://twitter.com/jeanniecw)
LinkedIn: [linkedin.com/in/jeanniewalters](https://www.linkedin.com/in/jeanniewalters)

Read why Jeannie thinks [employees are the answer](#) to the customer experience question.

Share This

"It's often the smallest things that make the biggest difference."



Adrian Swinscoe
Growth Strategy and Business
Development
RARE Business

Connect:

Twitter: [@AdrianSwinscoe](https://twitter.com/AdrianSwinscoe)

LinkedIn: [linkedin.com/in/
adrianswinscoe](https://www.linkedin.com/in/adrianswinscoe)

See the [big list of little things](#)
that can destroy your
customer experience on
Adrian's LinkedIn page.

Share This

Late one Thursday evening, I received a call from my bank about some suspicious activity on my current checking account. On reviewing a number of transactions, I told the bank's representative that I wasn't responsible for any of them. She told me that my bank account details had obviously been compromised and that she was going to cancel the cards associated with that account. She then said that she would order some new ones, arrange to block any pending transactions on my account and refund me for any transactions that had gone through. She then went on to explain that new cards would take up to four working days to arrive.

Removing the threat of fraud from my account was my main concern. But, it was Thursday evening and new cards may not arrive until Wednesday of the following week. That was going to be really inconvenient. It made me realize how we can sometimes take access to banking facilities for granted, and when that gets interrupted, how disruptive it can be.

"It's often the smallest things that make the biggest difference."



Adrian Swinscoe
Growth Strategy and Business
Development
RARE Business

Connect:

Twitter: [@AdrianSwinscoe](https://twitter.com/AdrianSwinscoe)

LinkedIn: [linkedin.com/in/
adrianswinscoe](https://www.linkedin.com/in/adrianswinscoe)

See the [big list of little things](#)
that can destroy your
customer experience on
Adrian's LinkedIn page.

Share This

On Saturday, to my surprise and delight, new cards arrived in the post and were ready to use. I only had to operate without my bank card for one day. I was both surprised and grateful to the bank for getting them to me so soon, especially since I had expected it to take up to four working days.

Did the bank's representative under-promise and over-deliver? Or, did they just manage my expectations? I don't know. But, it did make me appreciate that it is often the smallest things that can have the biggest impact on a customer's experience.

"Customer effort is becoming ever more conscious."



Ian Golding
Customer Experience
Specialist
Customer Experience
Consultancy

Connect:
Twitter: [@ijgolding](https://twitter.com/ijgolding)
LinkedIn: [linkedin.com/in/](https://www.linkedin.com/in/iangolding)
[iangolding](https://www.linkedin.com/in/iangolding)

Read about the
[Global CX Wakeup Call](#)
on Ian's blog.

Share This

Friends and colleagues often share their customer experience stories with me — the good, the bad and the downright ugly. Here is one of the ugly ones! On entering her local supermarket, a mum of three kids was rather taken by a child's garden playhouse on display in the entrance. She was taken by it due to the large sign saying that it was an ex-display model with a huge price reduction! She went straight to the customer service desk to buy it.

"You need to take it away with you now," was the response from the member of staff she spoke to. As the mum had come to the supermarket in her family car with the intention of doing her weekly food shop, she was not in a position to do so — this playhouse was big! The mum was told that unless she took it away there and then, she could not buy the house! She was shocked. The employee refused to accept her money! She was left with no option but to phone her husband. He had to leave work, go home to get some tools and come straight to the supermarket. You just read that correctly — the husband had to get some tools so he could dismantle the house to get it in his car! The supermarket staff just stood and watched. They did nothing to help — they did not even help him carry the pieces of the house to his car.

"Customer effort is becoming ever more conscious."



Ian Golding
Customer Experience
Specialist
Customer Experience
Consultancy

Connect:

Twitter: [@ijgolding](#)
LinkedIn: [linkedin.com/in/iangolding](#)

Read about the
[Global CX Wakeup Call](#)
on Ian's blog.

Share This

In a world where the concept of "customer effort" is becoming ever more conscious, this is one of the best examples I have come across of a business generating it unnecessarily. The staff of this large corporate organization could have dealt with the situation in any number of different ways. They could have put a sign on the house saying "sold" and allowed the mum to come back at a convenient time to collect it. They could have dismantled the house for them. They could have empathized with the mum and avoided causing her distress and annoyance and disrupting her husband's working day. Instead, as a result of something so SIMPLE, they now have a very unhappy and disgruntled customer who is no longer an advocate of their organization.

