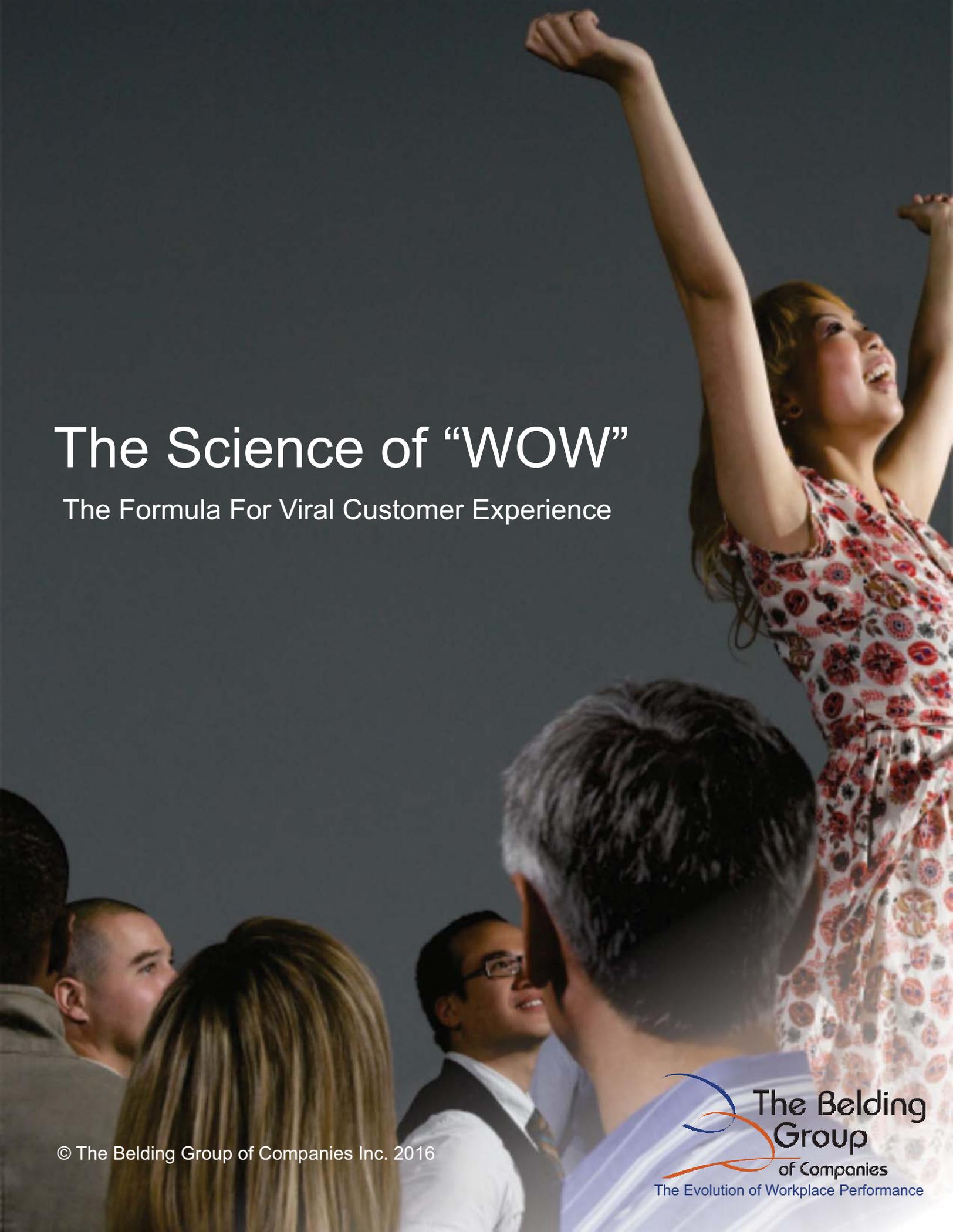


The Science of “WOW”

The Formula For Viral Customer Experience

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The Evolution of Workplace Performance

Introduction

The Rise of Customer Service

Customer Service has become increasingly more important over the last decade. Advances in technology have diminished the relative importance of price, location and convenience in purchase decisions. Web-based portals, greater automation and self-serve solutions have significantly accelerated the speed and ease of doing business. Beyond product and service-specific distinctions, customer service has become the last competitive differentiator for organizations.

