

Learn About Business as a Customer™

This program has been created to help students think about experiences as a customer of businesses. This will help students use their customer experiences to understand business. Students of all ages can observe the customer experience, influence purchases, and actually make purchases. Each experience can be learned from - if we only think about the experiences. There are many learning opportunities daily through the businesses students interact with – observing, advertisements and purchases or services obtained from business or individuals.

The intent is to have students read through this curriculum, think about it and participate in the activities to; learn concepts, engage in thinking about business, make the connection between being a customer and learning about business, take responsibility and ownership in learning through self-directed learning, ask questions of themselves & others and realize that as customers they are gaining valuable skills and business experience that will help them in the future. This can be enhanced by the involvement from a parent, teacher, or other students.

This course is part of the BPP™ (Business Preparation Program™) which is a business certification program for students.

Please support the social venture of TeachingKidsBusiness.com by paying for this curriculum. Proceeds go towards further developing programming to help prepare kids for business. We are in the business of teaching kids business.

Key outcomes are: finding creative ways to gain business experience, preparing for business and entrepreneurship, learning relevant future jobs skill, changing attitudes towards learning, building confidence in the future, skill development, self-directed learning, interdisciplinary learning and developing a résumé/CV.

By engaging kids in business preparation, we will plant the seed for future business and entrepreneurial success.

Overview of what is covered

- **Introduction to the concept of learning about business as a customer.**
- **Why is the understanding of customer relevant to learning about business?**
- **What is a customer?**
- **What is customer service?**
- **School as a customer and customer service experience.**
- **Learn to think about business as a customer.**

- **As a customer, you know a lot about business.**
- **Use your customer experiences good and bad to learn about business.**
- **Learn from observing other people's customer experience.**
- **What you expect as a customer is what a business needs to provide.**

- **How was this Business Preparation Program course customer service?**
- **Summary.**

Introduction to the concept of learning about business as a customer.

Recognize that customers are important to the success of a business, therefore as a customer you know a lot of what a business needs to do to succeed. You can learn a lot about business as you think about being a customer.

Goals:

- Understand the concept of a customer in business.
- Understand business from a customer's viewpoint.
- Realize you know a lot about business as a customer.
- Use your and other people's customer experiences to learn about business.
- Identify business opportunities (learn entrepreneurial skills) as a customer looking for a product or ways to improve a product or service or the way a business does business.
- Develop skills through the observations and experiences as a customer.

All successful businesses understand their customers. They understand what is important to customers and why customers buy from the business. Businesses conduct market research to better understand customers. Therefore, as a customer, you know why you buy from a business and what a business needs to do to get your business and keep you as a customer.

Good businesses think like customers to understand customers. Customers understand themselves therefore understand the customer part of the business – such as how to sell, service and retain customers.

Why is the understanding of customers relevant to learning about business?

A critical success factor of business is to have customers. I will emphasize this throughout this course. Product, location, service, pricing, promotion/advertising, staffing, community relations are all important factors to the success of a business but without customers the business will clearly fail.

If you understand your customer such as who will buy your product or service, how they make their decisions and why they will purchase then your product or service offering, location, pricing, and promotion etc. will be effective. Beyond understanding your customer if you take the proper actions to attract and keep customers you will have a higher chance for success.

Customers are unique but there are always going to be common factors that will engage customers to explore your business and become a customer with a business. There are always going to be simple and effective strategies if you think about who the customers are and what is important to them.

If you want to learn about business and succeed in business, then understand customers. Talk to other people about their experiences as customers and learn as much as you can.

What is a customer?

Dictionary definition:

A customer (sometimes known as a client, buyer, or purchaser) is the recipient of a Good or a service, or a product, or an idea, obtained from a seller, vendor, or supplier via a financial transaction or exchange for money or some other valuable consideration.

For this course let's think of a customer as someone who receives a product or service. Therefore, as a student in school you are a customer and in this course, you are a customer. In both situations, you are receiving an educational product and service. The educational product is the materials you receive while the service is the delivery of the course – in this case a service is provided by Udemy to provide the online platform to access this course. It is not as important how we classify the product and service but rather that you consider yourself as a customer who has customer experiences.

