7 ways to wow clients and dominate your niche



■ BY DANIEL FITZPATRICK, NEXT LEVEL TRADIE

It sounds so easy; Go out on your own. Provide excellent service. Get happy clients, referrals, repeat work, 5-star reviews, and a reputation as one of the best.

But have you ever had something go wrong on a job and, despite your best efforts, the client ended up unhappy with how long it took or, worse, disagreeing with you over the price?

No doubt about it, customer service is important. And good communication certainly isn't the only factor.

Other things to consider:

1 What does the 'wow' look like?

Everyone, from sales rep to technician or trades working onsite, should have a clear understanding of what's expected around customer service.

A great way to get everyone on the same page is to "define the wow". In your next team meeting, ask everyone to describe customer service experiences they've had personally. Write all these up on the whiteboard. What are the common themes?

Put yourself in the customer's shoes — what expectations would you have if you were the client?

How can you set the bar on the first interaction and match - or exceed - that each time you have contact with the client, all the way through?

Just like there are procedures on how to carry out work, there should be procedures in dealing with customers.

2 Little things make big waves

Sometimes it's the smallest action that can make the biggest difference; Arriving on time, not walking on grass/gardens, using clients' name, taking off boots (or wearing covers) before stepping inside, leaving things clean and tidy, bringing in the bins for a customer.

Clients really notice that stuff, especially if they've had bad experiences with tradies in the past.

The little things show your commitment to raising the bar, and build trust and loyalty.

Did you know acquiring a new client costs five times more than getting repeat work from an existing one?

3 Customer service is an inside job

Here's the thing: Customer service starts with culture.

How you treat and speak to your staff has a direct impact on how they treat and speak to clients.

Lead by example. If you refuse to compromise quality and standards, and only speak about clients respectfully, your team will see that and follow suit.

The fish stinks from the head down.

ANOTHER TIP - WHEN STAFF ASK YOU WHAT TO DO, SAY "WHAT WOULD YOU DO?" AS LEADERS, WE LIKE TO "TELL". INSTEAD, EMPOWER THEM TO FIGURE IT OUT.

With enough training, in time, they won't need to ring you, and you'll be confident they know how to handle things exactly as you would.

That's why hiring staff, not just on experience. but based on attitude and willingness to learn, is often a winning move.

Also, give specific positive feedback, so they know exactly what they're doing right.

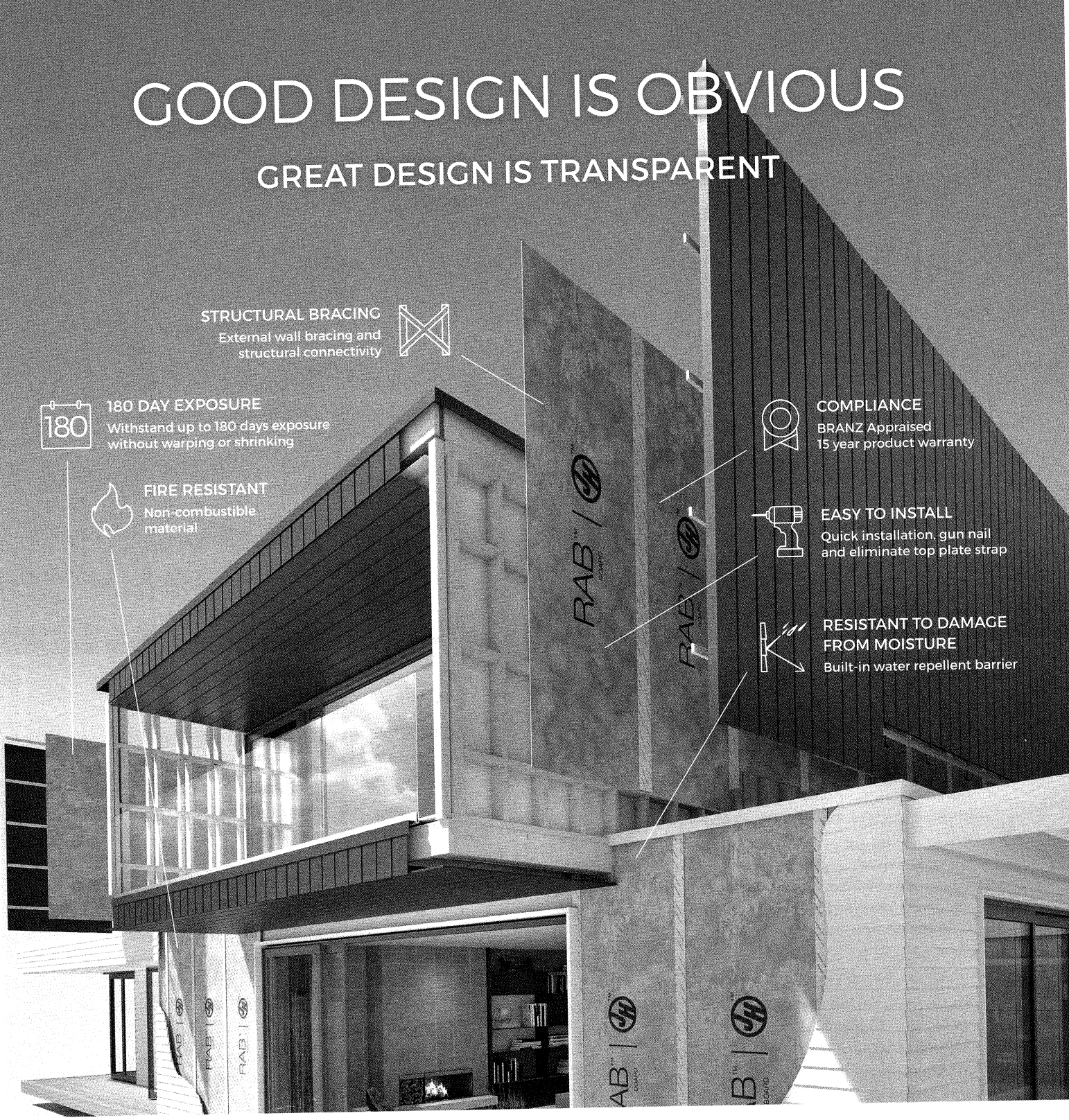
Note: As the owner, you're invested in building a good reputation and making your company successful.

