

Is the customer always right?



BAILLIE SCHEETZ, CAPITAL IDEAS

More from Baillie Scheetz, Capital Ideas ([HTTP://EDMONTONJOURNAL.COM/AUTHOR/BAILLIE-SCHEETZ-CAPITAL-IDEAS](http://edmontonjournal.com/author/baillie-scheetz-capital-ideas))

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Capital Ideas members were asked by a growing business about whether to expand products and services.

Here's what members of our community of business owners helping business owners had to say:

“50 per cent of customers are wrong to the degree that when they enter your business half of them are looking at the wrong product, they actually need a better model or lesser model. Be it selling a vehicle, insurance or construction what the customer thinks they need is not what they really need. As a professional, it is your job to guide them to the best product for their needs without making them feel wrong. That is called salesmanship.”

Mark Emenau, CEO of Exelect Recruiting Inc., exelect.com
(<http://exelect.com>)

“If you or your company caused the problem, apologize, fix it and reward the customer. It's always a rewarding challenge to change the difficult customer into a delightful customer. But know that you always have the right to fire that customer. It's a great discussion starter when I am coaching or instructing in professional sales.”

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Jim Spiers, coach, facilitator and mentor at Microbusiness Training Centre, microbusiness.ca (<http://microbusiness.ca/>)



Vicky Walker, founder of Empor Consulting/ PHOTO SUPPLIED BY:Vicky Walker

“*The customer’s perspective is based upon information available as applied to their business. If there is a misalignment between my perspective and theirs, then the onus is on me to educate and ask questions in a way that allows the customer to envision things in a new way. Maybe I’m the one that gets educated. Either*

way, that shared insight gives us the opportunity to come up with new solutions that we co-created and voila, they're right!

Vicky Walker, founder of Empor Consulting, emporconsulting.ca (<http://emporconsulting.ca/>)

“While the customer may not always be right. They are NEVER wrong. Problems and challenges will always arise. How you handle it is what your customers will remember. Handle these challenging situations in a positive way, and they will remember a great service experience.”

Keith Soubliere, general manager for Beyond Vision Optometrists, [beyondvision.ca](http://www.beyondvision.ca) (<http://www.beyondvision.ca/>)

“We begin by teaching our clients to ask is this the right customer? Are they a good fit for our business? Can we provide value they will pay a premium for? Can we serve them profitably? Do we like them? Once the answer to those questions is yes, the matter of the customer always being right is no longer an issue.”

Jeffrey Cullen, co-founder of BaseCamp4 Inc., [basecamp4.ca](http://www.basecamp4.ca) (<http://www.basecamp4.ca/>)

“I believe that the customer should always feel that they are being treated with respect and listened to. However, I think it's a myth to say the customer is always right. The customer may be asking for something which is not possible or ethical. It is the role of the representative of the company to take the time to understand the customer's perspective and then to respectfully explore and explain what can be done.”

Claudia Verburgh, founder and principal consultant at Engaging

Workplaces, [johncmaxwellgroup.com/claudiaverburgh](http://www.johncmaxwellgroup.com/claudiaverburgh)

(<http://www.johncmaxwellgroup.com/claudiaverburgh>)

“Essentially yes, customers can tell you when they are unsatisfied with their experience but they’re often wrong on what the remedy is. When something is causing an adverse customer experience you must determine the root of the problem in order to properly address it instead of dealing with the symptom.”

Zachary Beaudoin, president of Praxia Entertainment,

[praxiaentertainment.com](http://www.praxiaentertainment.com) (<http://www.praxiaentertainment.com/>)

The customer is not always right. In reality you have to figure out who’s right and who’s wrong for your business. Companies spend a great deal of time and money selecting the right staff, but show little regard in selecting their customers beyond whether their cheque clears. At Market Grade, we believe in supporting markets that will allow us to make a significant contribution by focusing on client projects that are truly important and meaningful to us.