In general, you are a customer when you use a product or service. We can broaden the meaning of customer by thinking about a customer experience for every product or service you try (or a family or friend's experience)

We can broaden the thinking of customer to any activity you participate in which involves a product or service. Listening to music makes you a customer of the musician and place you purchased the music or the radio station you listen to, playing in a park which is maintained by your city, traveling on a road or sidewalk or walking into a store makes you a customer in these situations.

If you consider yourself as a customer and think about your experiences as a customer as business experiences, then you will learn lots about business.

What is customer service?

Customer service (the act of helping or doing work for someone) is the service provided to a customer before, during and after the purchase of a product or service. It is important to realize the customer service cycle is throughout the process of the customer experience with the business – as a potential customer and as a past customer.

Customer service is about treating customers well – exceeding their expectations. The broader you define the meaning of customer service will enhance the experience for customers – the more details you think about to satisfy your customers will lead to better experiences for customers.

The customer service experience includes the;

Ease of use of a website,
Location of the business to make it easy for customers to access the business,
Wait times,
How you are greeted and dealt with at all stages of your interaction with the business,
Observations of treatment of others,
Handling of questions before and after the purchase,
Condition of the place of business,
Handling of problems,
How well trained the staff is?
How good the systems are that provide customers information?
Warranty and product return handling,
Communications with customers,
Any interaction with the business

Think of customer service experiences you, your family, and friends encounter;

Examples:

Food purchases.
Clothing purchases.
Haircut.
Transportation - car, bus, train, bike, plane, boat.
Electronics - TV cable, internet, cell phone.
Entertainment – movies, games.

Activity

1. Think about examples of customer service from the list about or your own ideas.
2. Take an example of a customer service experience and rate it.
 - a. Think about the experience and how it could have been better.
 - b. Where you satisfied with the experience?
 - c. Detail the parts of your experience – talking with someone, choosing the product or service, buying the product etc.
 - d. Were there some well executed details of the experience and some poorly executed details?
 - e. Were there details of the experience which were missing or could have been improved?

Customers are very critical to the success of businesses. If a business does not treat their customers well and if customers do not return, then the business will fail. Therefore, the customer service part of attracting and maintaining customers is critical to the success of a business. Once you begin to understand customer service you will have learned a lot about business success.

School student as a customer and customer service experience.

As a student, consider yourself as a customer of the school you attend. Consider the school and teachers as providing customer service to you. It does not matter your education is considered a product or service as it has both elements. The key thinking is that you are consuming education as a student which includes products and services. Throughout your student experience you are provided products and services by the school and teachers therefore we can consider you as customer who has customer service experiences as a student.

Many schools provided an excellent place to learn; safe, clean, good amenities and accessible. Many teachers do an excellent job in developing, organizing, and delivering curriculum and assist you in a variety of ways to learn as a student. Many teachers go beyond the expectations of their job and buy materials for your class, spend personal time preparing and helping students. Your school and teachers can be related to businesses and staff at businesses that make an extra effort to do an excellent job of serving you as a customer or businesses that forget or ignore about your needs as a customer.

Consider your teachers as providing customer service to you. Consider your teachers to be “selling” you an educational product and service. Learn to determine good teaching experiences from poor teaching experiences – but think of it in terms of how well you learn and not how strict a teacher is or how difficult the material is.

Identify teaching styles you like and dislike and teaching styles that you learn best from. It is a teacher’s job to teach you in ways to help you; understand the class lessons and develop as a well-educated individual.

Learn about excellent, good, fair, and poor customer service experiences as you interact with the school and teachers. Think about a range of ratings to learn a broad scale of customer experiences. Understand what contributes to moving the experience from one rating to the next – up and down the ratings.

Consider products you use in school and customer service experiences such as bus transportation, food service, maintenance, administration staff and maintenance. Think about these experiences and rate as poor, good or excellent. Identify ways these services could be improved.

Examine in further detail your school and teachers as providing services to you as the customer.

Activity:

1. Identify the services your school does for you daily. Consider all the activities or tasks that occur daily in your school.
2. List the things that the school and teachers do well to help you learn and make you want to come to school.
3. List the things the school and teachers do that makes you want to go to another school or teacher.