"You always have control to deliver amazing customer experiences."

My tale of terror comes from the transportation company that takes me to and from the airport. I always call the night before my flight to arrange for an early morning ride to the airport. One evening I called and reserved a car for 4:15 a.m. to get me to the airport by 4:30 a.m. for my 5:30 a.m. flight.

I was standing in front of our building, waiting for the driver at 4:15 a.m. My first indication that something was wrong was that the drivers were usually there at least five or 10 minutes early. I called the company and the dispatcher told me my driver was two to three minutes away. Almost 10 minutes later, the driver showed up.

I said, "You are late." She replied, "Only 10 minutes late. It's not like you're going to miss your flight." How did she know what time my flight was? Frustrated, I got into the car.



Shep Hyken
Shepard Presentations

Connect:
Twitter: [@Hyken](#)
LinkedIn: [linkedin.com/in/shephyken](https://www.linkedin.com/in/shephyken)

Discover [customer-friendly decisions](#) on Shep's company blog.

Share This

"You always have control to deliver amazing customer experiences."

She never apologized. She only complained about how bad her day had started. Even though I never responded to her, she continued to complain and tell me how this job of driving was temporary — and she hated the company. She was becoming emotionally upset, and eventually she picked up the radio to announce to the dispatcher that as soon as she dropped me off she was bringing the car back and quitting.

All I could think about was how bad this experience was, but maybe we could learn something from it:

1. Show up on time. Anything short of being on time or a little early is a sign of disrespect.
2. It doesn't matter how bad your day is, your customer doesn't need to hear about it.
3. You may not like the company you work for, but you should still respect the company you work for. They are paying you, so put your best foot forward.
4. Regardless of how good or bad your day is, you always have control to deliver an amazing customer experience. It's always up to you!



Shep Hyken
Shepard Presentations

Connect:
Twitter: [@Hyken](#)
LinkedIn: [linkedin.com/in/shephyken](#)

Discover [customer-friendly decisions](#) on Shep's company blog.

Share This

"Convey the right information from the beginning."



Roy Atkinson
Principal
Clifton Butterfield, LLC

Connect:
Twitter: [@RoyAtkinson](https://twitter.com/RoyAtkinson)
LinkedIn: [linkedin.com/in/royatkinson](https://www.linkedin.com/in/royatkinson)

Check out some of
[Roy's recent posts](#) on his
personal blog.

Share This

A friend of mine needed to order a new box of checks. Normally, it takes him one minute: He goes to the check company website, enters the routing number, account number, next check number, and click. Done.

One day recently, the check company website gave him the message, "We can not help you. Contact your financial institution." He then called the check company and they said the same thing, with no further information.

He called his bank to find out what was going on, but all he could get was automated information about his account balance. Finally, desperate to talk to a human (pressing zero didn't work), he claimed to have lost his credit card. That got him through, but the person told him he had the wrong department. At least they were able to connect him to the right one. Finally, after a half hour on the phone, he got to the right person.

"Convey the right information from the beginning."



Roy Atkinson
Principal
Clifton Butterfield, LLC

Connect:
Twitter: [@RoyAtkinson](https://twitter.com/RoyAtkinson)
LinkedIn: [linkedin.com/in/royatkinson](https://www.linkedin.com/in/royatkinson)

Check out some of
[Roy's recent posts](#) on his
personal blog.

Share This

Was it as simple as giving an account number and next check number?
Absolutely not. The rep asked for:

- Full name
- Social Security number
- Wife's name
- Her Social Security number
- Mailing address
- List of direct deposits received, and the amount (His wife's as well)
- The expiration date of his ATM card
- Driver's license number

In the end, he learned that the bank had changed check companies, and they finally gave him the website. Why did they not just convey that information at the beginning? Someone at the bank thought that this was an appropriate customer experience.

"Mistakes happen. It's what happens next that matters."



Dave Evans
VP Social Strategy
Lithium

Connect:

Twitter: [@evansdave](https://twitter.com/evansdave)

LinkedIn: [linkedin.com/in/evansdave](https://www.linkedin.com/in/evansdave)

Learn how to [align social and business policies](#) on Dave's latest blog.

