



Organizational strategies for filling the customer can-do/must-do gap

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Abstract Service leaders have learned that it is not enough to attract customers who are ready and willing to experience what their organizations have to offer; they must also attract customers who are able to perform important roles in co-producing a successful service experience. This recognition has led to increasing interest regarding how organizations should manage these quasi-employees to ensure everything that must be done actually *is* done. Leading service organizations embrace this responsibility and have developed strategies to identify and accommodate variations in their targeted customers' capabilities. They know that client satisfaction depends upon the organization making up for deficiencies between what the customer must do to have a great service experience and what the customer actually can do. Surprisingly, there has been little systematic investigation into how organizations create and execute strategies to ensure that these deficiency gaps are filled. However, it is becoming increasingly clear that organizations that have developed systems and procedures to fill these gaps are likelier to satisfy their customers and achieve higher levels of repeat business than firms that have not. This article offers strategies for organizations that commit to bridging the customer can-do/must-do gap and thereby ensuring their customers have a successful service experience.

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1. Customers bring resources and capabilities. . .but not always

When Disney first introduced the FASTPASS reservation system to its theme parks, it anticipated that

many of its guests would need training in order to obtain the value of this innovation. As such, Disney made sure cast members were visible and available near FASTPASS equipment to provide user guidance. Likewise, when United Healthcare gains a new customer under its AARP Healthcare Plan, it not only sends a booklet containing a clear explanation of its services but also calls each new enrollee to ensure that the customer understands the plan and how to use it. Both examples reflect corporate/firm

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recognition of a gap between what customers could/can do and what they must do to obtain the expected value from the service experience.

Disney and United Healthcare, like other successful service organizations, have developed strategies for a successful service experience that acknowledge and account for gaps that may exist between the capabilities and resources required of the customer and the capabilities and resources the customer actually brings to the table. There is no such thing as an average customer or typical service experience to these organizations; rather, customer variability is embraced. When they design their service experiences and train their employees, these organizations take the important next step of planning for the inevitable variations customers bring to the service experience. In short, they have accepted responsibility for filling any gaps that may occur between what capabilities and resources are required to obtain a satisfying customer experience and what their targeted customers actually bring to the service. This requires a careful assessment of targeted customers' capabilities and a plan to accommodate the inevitable differences.

Because service leaders recognize that their customers will vary in the human and physical resources they bring as quasi-employees, these leaders have created systems and procedures to account and compensate for the variations. They have learned that while their quasi-employee customers have many capabilities in common, each customer is unique. Service leaders therefore spend time and money to ensure they have done everything possible to create a can-do/must-do fit between their organization and each customer within their targeted market. More importantly, service leaders realize that when there is a gap between what a customer can do and what that customer must do, the service leader should have a strategy in place to fill that gap. They know that without preparation—anticipating and designing systems, training employees, and creating procedures—their organization will risk losing customers. This is not an easy decision, as it requires organizations to carefully balance revenues that would be lost from failing customers, especially those in their target markets, against the costs of allocating resources required to fill gaps.

The purpose of this article is to show how successful service organizations have planned for and filled customer can-do/must-do gaps. We use the lessons they learned to develop a five-step framework designed to ensure that all the resources and capabilities required to create a successful service experience are provided. We suggest that in a customer-centric marketplace, having strategies in

place that successfully fill these gaps enables organizations to gain a competitive advantage in co-creating value with their customers.

2. Finding and filling the customer can-do/must-do gap

To ensure that can-do/must-do gaps are filled, organizations need to understand the various roles customers play, the activities they perform in those roles, and all the resources and capabilities required to perform those activities. Organizations also need to carefully review the processes that integrate customers' can-do resources and capabilities with those provided by the organization, to ensure the must-dos are accounted for in co-creating value. The concept of organizations co-creating value with customers has evolved from earlier work on co-production roles customers have played or could play in their service experiences (Bendapudi & Leone, 2003; Vargo & Lusch, 2004). Although the roles that customers play have been relatively well addressed in the literature, how the organization best facilitates customer performance in those roles is not well understood (Ford & Dickson, 2012; Ford & Heaton, 2001; Ford, Sturman, & Heaton, 2012). Furthermore, while there has been interest in defining the role of customers co-creating value with firms (e.g., McColl-Kennedy, Vargo, Dagger, Sweeney, & van Kasteren, 2012), there has been surprisingly little investigation into the nature and types of human and physical resources that the organization must provide to compensate for any gaps between the resources and capabilities the customer brings and what is actually required for a successful service experience.