Learn to think about business as a customer

- A Customer is a person who buys goods or services from a business.
- Businesses exist to provide products and services to customers. Without customers, there would be no businesses.
- We have all thought about buying something – therefore we know what it takes for us to want to buy a product or service.
- We have all bought something or have been with someone who has bought something. We have experience buying or watching the buying process. We have many experiences as a customer. We have experience doing business.
- All customer experiences, good and bad, will help you learn about business. You know what to do to attract customers and what not to do to lose customers.
- Draw on your own experiences (or family members) to understand how businesses need to act to satisfy a customer. Think about the business you are dealing with as a customer.

Activities to consider:

1. Think about the times when you are a customer of a business – hair cut, food purchases, clothing purchases, school supplies etc.
2. Think of a recent shopping experience and think about how good it was and how it could have been better.
 - a. Think about experiences in which you or a family member or friend you were with - bought food.
 - b. Think of other experiences in which you were the customer or with someone who was the customer.
 - c. Think about customer experiences relating to all the products in your home.
3. Try and determine how many times a week and month you are a customer or with a customer.
 - a. Estimate the time related to being a customer above.
 - b. Build confidence in business with the level of experience you have as a customer. Build on your experiences.

As a customer, you know a lot about business

You should realize that you have been part of many purchase decisions such as food and clothing, which account for many purchases that you have influenced, were present for or actually made the purchase as a customer. Possibly you enjoy books, entertainment and electronics which you have purchased, received as gifts or influenced the purchase by others.

Hopefully you have tried to identify the frequency in which you have been a customer or with a customer. You should recognize the experience you have as a customer and the understanding of business from a customer's perspective. You can also draw on your experiences as a student in which a student can be considered a customer of the school and teachers. You have experienced many hours of customer service.

The following is a framework to consider the many things you know about business. By thinking about and answering the following questions you will identify many key success factors businesses are trying to figure out – but you know the answers businesses are looking for;

1. Think about a few products and services you or your household purchases regularly.
 - a. What needs and wants do you have for products and services?
If you think about this question, your list will be very long. It will include many products, services and involve many different type of businesses with different business models – the way they conduct business.
This will help you understand the demands of customers for which businesses exist to satisfy.

The things you want and need are what businesses provide.

2. Why do you buy products and services?
 - a. How important is the brand name, product quality, availability, price, shopping experience, retail reputation, manufacturer reputation?
3. How do you influence purchases made by your family members?
 - a. Do you ask for foods you like, clothes you need and would like to wear?
 - b. Have you given your opinion in other household purchases?
4. How do you influence purchases made by your friends?
 - a. Have you told a friend about music, movies, clothes which you like and they may like?
5. Why do you buy one product instead of another?
 - a. Do you compare price between products?
 - b. Do you consider design?
 - c. Do you consider the brand name?
 - d. Do you consider the location or business you purchase from – product may not be available from where you purchase?
 - e. Do you consider warranty and after purchase service?
 - f. Do you consider image and social pressure of what others may think of you for purchasing products?
6. Where do you prefer to buy and why?
 - a. Do you prefer online or from a local store?
 - b. Do you prefer the experience of one location over another?
7. What information do you need before you will buy?
 - a. What steps do you take before making the decision? Business would like to know this so they can try and communicate with you to influence your purchase decision.
8. How do you like to be treated as a customer?
9. How much are you willing to pay for things?
10. What other factors are important to you in deciding when, where, how much and how to buy a product or service?

You will have answers to the questions above, therefore you know many of the things businesses are trying to determine to get and keep you as a customer. Once you start thinking about the way you decide to do business as a customer, you will become knowledgeable in business.

Many entrepreneurs build their business based on the research and observations that businesses were not doing something well or not at all. Business opportunities are created when businesses fail to do things well or not at all. You can develop good entrepreneurial business skills by learning about customer service.

Use your customer experiences good and bad to learn about business.

It is likely you have had, seen or heard of good and bad experiences with businesses. As a customer you can learn from the failures and good things businesses are doing without working in or running the business. Customer experiences are a very effective way to learn about business and try different businesses to realize what interests you, what you are good at, where you feel you would enjoy working and identify business/entrepreneurial opportunities.