The Quest for WOW

One of the recurring themes with organizations trying to improve customer service is the search for “Wow” experiences. These are the memorable experiences that create positive word-of-mouth, and have the potential of spreading rapidly through social media.

There are mixed theories on the types of behaviours and actions required to create Wow experiences. Some theories, such as the one presented in The Harvard Business Review by Dixon, Freeman and Tollman (“Stop Trying To Delight Your Customers, 2010”), even suggest that trying to “delight” customers is not a productive goal. They suggest that greater customer loyalty will be gained by focusing on reduced customer effort.

Intuitively, however, there is a distinction between what one would call a “Wow” experience and a low-effort experience as suggested by Dixon. Similarly, “satisfactory” experiences, as measured in CSAT surveys; or “likely to recommend” experiences, as measured with the NPS model are not necessarily those that wow consumers.

So what does it take to get customers talking about us?

What is “WOW?”

A Meaningful Definition

The term “Wow” remains loosely defined as it relates to customer experience. For this study, we chose to define a “Wow” experience as a customer experience that was top-of-mind. It is an experience that people will think of first when in a discussion about a customer experience, and one that they feel will be interesting to others.

Positive “Wow” and Negative “Wow”

Because top-of-mind customer experiences could be either memorably good or memorably poor, we chose to look at both



spectrums. (They are, it can be argued, both in the “Wow” category, although the latter “Wow” might be uttered with a face-palm gesture.)



“It is an experience that people will think of first when in a discussion about a customer experience, and one that they feel will be interesting to others.”

The Goal of This Research

The purpose of the study was to identify commonalities as to what people considered to be Wow experiences. We reviewed the relative importance of people, product, price, policies and process in creating Wow experiences. We quantified the specific attributes of positive and negative experiences.

The ultimate goal was to provide organizations a clear and actionable picture of what they need to do to differentiate themselves with World-Class customer experience.

Methodology

Preliminary Development

Over a period of six months, 340 respondents were asked to recall a top-of-mind memorable customer experience at the beginning of a customer service training class. They were told that it could be either a positive or negative experience, and given no further parameters. Facilitators listened to the experiences, and noted common underlying themes and patterns. These themes and patterns formed the foundation for the more formal study.

Formal Study

The formal study was conducted over a period of two years, with 920 respondents in seven North American and Asian/South Pacific countries. They were asked to recall a top-of-mind memorable customer experiences. They were told that it could be either a positive or negative experience, and were given no further parameters.

After sharing the experiences, participants completed a questionnaire to document the nature and core elements involved. Participants could enter multiple answers to each question, and they were given the opportunity to record additional considerations that did not fall into the category options presented.

Highlights

1. It's all about People

Although customer experience is influenced by many factors, including people, processes, policies and organizational practices, “Wow” experiences are created by people

2. Customers look for Ownership

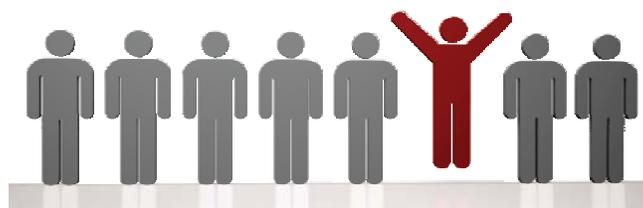
The primary driver of “Wow” experiences are employees taking ownership of situations. Conversely, the primary driver of negative “Wow” experiences is the perception of a conspicuous absence, or unwillingness, of an employee taking ownership of a situation.

3. Recovery creates Conversation (in a good way)

Customers are likely to have a “Wow” experience when an employee effectively turns a negative experience into a more positive outcome.

4. Not Caring creates Conversation (in a bad way)

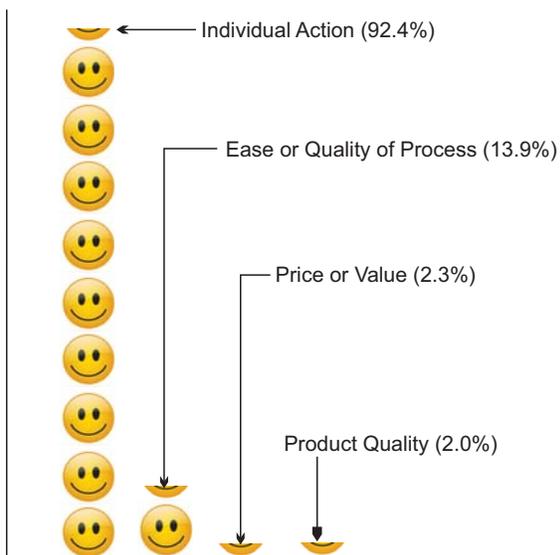
Customers are most likely to have a negative “Wow” experience when they perceive that the employee or employees they are dealing with do not care



By The Numbers

POSITIVE VS. NEGATIVE EXPERIENCES

In 61.4% of cases, the top-of-mind experience respondents chose to share was a positive experience.