2.1. Combined knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs)

Organizations and customers participate at varying degrees to create a service experience. We use the term *combined KSAs* to describe any variation of participation between an organization and its customer that includes all the physical and human resources and capabilities required to create a successful service experience. We define customer KSAs broadly to include not only the familiar task-related knowledge, skills, and abilities, but also factors unique to each customer, such as financial and physical resources, personality, social capital, intelligence, and life experiences in general. These KSAs represent a customer's stock of resources and capabilities or what a customer can do, but may not be sufficient to account for all that the customer must

do to have a successful service experience. Clearly, not every service will require the same type or array of resources. Moreover, not every customer will bring the same resources each and every time. Customers not only vary in their can-do KSAs, but also in what they will do and their perception of their co-producing roles (Kjellberg & Helgesson, 2007; McColl-Kennedy et al., 2012). While the information systems literature has developed some understanding of how organizations can effectively prepare their entry points (websites) to accommodate this variability in customers (e.g., Wobbrock, Kane, Gajos, Harada, & Froehlich, 2011), the growing scholarly discussion on this gap has generally focused on the nature and types of resources and capabilities that a customer brings to the service experience to co-produce it with an organization and not the total resources required (Lusch, Vargo, & O'Brien, 2007). This research has provided considerable insight into the range of roles customers play and resources they bring to value co-creation (Bitner, Faranda, Hubbert, & Zeithaml, 1997; Gronroos, 2008; Moeller, 2008; Payne, Storbacka, & Frow, 2008), but with rare exceptions (e.g., Canziani, 1997; Chase, 1978) there has been little investigation into the nature and types of resources that the organization must provide to compensate for the gap between what the customer brings and the total resources required to co-create the value of a successful service experience.

The challenge for organizations that wish to learn the lessons of service leaders is to not focus solely on either their own or their customers' resources but on the total combined KSAs required for a successful service experience. Thus, they must develop and implement strategies to ensure that each customer experience has all the resources provided by some combination of what each party brings. If the customer is unable to provide what is necessary for co-producing a successful service experience, then it is the organization's responsibility to find a way to fill the gap by making up the difference.

To this end, we present a contingency-based framework to prescribe organizational actions and strategies designed to close the gap between the customer's KSAs and the elements necessary to co-produce a satisfying service experience. Our framework expands a call for better understanding of how consumers juggle their own resources to compensate for resource deficits (Arnould, Price, & Malshe, 2006). Rather than being consumer-centric, however, our focus is on how organizations juggle to compensate for customers' resource deficits. We confine our discussion to the combined KSAs needed to co-produce the desired service experience. We recognize that misunderstanding a role because it is

unclear, not having the necessary physical resources to co-produce, and not being motivated to perform as a quasi-employee even when the customer has the capabilities are also influential determinants of customer co-production success. We argue that while customers can bring to a service experience their stocks of resources as represented by their KSAs, what they bring may not be sufficient to co-produce the experience and thereby co-create value (Sampson & Froehle, 2006). This is the reason the can-do/must-do gap exists and why it is critical for organizations to develop strategies for filling this gap.

3. Organizational strategies to fill the gap

Service leaders have long recognized the need for proactive planning to fill any gaps between what customers can and must do to co-produce service. Today's more knowledgeable and empowered customers expect organizations—especially those offering services—to accommodate their unique needs, wants, and KSAs. Service leaders listened; they found ways to bring customers into their planning. IKEA, for example, uses online forums and in-store 'experience rooms' to learn better which KSAs its customers will bring to fit the company's offerings into their lifestyles (Ford, Edvardsson, Dickson, & Enquist, 2012). Large healthcare organizations such as Kaiser Permanente and Johns Hopkins have established online health communities not only to create a social support forum for patients that enables users to help each other fill gaps in patient KSAs, but also to identify new service developments that these organizations can offer to accommodate gaps they learn about (Nambisan & Nambisan, 2009). GlaxoSmithKline used a similar Web-based strategy in launching its weight-loss drug, Alli. Because creating an individualized or customized treatment plan was critical to the success of Alli, online community interactions have become the foundation for sharing knowledge and enabling new consumers to manage the learning curve associated with this drug (Nambisan & Nambisan, 2009). Caterpillar, through its Collaborative Alliance Web-based platform, fills resource gaps between a client's knowledge and the knowledge needed to solve equipment problems by connecting the customer's engineering drawings with its equipment (Olmstead, 2012). Other firms, like Disney, have even invented terms like 'guestology' to communicate to employees its commitment to accommodating any gaps between its unique resources and those capabilities required of its varied guests (Ford & Dickson, 2009). These service leaders all have a shared strategy: they