Kris Hans, strategist at Market Grade Ltd., [marketgrade.com](http://www.marketgrade.com)

(<http://www.marketgrade.com/>)

“Not necessarily, but they should always be treated as an honoured guest. Then if something goes wrong, because you’ve started the relationship off on the right foot, they are not likely to assume that you don’t value them or that you don’t care about their concern , but that it was an honest mistake and you’ll do whatever is reasonable to solve the problem.”

Joanne Blake, founder of Style for Success Inc., [styleforsuccess.com](http://www.styleforsuccess.com)

(<http://www.styleforsuccess.com/>)

“The customer wants to be right even when everyone knows they’re wrong. Therefore, it is a sign of good customer service when the company can create a situation where the customer can be shown the fallacy of their argument but still walk away satisfied.”

Deirdre StLuke, corporate storyteller

“The customer is always right in their own opinion. It is our job to be

educated in what we sell or provide to fit our product into their opinion. However, there are customers who believe they are right when they are not. As a professional it is our job to make every effort to make the customer feel they are right, or empower them with some facts and choices, then the end decision is theirs.”

Suzan Burtic, president of Legends Limousine, [legendslimousine.ca](http://www.legendslimousine.ca)
(<http://www.legendslimousine.ca/>)

“Like all of us, customers are right sometimes and wrong other times. Firstly, you should try to understand what your customer wants to happen. Then you have to identify to the customer what requests you can accommodate, explain why you can’t accommodate other requests, and provide alternatives where practical. Finally, you should step back and evaluate if there are systemic improvements you can make to improve your business moving forward.”

Josh Spurrell, president of Spurrell & Associates Chartered Professional Accountants, [spurrell.ca](http://www.spurrell.ca) (<http://www.spurrell.ca/>)

“Absolutely NOT! In this day and age of instant gratification, high expectations and unreasonable demands, customers have become a force with which to be reckoned. Don’t get me wrong – businesses thrive on customer relationships. I get that. Some customers however cross the line. A company needs to be clear on their core values, their policies and practices and communicate same – and then be consistent. And that’s not always in the customer’s favor.”

Pat Mussieux, founder and CEO of Pat Mussieux, [patmussieux.com](http://www.patmussieux.com)
(<http://www.patmussieux.com/>)

“I don’t believe in there being a “right”. The customer is paying you for a service/product and it is in your best interest to deliver at the best of your capability. If you think you have delivered a product or service that you would be happy receiving then the transaction is finished and hopefully the customer is happy. As long as you listen to the customer, treat them with respect, and are fair — that is all you can do.”

Crystal Puim, owner and lead photographer at

Crystal.Puim.Photography, [crystalphotos.ca](http://www.crystalphotos.ca/) (<http://www.crystalphotos.ca/>)

“Steve Jobs said, most customers don’t even know what they want. If you believe that the customer is always right you are going to run into a lot of customer challenges. If you want raving fans, educate your customers on your product or service. Be proactive and handle every situation but the reality is some customers are going to take advantage of your desire to please them. So not always.”

Laurie McNaughton, business and executive coach, actioncoach.com/lauriemcnaughton (<http://actioncoach.com/lauriemcnaughton>)

“Particularly in the world of professional services, a client is not always right! This is why it is imperative that service-providers take good and relevant notes, contemporaneously with the events. Even when the client is wrong, a service provider can communicate this in a way that is respectful and results in a great dialogue with the client.”

Laura M. Schuler, shared general counsel, Schuler Law Group, [schulerlaw.ca](http://www.schulerlaw.ca/) (<http://www.schulerlaw.ca/>)

“The customer is not always right. There is a distinct difference between providing good customer service and being taken advantage of. Let’s face it, some people will complain simply to get something discounted whether there was a legitimate problem or not. The key is to handle these matters professionally and diplomatically, regardless if the customer had a valid issue or not.”

