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# THE CASE FOR CUSTOMER HAPPINESS

I'm sitting in a café at the corner of Orchard and Scotts roads in Singapore after a long flight from New York. The iced latte is just what I need to slake the weary, jet-lagged feeling that's defining this moment. Surrounding me are sparkling shopping malls, massive five-storey-tall outdoor TV screens, restaurants, hotels and movie theaters. Luxury brand names spill out of boutiques onto the sidewalk as easily as the shoppers who flit from store to store in search of retail satisfaction.

Singapore is one of the epicenters of shopping, not just in Asia, but globally. Of course, nearby Hong Kong deserves a nod for its stretch of malls from Pacific Place to Central and into the International Finance Centre of Hong Kong Island, and for its massive retail malls in Tsim Sha Tsui. Expansive shopping malls have also been developed in Beijing and Shanghai. The Ginza shopping district in Tokyo has been revamped. The United Arab

Emirates' shopping malls are following suit. In South America, too, I have seen glitzy new malls. In terms of sheer, over-the-top, slick consumerism, Singapore is at least equal to—or surpasses—all of them, including the Mall of America in Minnesota, Fifth Avenue in New York City, the Golden Mile in Chicago and any European shopping street.

There are many nationalities sitting around me. I listen to excited shoppers talking in different languages about what they've just purchased. Everyone seems to be making the most of their lattes, cappuccinos and warmed muffins before beginning the next round of retail therapy. People seem to enjoy that sort of experience: relaxing between shopping. More than that, and this may seem strange, they look—and sound—happy. There seem to be happy customers everywhere!

How can this be? Haven't philosophers over the centuries and numerous writers and psychologists argued and proved that materialism is bad for us? That shopping distracts us from achieving our true goals in life? That it's superficial and that commercial consumption can't create happiness?

Maybe these authors were missing something. Maybe people can experience happiness as consumers. Maybe it is possible, as the ads of stores surrounding me proclaim, to “find happiness in shoes,” to “find happiness *within*” (ice cream, that is) and to “forget love” entirely and “fall in chocolate.” After all, how do you explain consumers' obsession with Apple products? How do you explain why people may go out of their way to find something as mundane as the right hair conditioner? And doesn't an argument over Coca-Cola versus Pepsi sound like a lovers' quarrel?

Consider McDonald's "Happy Meal."<sup>1</sup> Launched more than 30 years ago in June 1979, the "Happy Meal" is viewed by some as a gimmick to get young consumers hooked on the company's burgers and fries with a cheap toy. Nonetheless, in its approach McDonald's was far ahead of its time in considering the notion of customer happiness.

The usual explanation, brand preference, just doesn't seem to do full justice to what's going on. Some consumers do not just *prefer* a brand; they seem truly happy about their purchases and are genuinely in love with the brand.

The core premise of this book is that shopping for goods, buying them and consuming them can indeed make people happy. While consumerism and marketing are often critiqued as distracting individuals from the pursuit of finding happiness in their lives, if done right and with a genuine interest in consumers as real human beings, commercial activities and marketing can enhance an individual's well-being, quality of life and life satisfaction.

Specifically, shopping, buying and consuming *can* result in pleasurable moments and sometimes in meaningful and engaging experiences that create happiness. Moreover, customer happiness does not need to be a passing mood. It can last and create an intimate and ongoing close relationship between a company and its customers. This relationship can strengthen the brand and result in future revenue.

My argument is entirely consistent with conceptual developments and empirical research over the last decade in the field of psychology. Thus, throughout the book, I will use psychological concepts to develop strategies and methods that can lead to customer happiness.

## HAPPINESS: THE NEW APPROACH TO CUSTOMER BEHAVIOR

Nowadays, customer behavior is being approached on a different level and more deliberately than ever. Companies seek to build close relationships with their customers and not merely market to them using transparent advertising messages. They want customers to experience pleasure, find meaning in their products and services and be fully engaged online. Companies want to connect with their customers on an emotional level: they want them to fall in love with their products and services. They want to appear on customers' blogs and tweets and on their social networking sites.

As a result, companies today are spending big money—as well as much effort and time—to develop happiness campaigns and to incorporate them into their customer-oriented business strategies.