systematically assess the gap between what customers in their target market(s) can do and what they must do to best experience the service. Most importantly, however, these organizations recognized and planned for the fact that not all customers are able to bring all the resources and capabilities required for the co-production of a service experience.

4. Finding and filling gaps in combined KSAs

In Figure 1 we offer a simplified matrix to illustrate how organizations have identified and filled the gaps between which KSAs customers are willing and able to bring to the service and the total combined KSAs required to co-create value of the experience. The x-axis represents the customer’s KSAs and the y-axis represents the organization’s KSAs. We use high and low to describe the types of resources and capabilities expected of each party in the co-production process, which when combined provide the total KSAs required to successfully co-create value. As portrayed in Cell 1, for example, in designing a theme park, restaurant, financial, or dental experience, the organization expects its customers to bring few of the total combined KSAs required while it accepts responsibility for providing most of the KSAs needed for the customer experience. There is little knowledge, skill, or ability required of a customer to co-produce a theme park visit, eat in a restaurant, make a bank deposit, or sit in a dentist’s chair. In these cases, the organization has anticipated that it will not expect customers to do much to co-produce the experience.

Figure 1. Filling the organization—customer resources (combined KSAs) gap

Resources Required from the Organization	High	<p>Cell 1: High Organization KSA, Low Customer KSA</p> <p>Examples: theme park, restaurant, concert, fast food, dental service, telephone, ATM</p>	<p>Cell 3: High Organization KSA, High Customer KSA</p> <p>Examples: PhD programs, ongoing medical treatment, complex B2B client solutions (e.g., with mining firms, project-oriented professional services)</p>
	Low	<p>Cell 2: Low Organization KSA, Low Customer KSA</p> <p>Examples: lawn service, hot dog stand, golf tournament</p>	<p>Cell 4: Low Organization KSA, High Customer KSA</p> <p>Examples: crowdsourcing, design tournaments, house build volunteer projects, self-organized community aid</p>
		Low	High
		Resources Required from the Customer	

USAA, for example, has designed its claims experience to enable customers to quickly handle their insurance claims online or by phone. Since the total resources (combined KSAs) required to handle an insurance claim in a distant location are considerable, USAA accepts responsibility to provide the vast majority of the total combined resources and capabilities required to make the service experience successful. Indeed, it has gained a competitive advantage by spending the time and money required to design optimal customer experience touch points, create transaction systems, and train its employees to ensure that customers receive the service experience they expect. USAA realizes that some customers will want to be coached through the claims process, seeking and expecting considerable help; others, typically experienced, know the process, are familiar with the forms, and are both willing and able to do it for themselves.

Service leaders understand the need to have flexible delivery systems to respond to variability in customers, and train their employees and build their Web pages to pick up on capability cues customers send. By responding to customer cues, these organizations are able to efficiently allocate their human resources to provide customers that need more service with exactly that, leaving self-sufficient users with less labor-intensive options. The key lesson is that service leaders expect variability in their customers and plan for it. They make every effort to discover what their customers want in their service experiences, the KSAs they will bring to co-produce it, and what they must do to make up any difference in the combined KSAs required to obtain that experience. The greater the co-producing role assumed by a customer, the more the organization needs to plan so its systems and procedures quickly sense and fully compensate for any variability in customers’ KSAs. While it is generally simpler, cheaper, and less risky for the organization to assume most of the tasks of producing many identical units of a service experience from an operations perspective, it may be more costly in customer satisfaction if customers actually desire a greater co-production role.

The remaining cells in the matrix describe the other resource combinations. For example, as represented in Cell 4, to host a crowdsourced, Web-based design tournament, the organization need only bring a technology platform for a group of strangers to virtually gather around and solve problems that the organization is unable or unwilling to solve on its own. In a sense, it opens its doors to anyone who wants to try and solve the problem (e.g., a t-shirt design for Zara, a product recommendation algorithm for Netflix). While some

crowdsourced tournaments require relatively few customer resources, most require a sophisticated level of expertise—in short, considerable KSAs.