Share This

Finishing up a week-long conference in Las Vegas, all I wanted was to get home to Austin. Unfortunately, Mother Nature had other plans: an impending snow storm resulted in the cancellation of all flights into Austin after 9:00 p.m. the evening of my departure. Making matters worse, not only was my flight canceled, but flights for the entire weekend were canceled given the expected severity of the storm. No doubt you've been in this situation. No one wants to spend a weekend in an airport.

Proactively, my airline sent me a tweet and asked if I could make an earlier flight, in which case they could get me on the last flight home without a delay. I tweeted back that I could and headed for the airport. By the time I reached the airport in Las Vegas, I'd already been re-booked LAS-IAH; by the time I'd arrived in Houston I'd been re-booked on the connecting leg to AUS. I arrived in Austin just as the storm was hitting. My SUV did the rest and I was in front of a fireplace shortly thereafter. Let it snow.

"Mistakes happen. It's what happens next that matters."



Dave Evans
VP Social Strategy
Lithium

Connect:

Twitter: [@evansdave](https://twitter.com/evansdave)

LinkedIn: [linkedin.com/in/evansdave](https://www.linkedin.com/in/evansdave)

Learn how to align social and business policies on Dave's latest blog.

Share This

As a direct result, my airline received 100 percent of my business. Even when more expensive, I pay out of my pocket (company travel guidelines still apply). I flew well in excess of 100,000 miles last year, hitting five continents in the process. We all understand that things happen — it's what the company that you've trusted with your purchase decision does next that makes the difference. And my airline made that difference for me.

"Learn to adopt a customer-centric outlook."

I remember grabbing lunch at a downtown diner when I was back in college. The restaurant was a regular for students and local residents, and most of the staff were older locals. The wait staff was often less than friendly, but on this day, my waitress took it to a new level. Instead of greeting me or asking for my order, the waitress simply glared at me until I said what I wanted and then walked off without a word. When I asked for silverware, she sighed, gave me a dirty look, and then threw it on the table as she walked past. Finally, she brought me my order, slamming the plates in front of me and storming off. It transcended bad service; it was intentional disrespect.



Adam Toporek
Customer Experience
Strategist
CTA Service Solutions

Connect:
Twitter: [@adamtoporek](https://twitter.com/adamtoporek)
LinkedIn: [linkedin.com/in/adamtoporek](https://www.linkedin.com/in/adamtoporek)

Read how to [turn a customer service culture](#) in Adam's latest blog.

Share This

"Learn to adopt a customer-centric outlook."

I don't know what set her off that day, whether it was a personal issue or rude customers. I just know that it was not me. And even though it happened many years ago, I still talk about her when I train front line teams.

The first step in delivering Hero-Class® customer experiences is adopting a customer-centric outlook. It requires reps to leave their personal life at the door, to shake off the last bad experience, and to focus on their customers instead of themselves. Each new customer deserves the best experience possible. This waitress did not understand that; those front line professionals who do will be poised to provide excellent customer experiences every time.



Adam Toporek
Customer Experience
Strategist
CTA Service Solutions

Connect:
Twitter: [@adamtoporek](https://twitter.com/adamtoporek)
LinkedIn: [linkedin.com/in/adamtoporek](https://www.linkedin.com/in/adamtoporek)

Read how to [turn a customer service culture](#) in Adam's latest blog.

Share This

"Think about ways to really hear your customers."



Colin Taylor
CEO

The Taylor Reach Group

Connect:

Twitter: [@colinsataylor](https://twitter.com/colinsataylor)

LinkedIn: [linkedin.com/in/colintaylor](https://www.linkedin.com/in/colintaylor)

Check out Colin's blog for more [customer experience influencers](#) to follow.

Share This

A major publisher was experiencing rising call volumes and costs. Their internal and outsourced resources were stretched to the max and their service and quality levels were at all-time lows.

The solution involved a complete review of the existing processes and procedures and an in-depth study of the call arrival patterns, causal events and a full operational audit. A full redesign of the process and its metrics was proposed.

"Think about ways to really hear your customers."



Colin Taylor
CEO
The Taylor Reach Group

Connect:

Twitter: [@colinsataylor](https://twitter.com/colinsataylor)
LinkedIn: [linkedin.com/in/colintaylor](https://www.linkedin.com/in/colintaylor)

Check out Colin's blog for more [customer experience influencers](#) to follow.