It is a good idea to talk about business experiences with your friends and family. This can be interesting conversations and good ways to learn. Your friends and family have had customer experiences which can be; interesting stories, funny, ridiculous and educational. It is a good way to learn from others mistakes and good experiences.

Examples of customer experiences you may have had:

1. Purchased a product that does not work.
2. The product did not have key features you wanted.
3. The manual or assembly instructions were not clear.
4. The packaging or sales information was misleading.
5. Purchased a product and then found it considerably cheaper a few days later at the place you purchased it from or at a nearby business.
6. You went to buy a product and it was not available.
7. A sales person was not available, helpful or knowledgeable about the product you were interested in.
8. It was difficult to find the product you were looking for.
9. The product you purchased was missing parts.
10. There was fine print to the warranty and the warranty was not what you thought it was.
11. Word of mouth by others of their good or bad experiences - a book or movie or business they liked or did not like.

Customer Experience Activity

This can be done on your own or in a group. If you are in a group, take turns identifying a customer service experience;

1. Identify a customer experience you have had. You can use the list above or below or create your own.
 - a. Think through the experience and recall as much detail as possible – each part of the overall experience you had.
 - b. This will help you understand that there are many parts to the customer experience.
 - c. A great way to learn about business is to understand each of the parts of the customer experience or the many tasks to provide the customer experience. Think about the jobs people do to perform these tasks – the many steps which are taken to provide the product or service to you. Think about how you would organize and perform these tasks.
 - d. As a business owner and as an entrepreneur how would you improve on these tasks – how would you do them differently and add task which you believe are missing
2. Interview people (family or friends) about customer experiences they have had or ones you have watched or others have watched.
 - a. Ask about their experiences.
 - b. Ask about what they liked and disliked.
 - c. Ask for suggestions on how the experience could have been better.
3. Repeat this as many times as you can. The more experiences you think about the more you will learn about business!

Examples to consider:

- a. I had a haircut.
- b. I picked out clothes which my parent bought for me.
- c. I accompanied my parent to buy food from a store.
- d. I provided advice to my parent to buy an electronic device such as a cell phone or computer.
- e. As a student, my teachers provide educational services in my school classes.
- f. I have travelled on public transit (road, train).
- g. I have read a book.
- h. I have gone to see a movie.

Explain your customer service experience.

A good way to learn to learn from experiences. As you recall experiences that think about them as a customer and to learn about business, you surprise yourself on how much you learn. The more details you can explain in your customer experience will lead to more learning. Keep in mind that business success is about understanding and executing the many details to satisfy your customers. Focussing on the details will help you learn about business.

1. Did you like the product or service?
2. What details stand out from the experience of buying or using the product or service?
3. Identify as many activities you can recall that you noticed during your customer experience? (tasks people did, things you noticed at the business, things that were said to you, information provided to you)

An example of things you may notice:

During my haircut experience: the location of the store was easy to get to, I was greeted when I entered the store, I waited for a period of time, good reading material was available while I waited, I liked the store, it was very clean, the chairs were comfortable, I liked the music being played, I liked the way they washed my hair (water temperature was good), the hair cutter had some good ideas on cutting my hair, I enjoyed the conversation as my hair was cut, I liked my haircut, the price was acceptable. I will come back for another haircut and tell others about this haircutting store and individual who cut my hair

4. How would you improve the experience you had as a customer?
Example: Find a better location which is more accessible, change the store layout, have better staff, offer different services, charge less money etc.
5. What elements of your customer experience do you notice the most and enjoy the most?
Example: You may have been interested in the design of the store (design may interest you and this may be a skill you have)

6. What have you learned from this experience?

7. The next time you go into a customer experience situation; notice what the business is doing and learn as much as possible from watching what goes on around you.

Learn from observing other people's customer experience.

You can learn from observing customer interactions - people being served by a business or experiencing a product or service. Take the time to notice other people's experiences and learn from them - as if they were your experiences.

There is so much to learn from watching business experience and there are many opportunities each day. You spend time with and around people. If you were to observe these people and think about the products or services they are using; you will witness many customers experiences. We all notice other people and we all interact with others. The key is to watch and learn from these people.

