

Personal Value Creation Characteristics – Your Success Foundation

By Renee Jones & Steve Trecha

Best quality, lowest price, best service, on-time delivery, exceeding expectations. You know the buzz – these characteristics are often a company’s definition of value for their customers. It’s what companies propose to do. The question is, what are the personal value creation characteristics, PVCC, that make the customer value happen?

We define Personal Value Creation Characteristics as those special behaviors, and often individual tendencies, that create extra value in a company’s products and services. They better serve while creating memorable customer experiences. “It’s what I am and it’s what I do, it’s a personal reflection of me,” offers Renee Jones, Executive Assistant to the Executive Vice President, of Volunteers of America Michigan. The VOA is renowned for its relentless efforts to help those in need across the state and nation.

“An organization’s success is based on how its people interact, function and how they address the day-to-day as well as the most perplexing tasks”, says Steve Trecha, Integrated Strategies, Chief Results Officer. Your work fills a large part of your life. To be truly satisfied, you want to do great work, including putting forth great customer effort. The reality and opportunity is recognizing and growing personal value creation characteristics that can drive customer success (see Top 10 Personal Value Creation Characteristics graphic for the list). Here are a few examples:

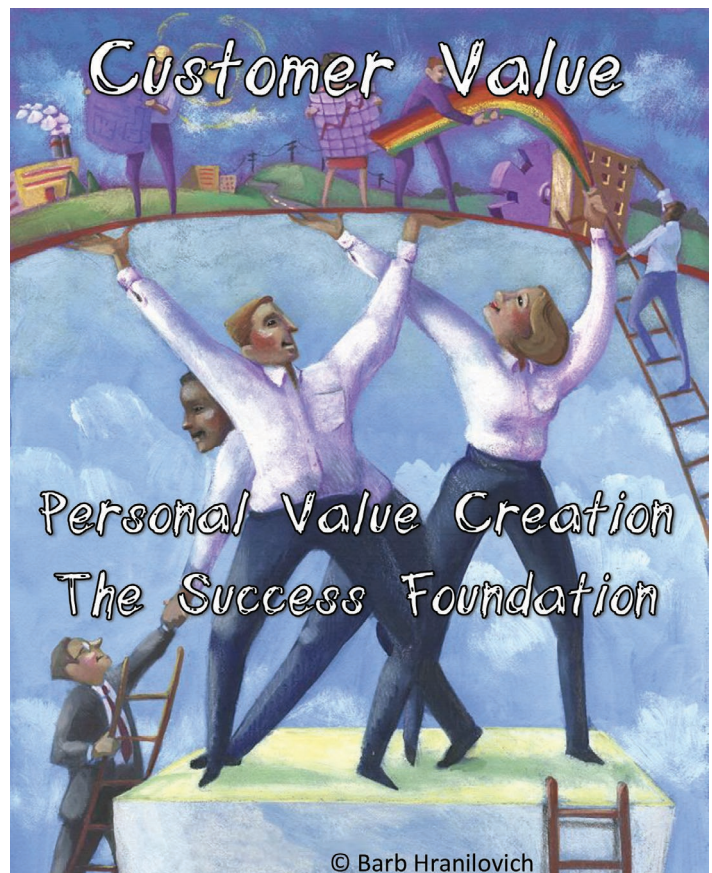
At some point we all become problem solvers. As business people, we should own the pathway to driving our customers’ success. Joel Smith is a forester working in log procurement and sales at Devereaux Saw Mill, located in Pewamo. They harvest, manufacture and globally distribute quality Michigan hardwoods for high-end flooring, cabinets, furniture and millwork.

Smith says, “It’s self-motivation; customers have a broad idea of what they want, yet often they don’t know the specifics, the options or pathways to make it happen.” Introducing forest management as well as a profitable harvest, or simply selecting the correct grades and cuts of lumber are examples of opening doors to customer success. Personal value creation requires a want and need to continually improve knowledge and skills.

