



STOKE B2B SERIES

EPISODE 6

Find a Way to Say Yes

We are all more or less wired the same way. We tend to evaluate requests from customers and people in terms of how much will it take from us to fulfill the request and whether the return is equitable. This happens unconsciously. It's goes from an immediate "yes" if we calculate the request costs us nothing or gains us something valuable...to an immediate "no" if we perceive it's out of the ordinary or it's going to be a heavy lift. It is the epitome of being focused on your solution and not the customer's problem.

But think about it. Your customer, by virtue of the request, is preparing for a commercial exchange. If a potential customer says they want to walk on the moon, and they have the assets to make this feasible, I am going to try and see that customer walk on the moon. It's a state of mind to be reflexively respond "yes!"

This may sound simplistic but we want you to think deeply about what is being talked about here. Your customer is the ONLY reason you and your employees exist. Your customers are coming to you with a problem to solve, they want to give it to you and they want you to solve it. In exchange, they want to make you successful. The easier you make it, (friction-free buying) and the more quickly you make the issue disappear for your customer, the faster you will grow.

Solve Your Customer's Problem and Own the Outcome

Your job and your employees' job is to understand the problem and the outcome your customer desires. Then you have to take responsibility for (1) solving the problem and (2) the outcome. We desire that you and your team will become outcome maximizers, not input minimizers. What do we mean by that? Many organizations view the customer's issue through the lens of how much effort it will take or that they are doing the customer a favor, rather than it's a privilege to be of service in solving the customer's problem. Be excellent. Most requests that you get from your customer will be what you already know how to do and do well. One percent will cause you to say WTF: this is usually opportunity knocking.

Most bad customer service experiences you have personally encountered stem from effort minimizers versus outcome maximizers. Recently at Onemata we wanted to leverage innovative and trendy clothing to connect people with our brand. We have a vision of really changing the tired logo-on-a-shirt concept. Instead, we want to connect to our customers and involve them in our energy and passion through cutting-edge apparel. I walked into an apparel shop and gave them this very exciting vision of what I want to do – and they showed me the cheapest T-shirt option "because it's very popular." Then they brought me five catalogs, the size of old-school phone books, and told me to tell them what I wanted. In

other words, they had no interest in our problem or helping us achieve our vision. They wanted to put logos on the cheapest T-shirts possible because that's the entirety of their solution to all customer problems. Now that's stepping over dollars to pick up dimes.

Over the years, saying yes to the customer and solving their problem has led the founders of Onemata – Mike, Brad, and Will – to start completely new businesses which we had previously never thought of. These are companies that we have subsequently sold for over 20X earnings and once over 20X times revenue. These were companies we sold for 1X revenue and from standard multiples up to crazy multiples. My friends, that's a lot of wealth creation. Saying yes is the only way!

Concentrate on the outcome – not the effort your firm takes to deliver the outcome. Reflect some version of this in your values and empower and train your employees to take action.

Things to Think About / Implement

1. Your customer is the only reason you exist. Find a way to incorporate this understanding in your corporate values. Find a way to say YES! and get it front and center in all you and your employees do.
2. You and your employees' job is to solve your customer's problem and to own the outcome. Make it feel like solving your customer's problem is the only thing you want to do that day.
3. Say yes and then evaluate what it will take to accomplish and then, after all costs and figures have been determined, put a margin on it that you love and let your customer know: "the good news is that you can do it and that it will only cost them X dollars."
4. After solving the one percent problems that come your way, go back to all of your other customers and see if they need that problem solved as well. Chances are they do.
5. Your customer's problem may require you to assemble and curate a set of solution providers to solve the problem. The great thing is you don't have to create each independent solution set, but you still have taken the responsibility to solve the customer's bigger problem and you will get known for solving this problem and all of the credit for being able to do so.