



Nathan Willard of HOODZ On 5 Ways to Create a WOW! Customer Experience

03/02/2023

Great customer service is holding yourself or your business accountable for their actions- If a customer issue arises, it is important to address it right away and offer a solution to the problem. I have always felt that showing empathy and respect in addition to an apology followed by a solution can go a long way.



As *part of our series about the [five things a business should do to create a Wow! customer experience](#), I had the pleasure of interviewing Nathan Willard and HOODZ.*

HOODZ originated from a successful small kitchen exhaust cleaning business in Northern Michigan and has been operating since 1972. The brand focuses on commercial kitchen exhaust cleaning as well as a recent expansion into pizza ovens, kitchen filters and pressure washing. Their team of passionate experts are dedicated to taking on the projects that most small businesses need in order to stay up to fire safety code. Moreover, HOODZ is the leading kitchen commercial cleaning business in the world, filling demands in any large kitchen facility. HOODZ is part of the BELFOR Franchise Group family of residential and commercial services franchise brands and is owned by worldwide disaster recovery leader BELFOR Property Restoration. Since HOODZ joined the BELFOR Franchise Group, the brand has driven tremendous growth systemwide, with a commitment to evolving its services and achieving tight-knit relationships with local businesses.

About BELFOR Franchise Group

[BELFOR Franchise Group](#) is the world's largest residential and commercial services franchise group based on geographic footprint. The privately held, multi-concept franchise system is a division of [BELFOR Property Restoration](#), the world's largest disaster restoration company. For over a decade, BELFOR Franchise Group has empowered entrepreneurs by offering industry-leading training, support and equipment, turnkey business models, and ongoing coaching and business development. BELFOR Franchise Group is the parent organization for 13 of the strongest service-based franchise opportunities for home and commercial cleaning and restoration. The franchise brands include: [1-800-BOARDUP](#), [1-800 WATER DAMAGE](#), [Blue Kangaroo Packoutz](#), [Chem-Dry & Upholstery Cleaning](#), [COOL-BINZ](#), [DUCTZ International](#), [HOODZ International](#), [N-Hance Wood Refinishing](#), [The Patch Boys](#), [redbox+ Dumpsters](#), [Safer Home Services](#), [WINMAR](#), and [Z PLUMBERZ](#). For more information, please visit <https://belforfranchisegroup.com/>.

Thank you so much for joining us! Our readers would love to “get to know you” a bit better. Can you tell us a bit about your ‘backstory’ and how you got started?

I started working in the franchising industry just under 20 years ago in Ann Arbor, MI. I have been fortunate enough to work in different capacities, both at the franchisor and at the franchisee level. There's a lot of joy that comes from helping business owners succeed and achieve their dreams. As someone who was once in their shoes, I enjoy being a part of a connected network of people who have the same goal. I have been with HOODZ now for seven and a half years and fell in love with the HOODZ model as it has repeat business, code compliance, and low labor demands. Those components add up to some major successes.

Can you share a story about the funniest mistake you made when you were first starting? Can you tell us what lessons or ‘take aways’ you learned from that?

During my first training week, I was cleaning an oven and put the conveyor belt on backward. Even if you don't know anything about kitchen hoods cleaning, you can only make that mistake once. From this mistake, I learned that it's important to follow the step-by-step training guide provided by our corporate team. We have these systems and processes in place for a reason, so it's very important to follow them.

None of us are able to achieve success without some help along the way. Is there a particular person who you are grateful towards who helped get you to where you are? Can you share a story?

Growing up, I was always taught from my parents to work hard for what you want and appreciate what you have. For example, music has always played an important role in my life. When I was twelve, Kenwood released the limited edition JL-802 speakers and of course, I had to have them. My parents quickly expressed to me that if I want them, I should get a job to pay for it. To their surprise, I got a job at our local golf range and woke up at 5 a.m. every Monday, Wednesday, and Saturday that summer. After two months of working, I purchased those beautiful speakers and still have them today. From this experience, I learned the importance of earning the things you want in life. Much like in business, it takes hard work, dedication and passion to be successful.

In your words, can you share a few reasons why great customer service and a great customer experience is essential for success in business?