Customers expect you to know what you are talking about. “You demonstrate your knowledge by putting in the time and effort to

get to know your customers’ needs and how to best meet them,” Smith notes. Smith goes the extra mile, literally, walking an entire woodlot marking and grading trees. “This is essential in building trust and confidence with the land owner. It confirms that I am the right person for this job,” says Smith.

While Smith is working in the deep woods of Northern Michigan, Zach Pashak, the Founder and President of Detroit Bikes, is manufacturing two-wheeled transportation in downtown Detroit. His passion is apparent. “We manufacture in Detroit, we largely hire Detroit talent, and I live in Detroit,” states Pashak. “I find it disingenuous any other way.” Detroit Bikes’ mission is to encourage cycling by making an accessible, enjoyable bicycle while



Top 10 Personal Value Creation Characteristics

- Knows the Mission
- Relationship Focused
- Massive Communicator
- Extended Passion
- Makes a Difference
- Future Orientation
- Seeks Feedback
- Problem Solver
- Invest for Customer
- Feel Good About It

Personal Value Creation Motto - "Customers are not just customers, they are people with needs to be met."

continuing Detroit's legacy of quality manufacturing and design. "I am an urban planner at heart, so to employ local talent, leverage Detroit's transportation history and help improve city mobility just made a lot of sense," says Pashak.

Hone the ability to listen, dissect, seek to understand and know when to offer a solution. "We can't solve all of a customer's forest management or lumber needs," adds Smith. "I listen and if our company can't help, I will recommend a competitor who is a better fit for the customer; it's simply the right thing to do. Ultimately we want to make people successful." That's a PVCC and a great strategy. Smith sees those customers returning in the future.

Renee Jones says, "You can't think about customers as being customers, they are people. And I think of them as just that – people." It's a core philosophy that builds the foundation of personal value success. Often when confronted with a customer need, it's not the chatter that drives the solution, it's the ability to listen. "There are needs to be met every day," continues Jones. The need is not always a product or service; it can simply be to listen. Being solution oriented, I listen wholeheartedly."

If you are going to grow your ability to serve your customer, you have to be willing to invest for your customer. "It can get frustrating if I can't meet a client's request," notes Jones. "I will research and build my knowledge and skills so the next time that request will be met." Pashak invested \$2 million to create Detroit Bikes. His vision and insight led to investing in his passion as well as his "to-be-created" customers. It's a personal value creation characteristic.

How do you know your personal value creation is working? Feedback is mission critical. "Take the time to get feedback from your clients, co-workers, boss, family, whomever," notes Jones. That's great advice. After all, how can you become a customer service expert, understand what your co-workers are looking for or even fully relate to your family unless you ask for feedback? It should be part of what everyone does every day – seek feedback. "I ask continually," adds Smith. "95 percent of our customers are happy. We work to understand why, as well as dealing with the five percent that aren't satisfied." Make getting feedback an essential part of you.

There is not always a hard measure of value. Those who think about and have been successful in linking their personal values and skills to their customer outcomes understand this. At the end of the day, it can simply be the feeling that you've contributed. Pashak states, "It's about the vibe, knowing you are growing and aligning, being alive. I think about the triple bottom line: community service involvement, environmental stewardship and the ability to be profitable."

"It's serving the mission, feeling good as I head home at the end of the day," says Jones. "It's about knowing I am doing what I like to do and am continually working to do it well," adds Smith. For some they are innate, but for others personal value creation characteristics can be learned and embraced to generate real results. PVCC drive real customer value measured in service, quality, price, delivery and exceeding expectations. After all it is success and success is the only option! — **SBAM**



Renee Jones is Executive Assistant to the EVP at Volunteers of America MI. Volunteers of America provides help for the homeless, food for the hungry, employment and shelter for veterans, housing for poor seniors, and a helping hand for struggling families. Our Community Kitchen serves over 130,000 meals per year to the most vulnerable. Learn more about ways you can help at voami.org or call Renee at (517) 489-5278 or email, rjones@voami.org.



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