In 2012, following the success of its McCafé, McDonald's will accelerate a USD 2.4 billion program to rebuild, relaunch, and refurbish thousands of its restaurants around the world.<sup>2</sup> In what it's calling the first restaurant makeover since the mid-1970s, the company's "Experience Engineer" and VP of Concept and Design, Dennis Weil, has devised four concepts for seating zones: chilling out, working, casual dining and group events. The cool revamp, with its clean lines and modern design, is an effort to make McDonald's restaurants a place where people will come to hang out. It's supposed to be a sort of fast-food town square, a place where people will nurture relationships that researchers tell us are central to happiness. The plan appears to be a winner: sales are up 6 to 7 percent at locations that already sport the new look. The company is banking on the

fact that the new McDonald's will change behavior and draw in people for a mutually shared happy experience, rather than the traditional pattern of pick-up-and-go.

### **CUSTOMER HAPPINESS IS EVERYWHERE**

Customer happiness is no longer just associated with what you eat or drink. Hotels, car manufacturers and life insurance companies are trying to make us happy. Consumer electronics manufacturers are jumping on the bandwagon. Happiness is also no longer limited to large firms. Ask any Pilates studio or private yoga instructor: they all want to make you happy, too.

The concept may be coming to your local bank as well if you live in Australia. In 2007, the Bank of Western Australia in Perth, commonly known as Bankwest, challenged its larger competitors in the Australian banking industry to explain why banking can't be more positive. This led to its "Happy Banking" and "Banking Refreshed" advertising campaigns.<sup>3</sup> The ads showed various happiness experts helping the bank to understand what would make customers happy and how to improve service.

The retail campaign entailed the creation of 160 new branches across four states. According to Bankwest, from 2007 to 2010 the "Happy Banking" campaign helped double the number of customers, from 450,000 to over one million.

If today's marketers want to empathize and connect with customers, it's hard to imagine getting any closer to the target consumer than Procter & Gamble's (P&G) campaign for the Always brand of feminine hygiene products, "Have a Happy Period." As its dedicated website says: "This is the time of the month that's all about you. So be your own best friend. Make it your mantra to indulge yourself and celebrate 'beinggirl.'"<sup>4</sup>

The website hyperlinks to another website, seemingly aimed at pubescent girls and their concerns about menstruation, relationships and other pangs of adolescence.<sup>5</sup> Inspired by the recent wellness trend, the “Have a Happy Period” page gives tips on how to, well, have the best period ever. The website offers the following practical suggestions:

- Make a hot cup of herbal tea.
- Melt away stress by taking a warm bath with candlelight and bath oil.
- Take a walk or a yoga class.
- Watch TV with a heating pad on your stomach.
- Consider dry heating pads—warm wraps that will let you leave the house and participate fully in your life.
- Sleep in late on the weekends and serve yourself breakfast in bed.
- Satisfy your cravings for a particular food.

It’s important to note that this campaign, which started in 2007, got a lot of flak from journalists and letters from some indignant women, including this open missive to P&G from a blogger in Austin, Texas:

*“Sir, please inform your accounting department that, effective immediately, there will be an \$8 drop in monthly profits, for I have chosen to take my maxi-pad business elsewhere. And though I will certainly miss your Flexi-Wings, I will not for one minute miss your brand of condescending bullshit. And that’s a promise I will keep. Always.”<sup>6</sup>*

Yet, despite these and other subpar reviews of the campaign, it seems to be quite successful. Infegy's Social Radar social media monitoring and analytics system says the "Happy Period" campaign has remained overwhelmingly positive since it first appeared in March 2007. The campaign probably would not have worked 10 or 12 years ago, when customers did not desire such a personal relationship with manufacturers and brands, especially involving such a sensitive topic. Its success today shows how important the concept of happiness has become in people's lives.

Even national governments are getting in on the act. My colleague at Columbia Business School, Professor Joseph Stiglitz, a Nobel Prize-winning economist and former World Bank chief economist, is pushing governments to make sure they consider the happiness of citizens as equal to, if not more important than, the mere measure of gross domestic product (GDP).<sup>7</sup> He believes that looking at GDP without considering the cost of economic progress (environmental degradation, for example) gives a false picture, and he urges governments to look at both the assets and liabilities on society's balance sheet.