The matrix offers a systematic way for organizations to assess the trade-offs between enabling the customer to do what must be done and taking on those tasks themselves. By ensuring the combined KSAs are present and accounted for, the organization will avoid failing a customer and the considerable costs that failure brings (Larsson & Bowen, 1989).

4.1. Cell 1: High organization KSA, low customer KSA

This cell includes services whereby the customer is expected to bring few resources and capabilities while the organization provides those that are complex and expensive. Examples include physicians, financial institutions, online retail sites, and classic hospitality experiences where a customer comes to the organization with the expectation of being served. Only minimal KSAs are required of the customer, such as the ability to get to the location where the desired experience can be found; to select the level and type of service from available options; to sit back, relax, and enjoy; and to pay. The organization, on the other hand, has to undertake significant research to identify how to get the customer to the location where the service is provided, what array of options should be made available, and how much to charge. Moreover, the organization has to use its research to ensure that the experience meets or exceeds the customer's expectations. If, for example, the organization is a themed restaurant, it must identify and provide the 'servicescape' elements of the theme that are integral to the experience, the food that complements the theme, and the service delivery system that makes the entire dining experience meet customer expectations. For this to happen, significant training, design, equipment, and facility costs must be incurred. In other words, to ensure that the total combined KSAs are available to co-produce the service experience, the organization's knowledge, skills, and abilities must compensate for the low level of KSAs required of the customer.

4.2. Cell 2: Low organization KSA, low customer KSA

This cell includes the most basic of all services. A landscaping company mowing a customer's lawn, an attendant handing out towels at a swimming pool, a call center employee providing customer service,

and a valet parking vehicles at a hotel are all examples of service experiences that require little total combined KSAs. Here, the customer typically pays the server of an organization to provide a service. It requires little knowledge, skill, or ability on the part of either the customer or the organization. The organization has to ensure only that the server shows up at the correct location, is qualified and trained to perform whatever basic skill is required, has a customer service attitude, is properly attired, and knows the organization's expectations for performance in the role. Thus, the organization will hire people with a customer service attitude (e.g., those who know how to connect in a positive way with customers within short time frames), train them to have whatever basic skills are required (e.g., park the car, hand out towels), and schedule them to be present at the correct location when required. Resources required of customers are low in that they only have to know how to ask for whatever service they require and have the ability to pay for it.

4.3. Cell 3: High organization KSA, high customer KSA

This cell includes challenging situations whereby the total combined KSAs needed to co-produce the service require both customer and organization to bring a considerable quantity and array of resources and capabilities to the experience for it to be successful. A PhD student, for example, must bring a great deal of knowledge, possess considerable ability, and have the time and skills to study and learn to be successful in a doctoral program. At the same time, a university must know how to hire qualified faculty; have the ability to provide an appropriate curriculum and support structures (e.g., classrooms, laboratories, library, Internet); and possess the skills to attract, retain, and educate qualified students. These high-level organizational KSAs require the commitment of considerable time, effort, and money to acquire and make them available to the students. Likewise, for a student to undertake a PhD program requires high levels of KSAs and the commitment of time, effort, and money to successfully experience the program. Since the co-produced educational experience requires considerable total combined KSAs, both customer and organization must have significant KSAs. This cell describes uniquely intense and generally high-value, complex, and long-duration relationships between customer and organization.

For example, in ongoing treatment for a chronic illness, patients may bring considerable knowledge of treatment options and the KSAs to actively

engage with their medical teams to jointly design or redesign and even co-produce their treatments (McColl-Kennedy et al., 2012). Similarly, in many complex business-to-business service settings, both the service-providing organization and the customer bring sophisticated KSAs; for instance, Caterpillar works closely with clients in mining, construction, and highway maintenance who have sophisticated knowledge—such as speed of the dozer or digger, miles per gallon of fuel used, miles per tire change, gradient of slopes, and physical layout of the mine or construction site—to plan and execute the most efficient outcomes and to ensure successful customer experiences.