Debbie Engel, owner of Debbie L. Engel Professional Corporation, [depc.ca](http://www.depc.ca/) (<http://www.depc.ca/>)

“In today’s online world, this ancient adage is actually more true than ever. With the widespread use of social media, anyone and everyone has a voice and the power to help your business’s reputation, or hurt it – which can be very costly, especially to small business owners. Not every customer is right for you, but every customer is right. The businesses who thrive now and in the future will be the ones who focus on attracting their perfect customer and give them exactly what they need, making each

interaction an absolute pleasure.”

Katie Pearse, online communications specialist, [hellobrandlab.com](http://www.hellobrandlab.com/)
(<http://www.hellobrandlab.com/>)



“Lots of times yes, but not always. It is good always aim for great customer service but to contribute to the the long term health of your business your employees should be a priority over some customers.”

*Kris Kasawski, principal and founder, parkpower.ca
(<http://parkpower.ca/>)*

“The need of the customer is always right, however, the solution they think they need is not. That is part of the service that organizations provide, innovative solutions to needs (and wants). If the customer was always right we would not have as much innovation.”

Darryl Moore, vice-president of Marketing and Communication at Executrade, [executrade.com](http://www.executrade.com/) (<http://www.executrade.com/>)

“Not always. Its important to listen to the customer and understand the issues. However, focus on listening and working with your team first as they will best work with the customers to resolve any issues and focus on a higher level of quality and service delivery. Its also important to help educate the customer on the Why around your offering and services. Once the customer understands the Why, they are more reasonable and will work with you.”

Ashif Mawji, president of Trust Science, [trustscience.com](http://www.trustscience.com/)
(<http://www.trustscience.com/>)

“In the greater sense of the phrase; yes. The customer is the free market and the free market will dictate if a business is on the right path. It’s more about society being okay with crocks as footwear than about a customer trying to substitute calamari for fries at a restaurant.”

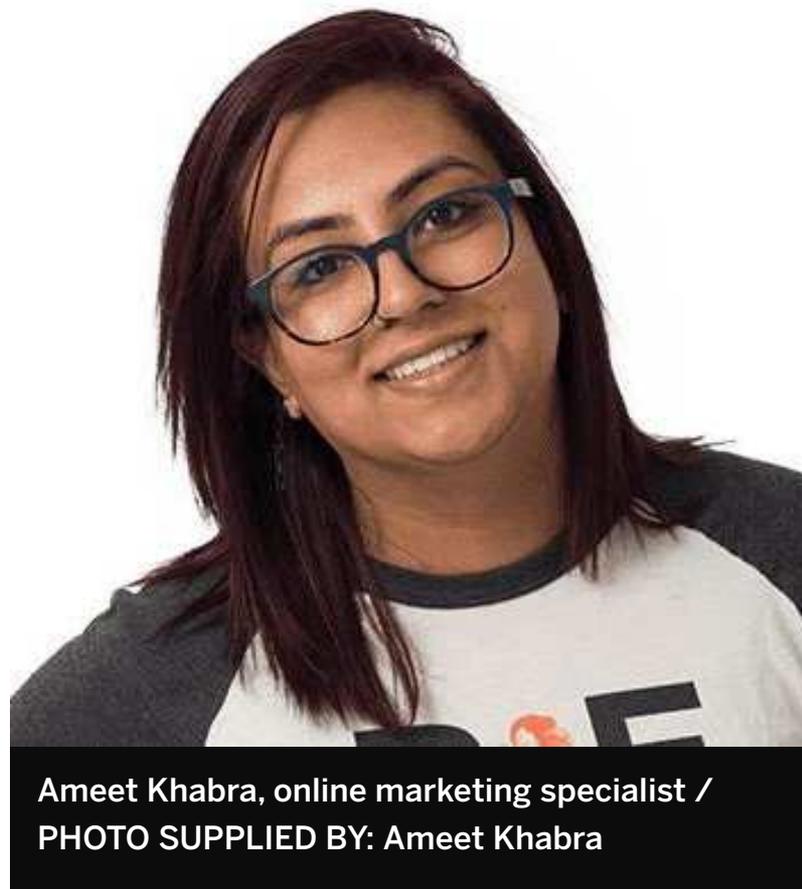
Brady Grumpelt, event co-ordination and staffing at Book Your Own Bartender, [BookYourOwnBartender.com](http://www.bookyourownbartender.com/)
(<http://www.bookyourownbartender.com/>)