The idea behind this new approach is that after a certain point, rising national wealth stops making its citizens any happier. This effect, called the Easterlin Paradox, has raised the question "What does it take, then, to make people happy?" In response, "Happiness Economics" has emerged as a discipline over the past 15 years.<sup>8</sup> Combining economics with psychology and sociology, it quantitatively studies topics like well-being, quality of life and life satisfaction in addition to the traditional notions of wealth, such as income or gross domestic product.

In late 2010, the government of the UK announced that it would start measuring people's psychological and environmental well-being, making it one of the first countries to monitor the happiness of its citizens. The governments of France and Canada are considering similar measures. Let's see whether the government of the country that wrote the pursuit of happiness into its Declaration of Independence will start a happiness campaign soon.

### **HOW IMPORTANT IS HAPPINESS IN B2C AND B2B?**

Just like other recent business trends (branding in the 1990s, customer experience in the early 2000s and new media in recent years), customer happiness as a topic first appeared on the agenda of B2C companies. Customer happiness is very important in B2C businesses and is used increasingly for competitive advantage. However, I expect it to be picked up by B2B companies as well since the message is no less useful there.

B2B dealings may involve different products and services and use different criteria for decision making (order time, proximity to a factory, global sourcing system, etc.). But if you are running a B2B business, you should also be concerned with whether your company customers, suppliers and trade customers are happy with your services. After all, the decision maker will be an individual or a group of individuals. Small pleasurable moments during a sales meeting or an immersive experience at a trade show can make a big difference. Also, doing business with a company that shares similar values can be rewarding. Most importantly, you should engage both business customers and end consumers alike to ensure a healthy bottom line.

Many of the benchmark cases and best practices featured in this book will come from B2C. Yet this book also includes B2B

examples—like the case of Brainlab, a company that sells medical technology equipment; the Central Asia Group, which explores the use of mobile banking technology in Afghanistan; and IBM's Smaller Planet campaign.

## THE PHILOSOPHY AND SCIENCE OF HAPPINESS

Wikipedia defines happiness as “a mental state of well-being characterized by positive emotions ranging from contentment to intense joy.” According to psychologist Ed Diener, individuals experience happiness “when they feel many pleasant and few unpleasant emotions, when they are engaged in interesting activities, when they experience many pleasures and few pains, and when they are satisfied with their lives.”<sup>9</sup> Because the emotional experience of happiness is often evoked by an event or a person, it may be measured by asking to what degree the event or person (or brand) contributes to happiness, or, reversely, how much an individual might miss the event, person or brand if it were no longer present. Moreover, happiness is a subjective psychological state: what makes people happy differs from person to person. Happiness is often momentary and transient, although it can also persist to the point of becoming a characteristic trait. When we characterize someone as a happy person, we refer to their consistent display of positive emotions and life satisfaction over time.

For two and a half millennia, thinkers like Confucius and Buddha, Socrates and Aristotle and Immanuel Kant and Karl Marx have been philosophizing about what constitutes happiness and/or a “good life.” Naturally, their views varied widely. Some advised a “religious life,” while others advised us to stay away from religion (Karl Marx wrote that “the first requisite for

the happiness of the people is the abolition of religion”). Buddha taught that happiness entails wisdom, and Aristotle proclaimed that happiness is intricately linked to ethical conduct and virtues. We will sort out these different views and examine their relevance to business in chapter 2.

It is also useful to look at modern-day scientific thinking on the topic. The positive psychology movement, in a sense the basis for this book, has put the spotlight on happiness since the beginning of this century. Martin Seligman and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, two of its key proponents, consider it as a science of positive subjective experience. The field of positive psychology thus provides an alternative perspective to traditional psychology’s decades-long obsession with damage repair and healing. Positive psychology stresses positive experiences (including well-being, contentment, satisfaction, hope, optimism, flow and love), positive individual traits (such as aesthetic sensibility, perseverance, originality and future purpose), and positive institutional values (such as responsibility, civility, tolerance and work ethic). This book will use key concepts of positive psychology to develop business frameworks and tools for creating happy customers.

Why, you might ask, should companies dedicate their limited resources to making customers happy? Aren’t they in the business of making money, not spending it on something as elusive as customer happiness? Making customers happy may be an admirable goal. But are we, as business people, now supposed to become therapists, social workers or, to use a more contemporary term, “life coaches” for customers?