Example;

1. Watch someone in a store looking for and buying a product.
 - a. See how they are dealt with by the store.
 - b. See what their experience is like.
 - c. See how happy they appear to be or how satisfied they are as a customer.
 - d. Listen to conversations people have to hear customer experiences.
 - e. Ask people what their experience was like.

What you expect as a customer is what a business needs to provide

As a customer, you expect things from the products and services you buy and from the businesses you purchase from. The interesting situation is that you know the answers that businesses are trying to figure out. This puts you in an interesting position – you know what is needed for you to purchase.

There are many things people consider when making a purchase;

1. Price - competitive price, best price, only on sale.
2. Payment terms - cash or credit.
3. Quality - expect the product to last.
4. Brand image of the product and the business - what are you associating with when you use the product.
5. Warranty on the product. How long will the manufacturer and/or seller support the product and at what level of support.
6. Service you receive before and after the sale.
7. Reputation of the business - how has the business dealt with issues.
8. Location - is it convenient for you, safe, accessible.
9. Return policies - will there be any problem returning the product.
10. Overall experience - will you be happy with the overall experience of purchasing and using the product.
11. Community involvement – does the business support your community.
12. Add to this list what you expect and others you know expect.

A business needs to be able to deal with all of these variables. In many cases, businesses are selling products produced by other businesses. Therefore, a business is a customer to other businesses. It is important for a business to associate with businesses and products to help meet their customer's needs.

Activity:

1. Consider a product that you have purchased recently or one you are planning to buy.
 - a) Make a list of things you consider when making the purchase.
 - b) List the things you just learned about the business that you are considering to buy from (the things the business has to consider to successfully sell to you).
2. Pretend you have a job as a consultant in which you are paid to give advice. As a “Customer Consultant” you are selling advice on how to properly sell to people like you.
 - a) Pick a product you would be interested in buying.
 - b) Pick a business you would consider buying the product from.
 - c) How should the business get you to buy this product?
 - d) Where should they advertise to get their message to you? How should they attract your attention?
 - e) What are the five most important things a business has to do to compete for your business?

How was this Business Preparation Program course as a customer?

You are a customer of this course. You have paid for the use of this course as a product and service. There a number of steps which were taken to find the course, pay for it, and participate as a student.

1. How was the information available to help you to make the choice to purchase this course?
2. Was the course outline and videos helpful in deciding to purchase the course?1
3. Did the information tell you what you wanted to know?
4. Was the information presented well?
5. Was the content a good resource?
6. Did the course meet your expectations?
7. Was the course relevant to help prepare you for business?
8. Was the course too long or short or just right?
9. Did you learn from the materials made available to you?
10. Could the content have been better and how would you have done it differently?
11. Did the course talk to you in a respectful way?
12. Were the videos a good resource?
13. Were the videos good quality visually and sound?
14. Was the UdeMy website a good experience?
15. Could you access and navigate the course easily?
16. Would you recommend the course to others?
17. Think about the many tasks involved to provide this course to you – think about the experience you had in detail. This will help you understand what goes into the customer experience.

Summary

Congratulations you have learned how to learn about business by being a customer!

In some respects, you just took on the job responsibilities of learning as a customer. You have developed many business skills from your experiences as a customer.

You should feel more empowered as a customer and realize that you can control the way businesses act to attract and retain your business, others you know or family members. The best way to influence a business is to make choices to buy or not to buy their products or services – and tell others.

The interesting thing about the activities you have thought about and completed is that you are right as a customer. Whatever is important to you should be important to a business – you know the answers about customers that business would like to and need to know. The challenge for the business is to determine if what you think is representative of many customers and how they can communicate effectively to all customers. If your

needs are unique, it is difficult for a business to change the way they do business to satisfy your needs only. If your needs are representative or your needs are shared with many customers, then the business needs to understand your needs and make changes in the business to satisfy these needs – or a competing business will – an entrepreneur will.

Continue to think as a customer and use this thinking process to learn about business and to influence how businesses treat you to attract you and keep you as a customer.

Continue to learn about business through the TeachingKidsBusiness.com
Business Preparation Program™ BPP™.

You are well on your way to learning about business - keep up the good work!