4.4. Cell 4: Low organization KSA, high customer KSA

This cell represents one of the most interesting occurrences to arise in the co-production of relationships between organizations and customers. Here, the experience can result in the quasi-employees actually getting paid for their co-production role. The term most commonly associated with this phenomenon is ‘crowdsourcing,’ coined by Jeff Howe (2012) in *Wired* magazine. Crowdsourcing is defined as taking a function that is traditionally performed inside an organization by employees and instead outsourcing it to a crowd. While most literature discussions of crowdsourcing focus on problem solving or accessing large labor pools, crowdsourcing can also be used with customers to co-create new value for an organization by co-producing innovations, new service ideas, processes, and designs (Afuah & Tucci, 2012; Ford, Richard, & Ciuchta, in press; Kozinets, Hemetsberger, & Schau, 2008).

Apple, for example, encourages non-employees (users) to co-produce new applications for its iPhone. Creating a new way to use the capabilities of the iPhone not only offers the creator fun and often a financial reward, but also enhances the value of the phone to that user and potentially other customers. In other words, by providing a technology platform via which non-employees can engage the organization in co-producing innovation, Apple empowers its customers to co-create value (Richard, 2012). Examples abound of how organizations employ customers, and more are reported daily. Nokia, for instance, used a ‘concept lounge’ to encourage strangers to invent a new phone. The winner, the Nokia 888, is currently being considered as an offering. Likewise, Electrolux sponsored an appliance-of-the-future contest, DesignLab 2005, that attracted over 3,058 contestants. Lego sponsors a website, LEGO Factory, that encourages people to

submit designs for new Lego products. Similarly, IKEA’s *fiffigafolket* contest asked participants to suggest designs for home media storage living room furniture, which generated in excess of 5,000 submissions (Abrahamson, Ryder, & Untenberg, 2013; Goffin, Lemke, & Koners, 2010).

These crowdsourcing strategies can not only lead to discovering solutions and innovations beyond the organization’s own KSAs, but also create an emotional attachment that can result in stronger customer relationships. Once an individual helps co-produce an app, it is difficult to leave the brand where the fruit of his or her creativity is used. The point is that the crowdsourcing integration of the limited KSAs of the organization with the greater KSAs of its customers, plus others, facilitates a pathway to providing the total combined KSAs needed.