Assuming we are even able to devise tools for creating happy customers, how will doing so impact on the bottom line for business?

Make no mistake, there is a business objective here—a big one. Companies don't create happiness campaigns just to be nice. Happy customers provide immense value to a company. Companies want to profit from customer happiness. In other words, companies see dollar signs on customers' happy faces.

The empirical evidence on customer satisfaction, customer delight and the Net Promoter Score, a measure of customer loyalty, indicates that happy customers are of tremendous value to an organization.<sup>10</sup> They become lifetime (or at least longtime) customers and enthusiastically recommend products and services to family, friends and coworkers.

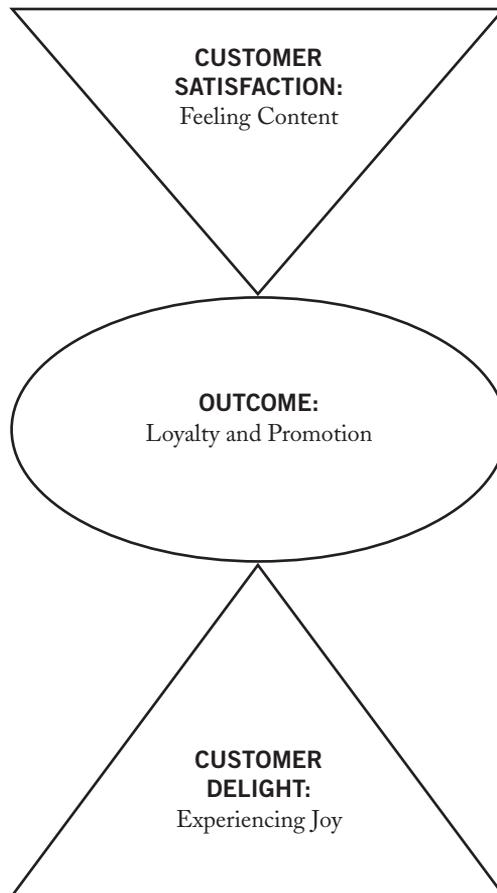
Happy customers can elevate brands to iconic status. Happy customers will even help a firm design new products and volunteer time and effort in promoting the company through their personal websites, blogs and other social media.

Why are happy customers such a gold mine? In the following pages, I will present a model that explains why customer happiness has such positive effects.

## **THE BUSINESS MODEL OF CUSTOMER HAPPINESS**

The model includes two key marketing concepts—customer satisfaction and customer delight.

Customer satisfaction results in a “quiet state of happiness” where the customer feels content. Customer delight is the joy and “wow” factor of happiness. Once customers are happy, they become loyal to a company and are willing to promote its products and services. Thus, the outcome of happiness will be a high Net Promoter Score.

**FIGURE 1. THE BUSINESS MODEL OF CUSTOMER HAPPINESS**

Let's take a closer look at the components of the model.

**CUSTOMER SATISFACTION: FEELING CONTENT**

One of the most essential and enduring concepts in marketing is customer satisfaction. When products or services meet or exceed expectations, customers are satisfied. When customer expectations are not met, disappointment and dissatisfaction can lead

to complaints or to the customer bad-mouthing the company, product or service.

Expectations play a key role. Clearly, expectations for premium and luxury goods are higher than those for value products. For this reason, even a high-end product, though it may objectively be of better quality than a value product, may sow customer dissatisfaction.

When expectations are met, it creates contentment. When you get what you want with no negative surprises, you relax, you're at peace with the world. There is no need to search for new stimuli. You may even experience gratitude. Thus, customer satisfaction can lead to a quiet sort of happiness.

For example, because of my heavy travel schedule, I value an airline that focuses on time so that I can get in and out of airports and planes quickly. Like most business travelers, I don't want to be stranded in an airport because of a missed connection—even if they try to compensate me by offering lavish personal service and an exquisite layover hotel.

I often fly Lufthansa because it focuses on punctuality, that quintessentially Germanic value. That message is clear throughout the flight: the captain gives frequent updates on departure, weather, arrival and connections. When the flight is delayed, they explain why, tell me how they will try to make up for it and repeat connecting flight information. Lufthansa makes me feel secure and informed; they put me at ease. I feel a sense of contentment knowing that they will try to respect my schedule.