PRIMARY EXPERIENCE DRIVERS

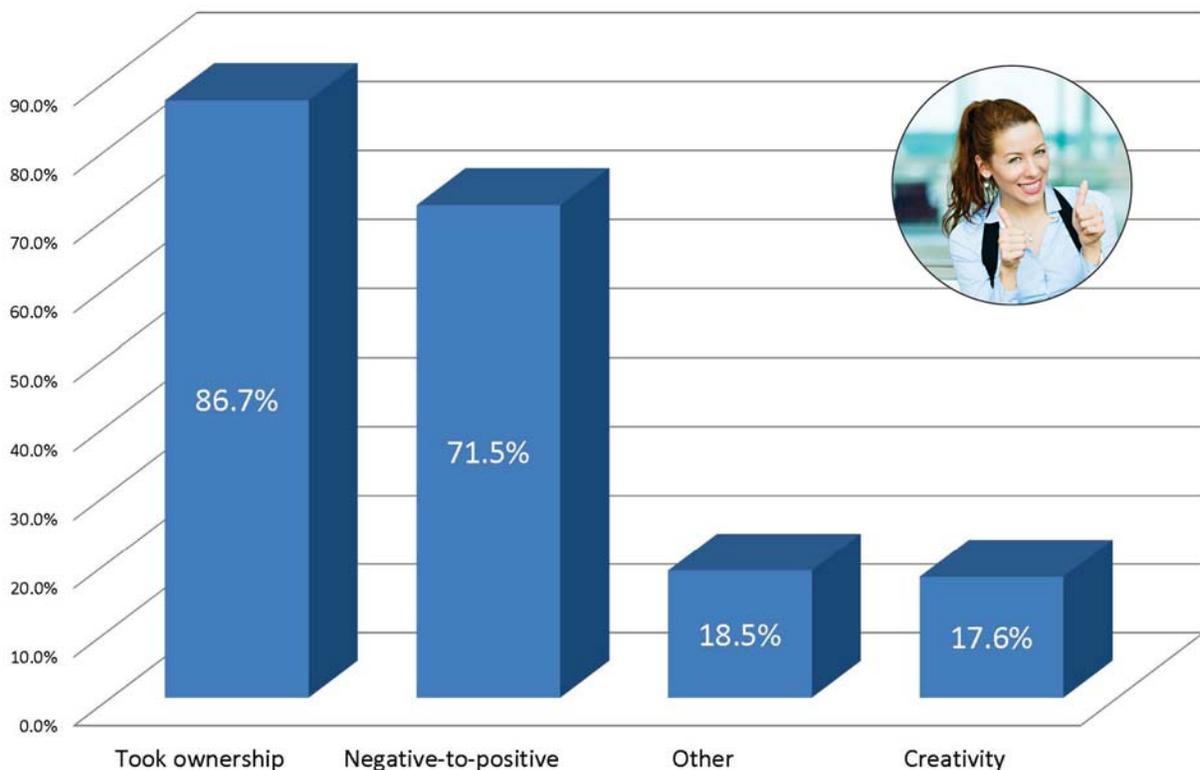
92.4% of experiences were related to a person or people's actions or behaviours

By The Numbers

FOR THOSE EXPERIENCES IDENTIFIED AS BEING POSITIVE

- 😊 86.7% were categorized as a person or people taking **ownership** over a situation
- 😊 71.5% were categorized as an initially negative situation being **turned into a positive experience**
- 😊 17.6% categorized as a person or people using **creative solutions**

