

The LimeBridge Value Irritant Grid

Putting People First



Detailing one of the themes from the LimeBridge book on reducing customer effort “The Best Service Is No Service”, Peter Massey shows how a simple grid can help you refine your strategy, operational tactics and get buy in from the rest of the business.

"Using [the value irritant grid] to investigate and classify our interactions was a moment of genius". As you can imagine, we were very pleased to get this feedback from Sage on the use of the value irritant grid.

It's great when someone reads a book and gets a breakthrough. Even better when used alongside other tools as part of a wider management ecosystem. It can then provide a sustaining rhythm we call "The Best Service Is No Service" where the benchmark would be a 40% reduction in customer effort over 2 years.

Companies like PPF overall award winners DRL (Appliances Online) took the book and made massive strides using its principles.

I want to show you a really simple way you can start on that journey: engaging people, both inside and beyond the contact centre, with what your customers want.

Too many codes

Most companies code their calls. Many companies use that data to understand what type of calls they receive. Few companies categorise their contacts in such a way that they understand and act on what customers want. Knowing why customers contact you is the most basic diagnostic of your offer, your products and services.

Many companies collect data galore on what happens. What the customer called about, what the fix was, what we did, what they did. But few companies collect the data for why customers had to call.

Where's my stuff" is the classic "why" code you see on Amazon's website. A telco might use "My handset doesn't work" as a why code. A utility might use "I don't understand my bill" or "My bill is wrong" or "My billing estimate is wrong". So much more insightful than classifying these as "billing" or "refunds". It is important to identify why customers had to make contact - in the customers' words.

We use this categorisation in a number of BSINS processes, including tracking benefit in "Skylines" and assigning ownership. But I will concentrate on just one use in this article: the value irritant grid.

Value irritant grid

In simple terms you plot what customers say they want when they contact you, in their own words, on a 2x2 grid. The x axis is the customer and the y axis the company.

Each axis is split into value and irritant (see diagram).

Some companies already use the lean concepts of value and waste but this 2 dimensional split in the nature of contact is insufficient to create a meaningful dialogue internally. So we advocate this 4 way split.

How do we stop doing dumb things to our customers and our people?

In the quadrant of irritant/irritant, at the bottom left, are all the things no one wants to deal with. They are the "dumb things" to stop at root cause. For example "I've forgotten my password".

If the contact is valuable to the customer but not to the company, this is where a benefit means that customers are most likely to work through your self service, online and apps. For example "What's my balance?" in a bank account

If the contact is valuable to you but not to the customer then it must be simplified as much as possible. For example "I don't understand your form". You have a regulatory obligation to send it - but not to

make it unintelligible. Automation is rarely the answer here, often leading to a call instead.

In the value/value quadrant are things to resource fully with smart people who have more time now they have fewer dumb things to handle. For example "Can I have an overdraft?" might be an opportunity to offer loans, alternative accounts or rates.

This allows you to have a clear strategy for each contact reason. And to move your resources from dumb stuff to adding value. To move your customer experience from excellent but unnecessary, to effortless.

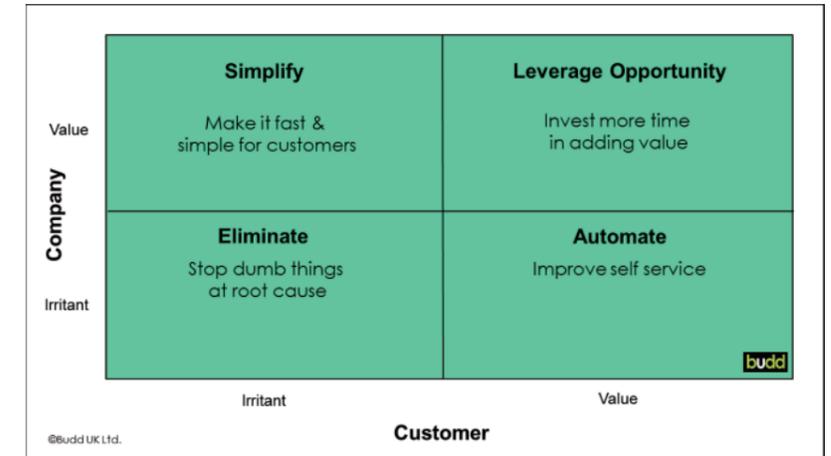
Clear direction and ownership

But which quadrant fits your business strategy? Take for example "I want to change my address". Depending on your point of view, you could assign a value or an irritant to business or customer: it could be in any quadrant.

The important issue is the conversation to get agreement between all stakeholders on which quadrant. And it may be different for varying customer segments. That conversation and alignment, although simple in theory, is very powerful in practice.

It also allows clear ownership in the management processes. The owner accountable is the person who creates the demand, not the one who handles the demand. For example, if my statement letter is not clear, it isn't the contact centre's fault. It's the department who wrote an unclear letter, or one that conflicted with the brand values.

By quantifying each contact reason, to give clear priorities, you can have "reason code project managers" or "customer journey owners" who should be on top of what and why



dumb stuff happens and the root causes.

And since front line staff usually know what happens and why it happens, they can take part. But that's another story about another part of "Best Service" called WOCAS - what our customers are saying.

Getting buy-in

Doing it this way changes the whole mindset of fixing things, of analysing things.

Indeed it causes and allows 3 things:

1. Senior, middle management talk the same language as the agent and the customer. It's harder to ignore the frustration of the customers' requests for help and a cultural shift occurs.
2. Analysis follows the customer journey. It starts with the customer, goes to the contact point and then into the organisation. Journey maps are very different from process maps and allow for both physical and emotional mapping of why things happen and therefore how it can be avoided.

3. Frontline staff can start asking questions. If they ask why something happened, then analysis

projects become unnecessary. You have real time root cause analysis, free feedback and engaged frontline staff. You can't analyse data that isn't there, so speech analytics will not tell you the answers unless the customer spoke them. To do that the agents have to ask the relevant questions.

Try this at home...

As Sage did, you can try this part of "Best Service" out without any help. The value irritant grid is a very simple tool, very powerful when populated with the right categorisation of contact. It can create a great conversation with colleagues.

Used as a live, ongoing piece of the customer ecosystem we call The Best Service Is No Service, it can transform the purpose of the contact centre from problem child to intelligence source. It can help you to start to develop programmes to reduce customer effort such as overall PPF award winners BT Retail.

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Feedback from Sage on using the grid

"I could talk for hours about what we've got out of the book... the biggest by far being the approach to value and waste interactions... using the approach to investigate and classify our interactions was a moment of genius. Just presenting these results and getting a couple of changes under our belt changed the culture of our senior leaders across R&D, Commercial, Service and Sales.

It changed our thinking, gave us confidence to know we could remove customer interactions AND improve their loyalty (and thus revenue, lifetime value etc) at the same time. It then focused our execution on some simple things. We started just over 2 years ago now and have seen an increase in NPS, stable renewals and realised a 20% capacity saving from our operations budget (which we've reinvested into more value adding activities)."