Does Lufthansa induce strong, blissful emotions in me? Am I full of joy when I sit in their seats? Not really. That would take a bit more. Lufthansa simply provides a satisfactory flying experience

for me. I expect them to be on time. They do their best to fulfill that expectation and, most of the time, they do.

Many companies use customer satisfaction as a key performance indicator. While sales or market share indicate only how well a firm is performing at the moment, satisfaction is an indicator of how well it may perform in the future because satisfied customers often become a strong base of loyal customers.

Attempting to measure customer satisfaction also sends a simple but important message to customers, namely: “We care about satisfying you.”

The usual measure of customer satisfaction is a simple question on a five-point scale. “How satisfied are you? Check ‘1’ for very dissatisfied and ‘5’ for very satisfied, or something in between.” For more precision, you can use multiscale measures in which the customer assesses satisfaction with various features of a product or aspects of a service. Consider hotels. How satisfied is a guest with the room, the bed, the linens, the check-in and check-out, the business center, the fitness center, restaurant facilities and so on? These individual aspects of the hotel can then be weighted, and those weighted scores added up into a composite satisfaction score for the hotel.

Most of these satisfaction measures take a common, rational and analytical view of the customer. By nature they are extremely cognitive and left brain-heavy. The assumption of most customer-satisfaction models is that customers think a lot about what they want (from a hotel room, its bed, its linens) and form expectations ahead of time (based on prior product performance or by extending expectations from other brands to a specific brand). They then, presumably, do some sort of mental calculation to determine how satisfied they are.

This sort of measurement omits emotion and surprise. It does not consider customers as full-fledged human beings—with cognitions *and* emotions. It leaves fun out of the equation.

Satisfaction researchers eventually noticed over the years that something was missing. So they added surprise and emotion to the equation, proposing that customers can also experience *delight*—an emotional state that goes far beyond mere customer satisfaction. Delight leads to happiness as well, of course—through joy and novelty rather than through comfort and certainty.

#### **CUSTOMER DELIGHT: EXPERIENCING JOY**

In a seminal academic article, three marketing professors, Richard Oliver, Roland Rust and Sajeev Varki, conceptualized customer delight as a high level of satisfaction including pleasure and arousal. They wrote that customer delight results from surprise.<sup>11</sup> It is a strong and positive reaction arising from the unexpected.

As customers, we've all experienced delight and surprise. On a recent shopping trip to IKEA, I was in a rush and forgot to load my purchase of two folding chairs (among many other items I had bought that day) into the car. Ever the absentminded professor, I remembered what I had forgotten the following day. It seemed like a waste of time to ride across town to the store and ask them to search for the inexpensive chairs, so I did nothing. A week later, when I returned to purchase another item, I casually asked about the chairs, expecting nothing. When an employee emerged from the back room holding the two chairs in his hands, I was thrilled! The outcome exceeded my expectation.

Creating a delightful moment doesn't have to be complicated. It can be a personalized message, an unexpected discount or service that comes from the heart. Try to recall a delightful customer

encounter of your own. What exactly caused your delight? What part of the experience made you happy?

When companies create a “wow” moment for customers, they engender a very special reaction. They plant a seed in the customer’s memory that is easily recalled and that the customer will be motivated to share with family, friends or colleagues, because a joyful experience is a pleasure to share. This is free, personalized advertising for the company that supersedes monetary value. I have shared my IKEA story with many friends and colleagues, both face-to-face and online. I have become an unpaid, third-party cheerleader for IKEA and for other companies that have created a joyful experience for me.

And, of course, the delight you experience leads you back to the company, which will result in your bringing in new customers. This may eventually allow the company to sell its products or services at a premium price.

Some critics suggest that delighting the customer unfairly raises the bar of customer expectations, making it more difficult to satisfy *or* delight them in the long run. This may be so, but customer delight still offers advantages that outweigh this risk. First, these initiatives provide differentiation for the firm in the market. Second, if the company can create customer delight or a customer happiness initiative as a mind-set or strategy (and not as a one-off deal), it will drive innovation that, in turn, keeps customers happy and raises the bar for the competition. Finally, the positive and lasting memories bond the customer to the company.