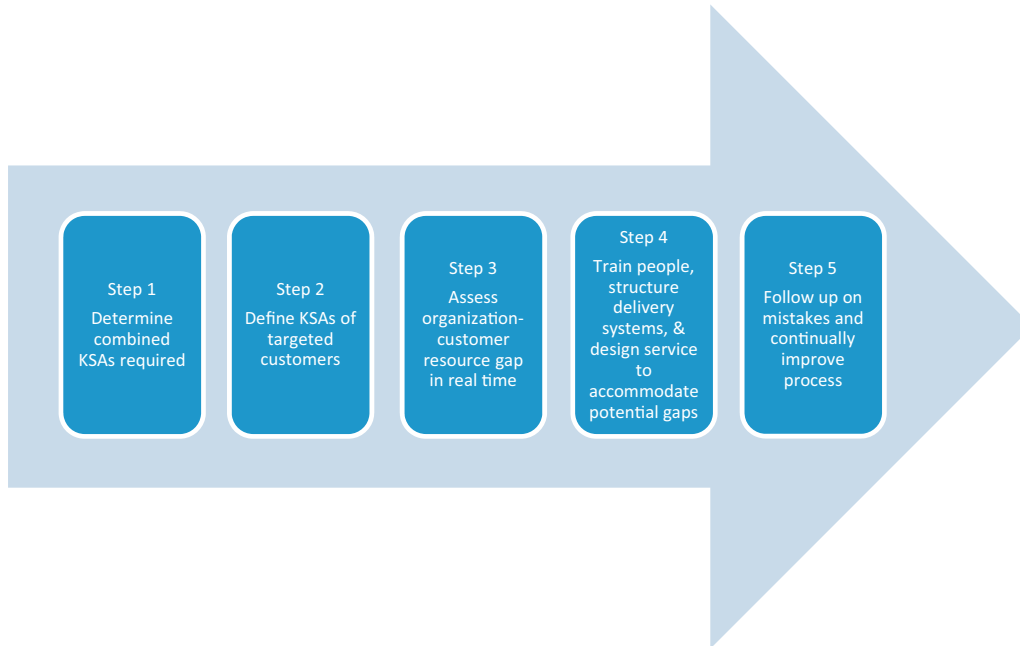
5. Steps for success

For organizations that wish to use the matrix to apply the lessons learned from service leaders, we offer a five-step process (Figure 2). The process begins by accurately assessing the total combined KSAs: all the resources and capabilities required for a successful service experience. The second step is determining the desired division of KSAs between those to be provided by the organization and those to be provided by the customer. Third is creating a means for accurately assessing the organization-customer resource gap in real time. Fourth is developing the systems and processes—through training employees, structuring delivery systems, and designing the entire service experience—to accommodate any gaps between what the customer can do and what the customer must do. Fifth, and most important, is following up on mistakes and continuously improving the organization’s gap-filling capabilities. This five-step process allows organizations to plan how everything that must happen in a successful service experience, will happen—with a strategy for filling customers’ can-do/must-do gaps.

5.1. Step 1: Determine the total stock of resources and capabilities (combined KSAs)

The beginning point of this process is to assess the total stock of resources and capabilities (combined KSAs) required to co-produce a successful service experience. This assessment will include the complexity of the experience, the amount of time and effort both the customer and organization have to commit to co-producing it, and the value derived from each customer’s experience. If the experience is to eat in a quick-serve type restaurant, then the

Figure 2. Five step strategic process



total required combined KSAs include all the resources and capabilities necessary to provide a satisfying (for the customer) and profitable (for the restaurant) meal. Restaurants know that their customers will not expect to or be capable of doing much to co-produce this low time commitment experience, so they plan on filling the gap between what combined KSAs are required to have a satisfying and profitable restaurant meal and those that they anticipate their customers will bring. Thus, they design an elaborate food service production and delivery system, train their employees to help customers select what they would like, and provide the necessary physical resources (chairs, tables, forks, etc.) to enable the customer to co-produce. Because restaurants know of the relatively low value, short time, and minimal effort customers are willing to commit to co-producing quick-serve dining experiences, they limit their customer must-do roles to simple, easily mastered, and low-effort tasks such as delivering their own food to the table, picking up the needed knives, forks, napkins, and sauces, and then cleaning up afterward—disposing of paper plates, plastic forks, and napkins in trash cans provided. On the other hand, when a task is valued highly enough that the customer is willing to commit time and effort to its co-production, the organization can expand the customer's role(s). For example, a gym, a rehabilitation clinic, or an MBA program will require a significant amount of total resources. Thus, these experiences all have greater co-production role requirements (i.e., must-dos) for customers. In type and quantity of resources required, eating

at a restaurant requires different roles and activities of the customer than completing an MBA. It is important to note that both the total combined KSAs required for the customer to obtain the desired experience and the potential resource gap caused by differences in customer KSAs will vary from one type of service experience to another.

5.2. Step 2: Define the KSAs of targeted customers

The second step follows directly from the first. Once the organization has identified the total resources and capabilities required to perform all the tasks and roles required for a successful service experience, it now needs to decide which it will do and which it will expect its customers to do. This step allows the organization to define which KSAs are expected of the customer in the customer segment(s) targeted. The matrix described earlier offers an analytic tool to determine what types of KSAs the customer should be expected to bring to the experience and which ones the organization must plan on providing.

While there is no such thing as a typical customer, research on customers in the target market together with actual customer data gathered by the organization reveal which KSAs customers are likely to bring to the service experience. For example, if the customer is expected to bring an ability to read and follow written directions in English, then the tasks customers need to perform can be presented in written English. But, depending upon the neighborhood or

region where the organization provides its service, it may also offer directions in other languages that its targeted customers may speak. Essentially, the organization needs to intimately understand the customer segment(s) that it seeks to co-create value with and offer accommodations—in this case, a range of languages.

Service leaders carefully design service experiences with the targeted customers' KSAs in mind so they know what gaps their organizations should be prepared to fill before a customer ever enters the physical location or accesses the website. Indeed, even seemingly small details can make big differences in customer experiences when they are valued by those targeted customers (Bolton, Gustafsson, McColl-Kennedy, Sirianni, & Tse, 2014). Disney knows from its extensive customer research that a percentage of its guests will require motorized assistance; therefore, it intentionally locates this resource at its park entrances. Likewise, universities know a certain percentage of students will require remedial assistance as they begin their educational experience and hence provide remedial courses for them. While these are simple and somewhat obvious examples, the lesson is clear: Service leaders plan for the gaps between what they expect their customers can do and what they must do to have a successful service experience.