“No. The customer can be very wrong and wrong for your business. There are times that you just have to say someone just isn’t worth the time you will have to invest. Knowing when to work with a difficult customer and when to fire an impossible one is only learned through trial and error.”

Howard Suissa, founder of Suissa Design, [suissa.ca](http://www.suissa.ca/) (<http://www.suissa.ca/>)

“No and that’s okay! Gracefully, we as product/service experts explain the options & solutions to the client while respecting their opinion and priorities. Being knowledgeable and humble, often we provide not what the client asked for but what they need in order to solve problems and make educated decisions in order to achieve their objective. In the end, it is not important who is right, but rather that the needs are met as planned.”

Conrad Erbes, CE Security & Consulting Inc., [cesecurity.ca](http://www.cesecurity.ca/)
(<http://www.cesecurity.ca/>)



Ameet Khabra, online marketing specialist /
PHOTO SUPPLIED BY: Ameet Khabra

“In short, no, the customer is not always right. The reason being is that they have hired me to execute a task that they are not able to execute - they, generally, are not an expert in the field, so for them to be right is pretty unlikely.”

Ameet Khabra, online marketing specialist, [ameetkhabra.marketing](http://www.ameetkhabra.marketing/) (<http://www.ameetkhabra.marketing/>)

“Yes and no. Sometimes the customer may be factually wrong about an incident, BUT the customer is always entitled to feelings they had about the experience with your brand. It doesn't matter who is at fault, if they had an experience with you that was unpleasant, it is your responsibility to try – if possible – to make it better. Sometimes, however, it's just not possible.”

Randy Brososky, chief rogue and bottlwasher, groupofrogues.com
(<http://groupofrogues.com/>)

“It is true that the customer is always entitled to their opinion. It is our responsibility to suggest viable solutions. Sometimes that means reframing the context of the problem. Hearing, “I’ve never thought about it like that” it always music to my ears. It means a discussion has begun that creates awareness on both sides. The issue shouldn’t be, “is the customer always right, it should be, “has the customer been heard and understood?” That creates success for both parties.”

Kathy Johnston Umbach, CEO of Human Dimensions Licensed Interior Design, [linkedin.com/profile](http://linkedin.com/profile/view?id=AAEAAA0v2uMBe8s3wMM0ygI7OACLLxqTGkAjHYM) (<http://linkedin.com/profile/view?id=AAEAAA0v2uMBe8s3wMM0ygI7OACLLxqTGkAjHYM>)

“No, it’s not true the customer is always right. You always have to listen to your customer, fully appreciate their issue and try to solve it but sometimes solving the issue just isn’t possible because your business and the product or service you offer just isn’t the right fit. You can’t be everything to everyone so focus on serving your core customer the best you can and treating those that you can’t serve with respect and fairness.”

Blaine Bertsch, founder of Dryrun, dryrun.com (<http://dryrun.com/>)

“In our business, the answer is no. Our job is to share our knowledge & expertise with clients, to foster trust and ultimately become a trusted advisor. If you have a great relationship with your clients, they’ll be more than willing to listen. How you communicate it is absolutely key.”