Isn’t this exactly the recipe for Apple’s success? Differentiate from the rest of the pack in the consumer electronics industry; always innovate in a consumer-centric way; rely on the bonding

provided by the collective memory of the Apple community and the late Steve Jobs.

### **THE OUTCOME: LOYALTY AND PROMOTION**

The Net Promoter Score (NPS) was introduced by Fred Reichheld in a 2003 *Harvard Business Review* article called “The One Number You Need to Grow.”<sup>12</sup> It is arguably the most widely used customer metric for loyalty today. A strongly positive NPS indicates that customers are extremely satisfied and delighted—happy, if you will—with the company’s product or service and are willing to promote it to others.

The NPS measure asks customers a single question on a 0 to 10 rating scale, “How likely is it that you would recommend our company to a friend or colleague?” Closely note the wording: “recommend” the company (not just telling stories) and “friend or colleague” (not strangers). In your private life or at work, your reputation is at stake, and therefore you recommend very carefully. Most importantly, the NPS is a behavioral rather than perceptual index, asking what customers will *actually* do, rather than what they say they might do.

Based on responses, customers are categorized into one of three groups: Promoters (9–10 rating), Passives (7–8 rating) and Detractors (0–6 rating). The percentage of Detractors is then subtracted from the percentage of Promoters to obtain the NPS. An NPS of +50 is considered to be excellent. The goal is to increase Promoters and decrease Detractors.

Proponents of the approach claim that a company’s NPS correlates strongly with revenue growth. The score can also be used to motivate an organization to become more focused on improving products and services.

Businesses rightly love the NPS for its simplicity and benchmarking value. Many academics, on the other hand, are puzzled, because in direct comparison the NPS usually does not outperform other customer satisfaction measures. This comes as no surprise, since voluntary promotion is the behavioral manifestation of a customer's satisfaction and delight. It's the internal glow of happiness driving the behavior. It's the feeling of being understood, of getting what you deserve and of being served with the right products and services. It also goes further: being surprised at times and getting more than expected because this shows the company's extra care and concern for its customers.

Customer satisfaction, customer delight and the NPS are all valuable ideas and metrics. However, from a psychological perspective, they contribute little toward understanding *why* customers are satisfied, delighted or likely to recommend the company. Moreover, from a strategic and tactical business perspective, they provide little advice on how to satisfy customers, how to create surprise and how to turn Detractors into Promoters—that is, how to make customers happy.

Discovering this “why” and “how” is the number-one task of customer insight and customer management executives. Customer management specialists must seek to understand customers' motivations, feelings and behaviors and then develop strategies and tactics that will satisfy customers, delight them and turn them into such enthusiastic supporters that they repeatedly buy and promote the same products and services.

Great businesses have already learned this lesson and apply it often. They have made customer happiness the focus of their entire business.

## HAPPINESS AS A BUSINESS FOCUS: WHOLE FOODS MARKET

In the October 2005 issue of the journal *Reason*, John Mackey, chairman and CEO of Whole Foods Market (WFM), wrote an article called “Rethinking the Social Responsibility of Business.”<sup>13</sup> In it he criticized Chicago economist Milton Friedman, who considered profit maximization and shareholder value to be the key goals of a business. “I’m a businessman and a free market libertarian,” wrote Mackey, “but I believe that the enlightened corporation should try to create value for *all* of its constituencies.”

Mackey is certainly not hostile to profits. At the time he wrote the article, his company had year-on-year sales of more than USD 4.6 billion, net profits of more than USD 160 million, and a market capitalization over USD 8 billion. Compare this to 1980, when he cofounded WFM: The company began with only USD 45,000 and posted USD 250,000 in sales in the first year. Mackey explained:

*“We have not achieved our tremendous increase in shareholder value by making shareholder value the primary purpose of our business. In my marriage, my wife’s happiness is an end in itself, not merely a means to my own happiness; love leads me to put my wife’s happiness first, but in doing so, I also make myself happier. Similarly, the most successful businesses put the customer first, ahead of the investors. In the profit-centered business, customer happiness is merely a means to an end: maximizing profits. In the customer-centered business, customer happiness is an end in itself, and will be pursued with greater interest, passion, and empathy than the profit-centered business is capable of.”*

Customers are loyal because they believe the company is more than just a supermarket that sells organic produce and natural foods. They appreciate a company that shows concern for the local community and the environment and that offers a good working atmosphere for its “team members” (employees). Anyone who has shopped at WFM knows that it’s not inexpensive. But customers have shown their willingness to pay a steep price premium to support the company and its products.