If you can't say the same for your staff, it's time to train them to think more like you. Show them a career path (not just a job). Incentivise them for hitting targets, and going above and beyond for clients.

Set the expectations and spend time educating your employees.

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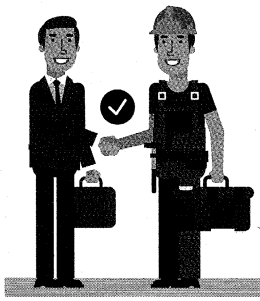
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REFERENCES

68% of clients are willing to spend more when a company provides excellent service

67% of clients say they'd actively discourage others from using a company that provided poor service
www.forbes.com/sites/shephyken/2018/08/05/what-customers-want-and-expect/#3ce7ada27701

Did you know acquiring a new client costs five times more than getting repeat work from an existing one?
www.invespcro.com/blog/customer-acquisition-retention/



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4 Miscommunication leads to misunderstanding — which never leads to anything good

One thing's for sure - open communication is key.

Give clear expectations to the client. Be transparent from the very beginning. Especially around pricing, timelines, and any variations.

Be sure sales staff aren't making promises tradesmen can't keep.

ALWAYS ACKNOWLEDGE AND INFORM THE CLIENT IF PROBLEMS ARISE. LET THEM KNOW YOU HAVE A SOLUTION; THEY WILL APPRECIATE YOUR FORWARD-THINKING.

Explain the costs involved (if any) and why it's needed. Leaving it — or going ahead without explanation — is likely to cause headaches later.

Project Management software like Buildertrend or Simpro also have time-saving features like ability to track leads, and a customer portal to streamline all communication and decisions in one place.

5 Feedback is the breakfast of champions

An issue bought up by a customer is actually a good thing. It's an opportunity to see your business through the eyes of the client. Take it as a chance to prove how good your customer service really is.

Deal with complaints ASAP and rectify the problem. Leaving it to resolve itself will almost always make things worse.

A COMPLAINT IS A CUSTOMER REACHING OUT FOR HELP. EVEN IF THEY'RE TAKING PERSONAL DIGS, OR HAVING A BAD DAY AND TAKING IT OUT ON YOU, KEEP YOUR COOL.

If handled well, clients can actually end up being bigger fans than if the issue never arose.

When a customer says they're not happy, what do your guys say to that customer? Have a process, and make sure everyone knows what it is.

Also, keep in touch with clients after jobs. Ask them "How can we improve?"

Feedback is how you get better.

6 Look to build a relationship (not make a sale)

This is a much easier way to win jobs.

It's even been found that 68% of clients are willing to spend more when a company provides excellent service through the buying process.

So, when quoting, be intentional about building rapport, and listen carefully to what the client wants, rather than jumping in to offer a solution too quick.

Be prompt and friendly with communications, and keep language friendly — words like "company policy" are a big turn off!

7 Your reputation hinges on consistency

About 67% of clients say they'd actively discourage others from using a company that provided poor service.

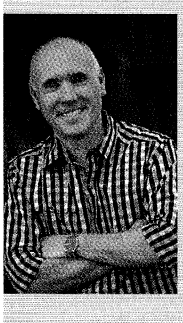
One bad experience can, unfortunately, be talked about online again and again. Word of mouth is now on steroids. Potential clients can easily find reviews (good or bad) in seconds.

THE BOTTOM LINE IS, YOU'RE NOT THE ONLY ONE REPRESENTING YOUR COMPANY, SO THERE NEEDS TO BE CONSISTENCY.

The best way is to create systems within your business which everyone follows. Then check in regularly with staff. And track your KPIs around customer service.

Systemise and automate your customer service as much as possible. So you can stay on top of your game, and avoid the stress of unhappy clients. Even if it goes wrong, it can't go too wrong, or too far, without you knowing about it.

Can you really afford not to?



NEXT LEVEL TRADIE

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Here's a snapshot of the Supreme Winners from the last 10 years:



To check out all the Supreme Winners from the last 30 years head to: www.houseoftheyear.co.nz

The 2020 Regional Awards are coming up, in order to keep up a tradition that is now 30 years strong, these events have adapted to the new restrictions and will be held as virtual events this year. **Tune in online to the virtual awards ceremonies to see who comes out on top this year. Head to www.houseoftheyear.co.nz for details.**

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