5.3. Step 3: Accurately assess the organization-customer resource gap in real time

The third step in filling the can-do/must-do gap is to create a capability to accurately assess any can-do/must-do gaps in real time. Regardless of how much customer research is done or how carefully the service is designed and planned, customers will vary in their KSAs. They are different not only from each other but also from one customer experience touchpoint to the next. Customers bring different levels of willingness to co-produce and have different levels of knowledge, skills, and abilities to perform their quasi-employee roles. They can learn from repeated experiences and improve their capabilities to perform their roles in co-production, but they can also learn what they don't want to do. For example, while Home Depot knows that many customers will be better at using the self-checkout the more they use it, they also know that some customers vow to never use that technology. Thus, they plan for both by offering different options for customers to pay. Home Depot accepts its responsibility for filling any resource gaps between what its customers can do and what they must do to have a successful experience by providing employees with the necessary

knowledge, skills, and abilities to make up the difference. Similarly, hotels and airlines fill these same gaps with online and kiosk check-ins.

5.4. Step 4: Train people, structure delivery systems, and design the service to accommodate potential gaps caused by variability in customers' KSAs

Accommodating customer variation in KSAs requires developing plans and procedures for filling customer can-do/must-do gaps in real time. However, there is more to filling this gap than creating a new employee training program. Making up for any differences between what customers can do and must do to have a successful service experience also includes reassessing service delivery systems and experience design. Thus, a Web portal should be reviewed to ensure it accommodates variability in customer capabilities to access the service. For example, service leaders of online services include a help icon to enable customers unfamiliar with the site to get help using it. Litigation attorneys, tax preparation programs, and some retailers have an icon on their websites to allow users to talk to a real person in case potential customers are perplexed by the technology. Telephone trees offer callers a '0' option if their needs are not met in the standard menu choices. Agents are available at airports and hotel check-ins to assist customers who need help getting a boarding pass or registering for a room. Service leaders make a deliberate decision on how to respond in real time to accommodate their customers' variability in KSAs by how they train their employees and design the experience.

5.5. Step 5: Follow up on mistakes and continuously improve the process

Perhaps most important in creating any strategy to fill the gap between what a customer can do and what a customer must do is to follow up on any mistakes and continuously improve the process. Much has been written on the importance of finding and fixing mistakes in the service experience. Without question, service leaders do this with passion. They want to know when they failed to provide the experience expected by their customers because they failed to fill a gap between what the customer can do and must do. Thus, they systematically collect data on these mistakes to inform the continuous improvement in their training programs, delivery systems, and experience design that will prevent these from reoccurring. They don't expect to be perfect because most services require human interaction and humans are not perfect. Thus, they plan

for failures and constantly sharpen their real-time assessment procedures for finding gaps between customers' can-dos and must-dos. Emirates (n.d.) is a good example. Internationally recognized for its excellence in service, the airline group believes customer experience is its differentiator:

Our challenge is to constantly re-look at what we do and to keep designing and delivering an Emirates experience. . . . A commitment to customer service is therefore a critical value that all employees demonstrate internally and externally across the organization.

6. Lessons you can use

This article expands on the roles customers play in the co-creation of value to focus on the roles the organization must play in filling gaps between the resources and capabilities (KSAs) customers can and are willing to bring to the service experience and the total sum of resources (combined KSAs) required for a successful service experience. Our five-step framework captures the strategic process used by exemplar service organizations to ensure that any gaps between what customers must do and what they can do are filled. While we leave it for others to explore the motivational factors (or willingness) to perform the roles required in value co-creation and co-production, we spotlight how service leaders have accepted responsibility to recognize and then plan ways to fill any customer resource gaps to avoid failing their customers. They have built into their service delivery systems, employee training, and service design the resources and capabilities to identify and make up the difference between the unique stocks of resources each customer brings to a service experience and those required for meeting or exceeding expectations. We believe the five-step process is a useful tool for all organizations when planning and preparing to ensure the combined KSAs are accounted for in service offerings to targeted customers. When service experiences require customers to successfully play a role in co-producing their experiences, the five steps can be applied to fill any gaps between those things customers can do and those that they must do to achieve service success.

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