Beyond the mission statement and the exciting stores, how exactly does WFM ensure that customer happiness becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy? Does Mackey’s business actually make people happy?

In the 30 years since it began, WFM has built a solid reputation based on the attitude of the founders toward their customers and the fact that they offer products believed to be more healthy than the mainstream supermarket alternatives.

Remember when supermarkets were cavernous places with fluorescent lights bright enough to sting your eyes, cheesy music playing, and a big guy named Irv with meaty arms and a mustache cutting slabs of meat at the back butcher counter? You could go to just about any supermarket in any town in America and know, as you entered the store, where everything would be located. Past the checkout counters, the fresh fruit and produce on the right wall; the meat counter at the back. Turn left and walk all the way across the store (past aisles of dry goods, cereals, snacks, paper goods, greeting cards, pet supplies, laundry detergent and small home fix-it items), and there were the cold cases filled with dairy products, eggs, and eventually frozen veggies, pizzas and ice cream. Make a U-turn back toward the checkout counters, and the wine and beer section was near the front of the store. With

minor variations, every grocery store in America had this layout, and this was the way everyone typically bought groceries.

Then WFM turned the status quo on its head. Soft lighting, innovative displays, cool music, lots of fresh, organic, natural products. A salad and soup bar, for goodness' sake, and seating, so you can eat it right away.

In one of their recent Facebook postings, on a Sunday at 7:47 A.M., WFM asked the simple question: "Good morning, what's for breakfast?" 615 people replied. Some answers were short and sweet, saying "pancakes" and so on. But others showed more love:

*"Melon and Greek yogurt. All from Whole Foods although I couldn't afford the price and other stores with the same brand are less expensive in today's economy, I went ahead and purchased it. I think it made me feel important to be able to buy from Whole Foods. Still looking for work since 2009. We love Whole Foods and are looking forward to guilt-free shopping with you."*

So even a customer who is apparently out of work still buys at the more expensive WFM and feels good about it. These types of comments are not unusual on the company's page.

More than 2,000 comments were posted after Mackey wrote a *Wall Street Journal* op-ed piece about the health care reform bill being considered by Washington in 2010. According to the company, WFM pays 100 percent of the residual insurance premiums for full-time team members, almost 90 percent of their workforce. Additionally, those team members get to vote for their new plan options every three years. These policies are widely known, so WFM customers know that they support a company that supports its workers.

In his article, Mackey took a position against the more liberal health care reform that the Obama administration was pushing. But WFM customer comments were mostly supportive:

*“I am so glad John Mackey spoke up! Thank you! I will shop more at Whole Foods because of it!”*

*“Jack Mackey has outstanding character! His ideas make complete sense to me! I’m going out of my way to buy from Whole Foods now—even driving out of town to make purchases.”*

*“My wife and I have become Whole Foods customers because of John Mackey’s courageous stand of simply sharing his story of what works at Whole Foods. Congratulations, John, for having the guts to buck the mainstream wisdom of many of your customers. Here in St. Louis you have picked up a whole bunch of new customers because of the courage of your convictions!”*

*“I am a big fan of Whole Foods and what they represent. I, however, am in shock that such a seemingly progressive company opposes health care reform . . .”*

*“Bravo Mr. Mackey for doing the RESPONSIBLE thing for your employees . . . I only hope that more American companies learn from your excellent example . . .”*

## CONCLUSION

It is not easy to make, and keep, customers happy. But as we have seen in this chapter, customer happiness can provide immense value to a business. When customers are content and satisfied,

or feel joy when you delight them, they will become not only loyal but also recommend your company and brand to their family, friends and colleagues. They will share their positive views with the world via social media. Thus, it is worthwhile for any company, large or small, to look at how to bring happiness to customers.

In the next chapter, we will examine more closely the concept of happiness and what philosophers and psychologist have found out about the nature of happiness. In the following chapters, I will present three methods for making customers happy. Throughout the book, we will examine how some companies have used these insights to build strong businesses.