Share This

With the client on site, all calls were removed from the internal center and the existing outsource call center and moved to a new outsourcer. Significant training based upon required competencies was provided. The call volumes surged from the day of the cut-over, increasing to more than 20,000 calls per day, due in large part to the poor service levels that had become the standard prior to the cut-over which created a backlog of unresolved issues. Within a week, call volumes had subsided, service and quality targets were being achieved and the both the call length and call resolution rates were at new record highs.

Within six months, the company had reduced its call center costs by more than 50 percent (more than \$1,000,000) and maintained industry leading service and quality performance.

"Your host station is the home of your company."



Richard Shapiro
President
The Center For Client
Retention

Connect:
Twitter: [@RichardRShapiro](https://twitter.com/RichardRShapiro)
LinkedIn: [linkedin.com/in/richardrshapiro](https://www.linkedin.com/in/richardrshapiro)

See more insight into
[customer experiences](#) on
Richard's blog.

Share This

My wife and I visited a museum in New York City a few years ago. We had ordered tickets in advance. Apparently due to budget constraints, the museum had to reduce its staff so there was only one person stationed at the will-call window. Why would one of the most prestigious museums in the world have a grumpy woman at that desk snapping at customers as though they were criminals trying to sneak into Fort Knox? Every person in line could see this employee disliked her job and didn't enjoy dealing with customers.

What should have been the beginning of a wonderful experience was ruined from the start. Why treat museum-goers, possibly the most patient and well-mannered group of customers, with such disrespect? There was no possible explanation for why customers had to be exposed to her wrath.

"Your host station is the home of your company."



Richard Shapiro
President
The Center For Client
Retention

Connect:
Twitter: [@RichardRShapiro](https://twitter.com/RichardRShapiro)
LinkedIn: [linkedin.com/in/richardrshapiro](https://www.linkedin.com/in/richardrshapiro)

See more insight into
[customer experiences](#) on
Richard's blog.

Share This

I have found after conducting research for many years, that all sales and service associates generally fall into four distinct categories: Welcomers, who see the customer as a person first, customer second; Robots, who go through the motion of delivering the service experience, but don't express any emotion; Indifferent, who couldn't care less about customers; and the Hostile, who are just mean and nasty people. They are not only hostile to customers, but to co-workers too. Unfortunately, executives at the museum did not understand the value of having a friendly and welcoming person at the initial point of entry. I'm not sure exactly what they were thinking. You only have one opportunity to make a good first impression. The will-call desk is that place. A Welcomer is essential to create that positive introduction, setting the stage for the rest of the customer experience journey.

Your host station, switchboard, contact center, or physical store, is the home of your company. Make sure every customer feels welcomed, important and appreciated at the get-go. Give customers hope they will do business with an organization who understands that they are the most important asset.

11 Lessons for Avoiding Your Own Horror Stories

There will always be unhappy customers, but they don't all have to turn into tales of terror. Here are eleven key takeaways from our experts' stories to keep your customer experiences in good shape no matter what comes at you.

1. Invest in measuring, monitoring and incentivizing consumer-centric behaviors.
2. A single interaction can make or break a customer experience.
3. Understand the customer's end-to-end experience to avoid breaks in the chain.
4. Don't wait for customers to contact you. They love when you take the initiative.
5. Don't make it difficult to do business with you—make it enjoyable.
6. Constantly monitor interaction quality and be on the look out for “bad seeds.”
7. Use your data to improve your customer experience—it's full of hidden gems.
8. Eliminate issues out of agents' control so they can put their best feet forward.
9. Know your customers well and treat them well—loyalty drives revenue.
10. Your customers are always evolving, so take the opportunity to grow with them.
11. Give agents tools and scripts to ensure they deliver the right message the first time.

Making the Best of Your Contact Center Experience

You have one chance to make a lasting impression with your customers. A contact center solution can help you enhance the customer experience from the moment calls reach your Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system to call resolution. They help you to attract and retain customers, and please them for less.



When it comes to customer satisfaction, Swanson Health Products is America's #1 rated catalog/Internet merchant. So when they needed a solution that would help them track and handle their calls, emails and chat, they turned to Mitel's [MiContact Center](#).

Thank You!

Thank you to the customer experience leaders who
contributed their tales to our project!

Avoid your own customer experience tale of terror with help from Mitel.
[Contact us for more information](#) or [learn more online](#).