What Created The Positive Experience

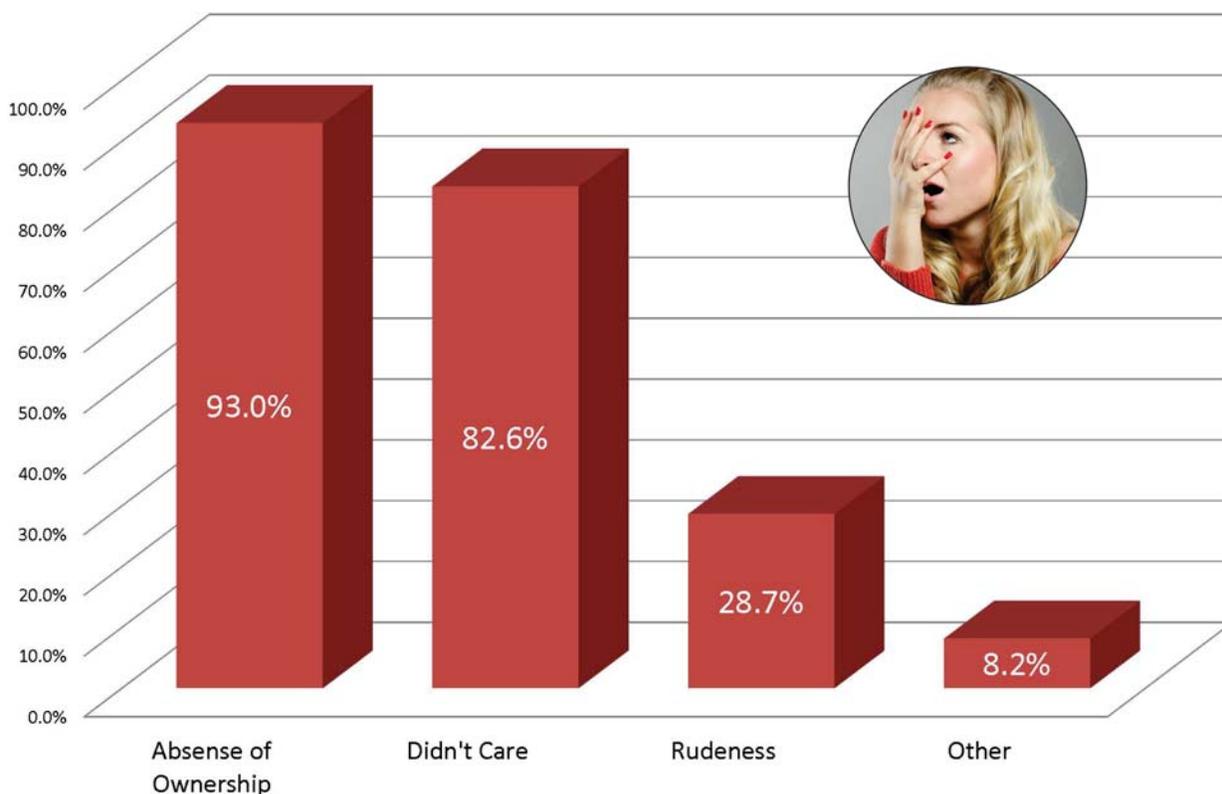


By The Numbers

FOR THOSE EXPERIENCES IDENTIFIED AS BEING NEGATIVE

- ☹️ 93% were categorized as a person or people not taking ownership over a situation
- ☹️ 82% were categorized as a person or people not caring
- ☹️ 29.8% were categorized as people being rude

What Created The Negative Experience



Conclusions

“Wow” Experiences Are Created By People

“Wow” experiences are created by people. While processes, policies and practices may have a strong influence in overall loyalty as suggested by the Dixon research, they are not the elements that create memorable moments that are likely to be shared between individuals.

Service failure is a significant breeding ground for “Wow” experiences. Although the theory of the Service Recovery Paradox¹ has been called into question in recent years, this study shows that the ability to turn negative situations into positive outcomes still plays a critical role for organizations. Over seven out of every ten “Wow” experiences – experiences that people are likely to share – began as negative situations.

The results point to clear and actionable direction for organizations who want to differentiate themselves through outstanding customer experience.

¹The Service Recovery Paradox, (Hart, Heskett, and Sasser 1990), suggests that recovering from a service failure can "create more goodwill than if things had gone smoothly in the first place"

About The Belding Group of Companies Inc.

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The Belding Group is a global leader in helping organizations stand out through customer service, leadership and workplace development. We have two divisions that provide performance training, consulting and measurement solutions for organizations globally.

Our award-winning training division, Belding Training, designs and delivers highly-effective, customized training in customer service, leadership and workplace performance. Our consulting division provides in-depth analysis on customer experience, customer journeys and leadership effectiveness to help companies create customer-centric cultures.

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