Andrew Bryson, president of Quercus Solutions, [quercussolutions.com](http://www.quercussolutions.com)
(<http://www.quercussolutions.com/>)

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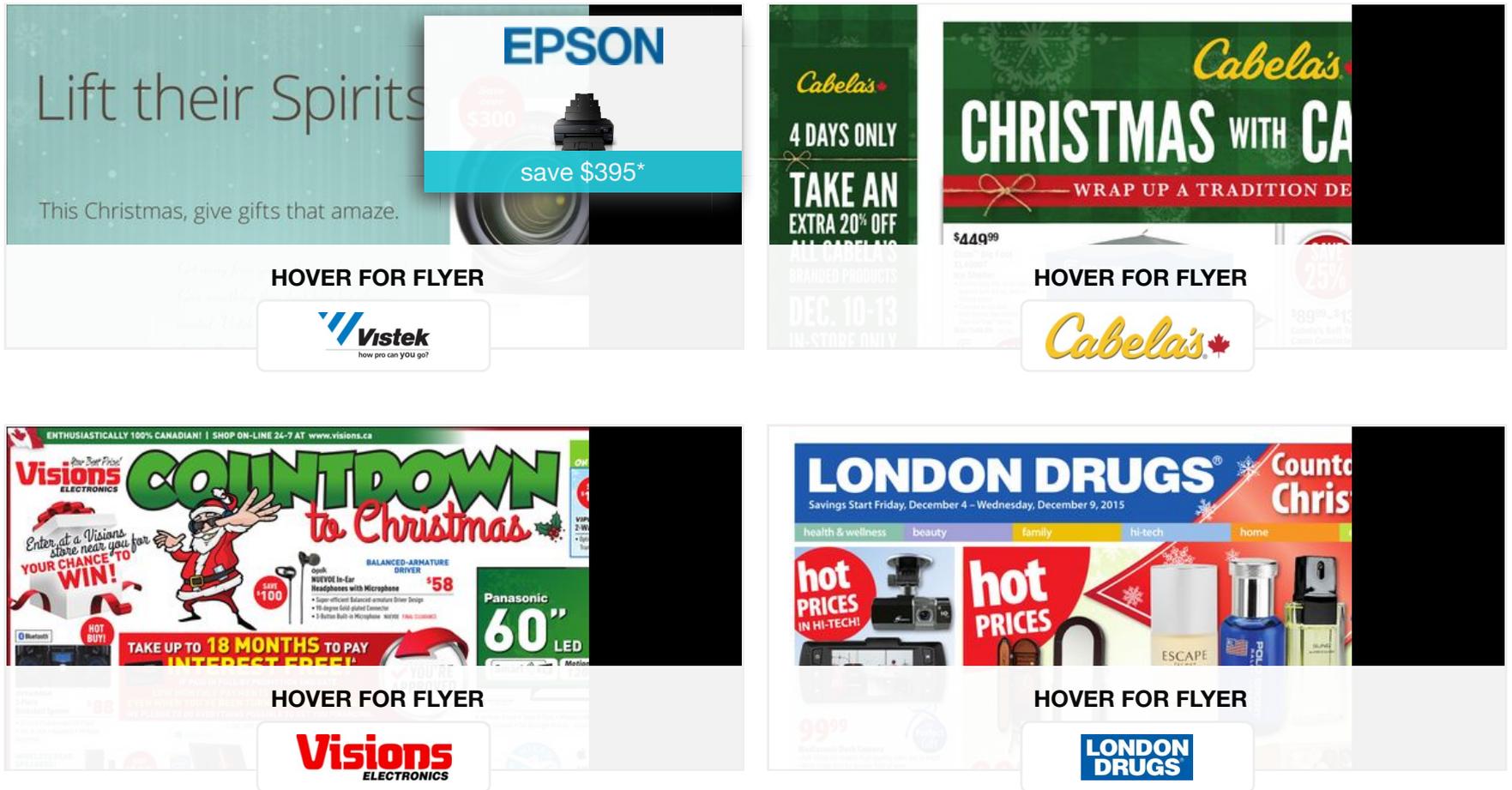
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(<http://capitalideasedmonton.com/capital-questions/what-does-employee-health-and-wellness-mean-at-your-business/>)

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