Business, especially service-based industries, will almost always fail without consistent and superior customer service. An exceptional customer experience, which must include top-notch service, builds trust and instills confidence in consumers. On top of that, from a business owner's perspective, managing a business with a focus on customer service is much more rewarding and enjoyable than the alternative. Not only does it increase customer loyalty, but it creates an extraordinary positive work environment for your staff, enriching the lives of everyone involved. I'll often encourage business owners with a famous, but simple quote by Ray Kroc, as he said it best: "...look after the customer and the business will take care of itself."

We have all had times either in a store, or online, when we've had a very poor experience as a customer or user. If the importance of a good customer experience is so intuitive, and apparent, where is the disconnect? How is it that so many companies do not make this a priority?

I think that most companies set the intention of making customer service a priority. In other words, no business says 'let's see how badly we can treat the customers today.' The issue, possibly, is finding the right people, making that service experience a priority, and training it. Empowering the people who are a part of your team to make the right call can go a long way. This can be seen as treating them with respect, instilling a sense of pride for the company they work for, and being consistent with that message is going to take your business far.

Do you think that more competition helps force companies to improve the customer experience they offer? Are there other external pressures that can force a company to improve the customer experience?

There is no doubt that competition forces companies to improve their customer service. I think that good competition helps with improving customer service. There are many

external factors that can force a company to improve customer service, but I would worry about its success. You shouldn't be "forced" to have good customer service. If you are not focused on the customer, what are you in business for?

Can you share with us a story from your experience about a customer who was "Wowed" by the experience you provided?

One of the amazing things I hear almost every day is how customers ALWAYS come back to HOODZ after being unsatisfied with other companies. I love hearing about the consistent satisfaction customers have with our brand. Our quality services and professionalism are proven to be the best out there. There are always exceptions, of



course, but most of the time, they come back. Looking at my personal experience with customer service, I had an eye-opening occurrence when I worked for a heating and cooling company back in the day. For example, a customer we had who was about 90 years old lived on the north side of Detroit. One day, his boiler had broken and the replacement part was in New York, which to replace would take at least 3 days to ship. The man had no family that was close that he could go to, and no means to heat his home. I noticed the problem at hand and realized I had an obligation as his service provider to help him. That very same day, I gathered heaters and drove back to his home to ensure he had a heat source that night. From this experience, I learned that taking care of the customer goes way beyond the job requirements.

Did that Wow! experience have any long-term ripple effects? Can you share the story?

The man in the story above remained a friend and loyal customer for years until he passed. Regardless of who the customer was, I learned that good decisions can create positive rewards for years.

Based on your experience and success, what are the five most important things a business leader should know in order to create a Wow! Customer Experience. Please share a story or an example for each.

1. Happy employees equate to happy customers — Creating a positive culture, your business will result in a better customer experience.

2. Good customer service results in a referral business — HOODZ continues to grow in markets with minimal advertising because of the referrals we receive from other businesses.
3. Customer trust is based on customer service and quality — Being a resource and a problem solver for the customer will create trust and long-lasting relationships with the customer. I have always attempted to have a great vendor relationship should a customer need a good electrician, plumber, etc., I was able to provide a trusted recommendation.
4. Great customer service is holding yourself or your business accountable for their actions- If a customer issue arises, it is important to address it right away and offer a solution to the problem. I have always felt that showing empathy and respect in addition to an apology followed by a solution can go a long way.
5. Continuous customer service improvement — It is important to collect feedback to further improve how your customer service is viewed. The goal should be to always look at ways to improve.

Are there a few things that can be done so that when a customer or client has a Wow! experience, they inspire others to reach out to you as well?

Absolutely! They can tell their friends, family, and co-workers about how well they were treated. Just as important, though, if they did not receive the service that they expected, I love hearing that feedback as well so I can find a solution to the issue at hand.

You are a person of great influence. If you could start a movement that would bring the most amount of good to the most amount of people, what would that be? You never know what your idea can trigger. :-)

Although I appreciate new movements, one that is already near and dear to my heart is the Ronald McDonald House. Food, toys, household items etc. are great ways to help support this charity. My family utilized the Ronald McDonald House for two months when my son was born. I cannot begin to explain what they do on a daily basis to allow a family to be steps away from a loved child at the Hospital.

How can our readers follow you on social media?

www.linkedin.com/in/nathan-willard-6a8491122

This was very inspiring. Thank you so much for joining us!