

**Sharing the recipe
for success.**

**Hints and tips for
great customer
experience.**



Committee Chair:

Andy Davy, The Mall Maidstone

Vice Chair

Charlotte Crawley, Cushman & Wakefield

Suzanne Arkinson, The Howgate Shopping Centre

Sam Eastwood, Bentall Centre

Sean Kelly, PR4Property

Susan Mendoza, St John's Centre

Howard Morgan, Real Service

Deborah O'Donnell, Vangarde Shopping Park

David Wait, Serpentine Green Shopping Centre



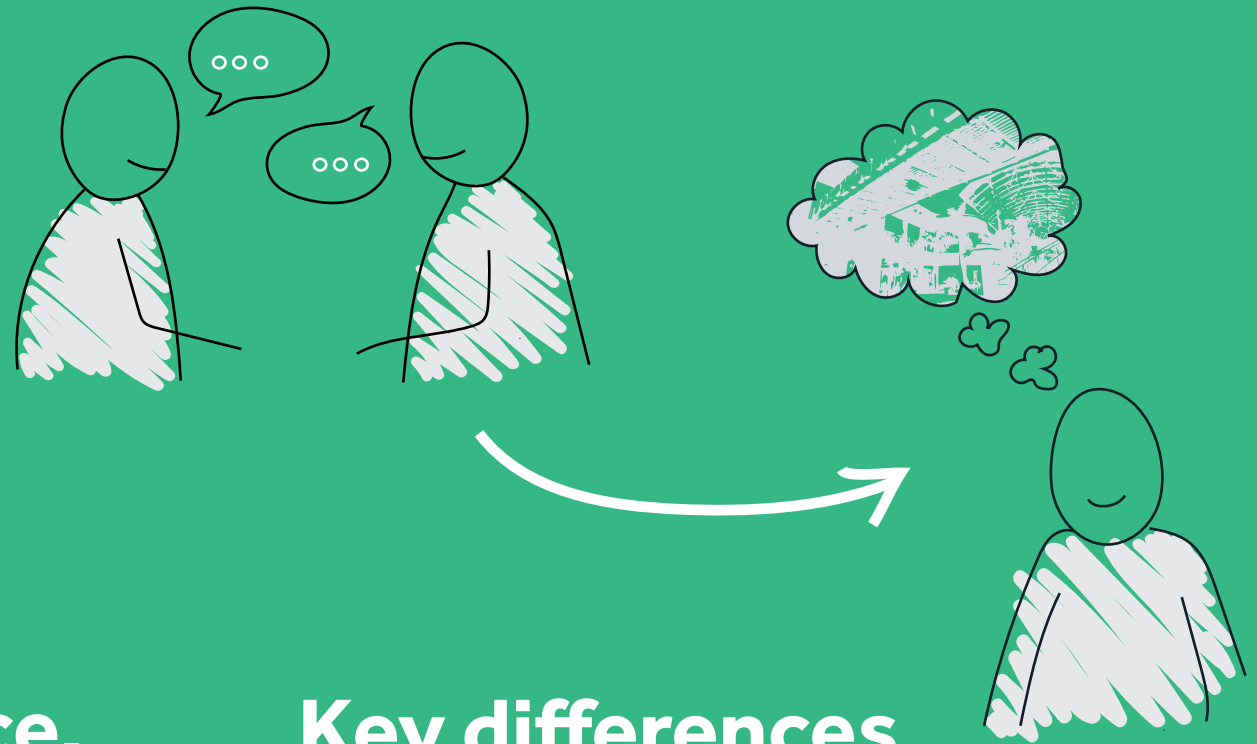
Changing tastes.

It's been 5 years since we last produced a best practice guide for customer service, and whilst some things have remained the same, there's been an enormous shift in the expectation of customers within the retail property and placemaking community.

The digital age continues to grow stronger, creating more challenges for the physical space and the overall experience we provide for our customers is more crucial than ever. Focusing only on the basic elements, such a clean and safe retail place with promotions and events, is simply not enough. We need to offer a diverse customer experience, one that isn't left to chance.

This guide has been produced to help you choose your recipe for success. Over the course of our judging, we've seen many different recipes for the best customer experience, with different equipment and decorative elements used. Fundamentally, key ingredients and approach were the same and this guide will provide you with hints and tips that allow you to truly stand out from the crowd.

This guide was produced by the Revo Customer Experience Committee who have used their experience from the ACE Award judges' visits.



The judges experience.

Having undertaken a comprehensive review of all aspects of the ACE Awards, it became apparent to the judging panel that in order to accurately reflect today's retail property and placemaking sector, some significant changes had to be implemented, including the way in which we undertake our judge's visits.

We now go behind the scenes and visit the top three entrants in each category. We talk to the teams on the floor to fully understand their role and the part they played in delivering the retail place's approach to customer experiences. In doing so, we understand the needs of their customers and what is expected of them in terms of delivery and implementation. We also talk to the managers of each retail place, specifically about their vision for the customer experience, customer expectations and how they tailor their offer to this.

This has provided us with true insight into the recipe for success.

Key differences.

During the different stages of visits, it was clear to both the mystery shoppers and judges that those who scored highly demonstrated a clearly defined vision and strategy for the customer experience.

Strong leadership is important in ensuring that there is a clear and compelling vision and other ingredients including an effective daily implementation plan that inspired and supported the whole team to deliver the right mix.



The right mix.

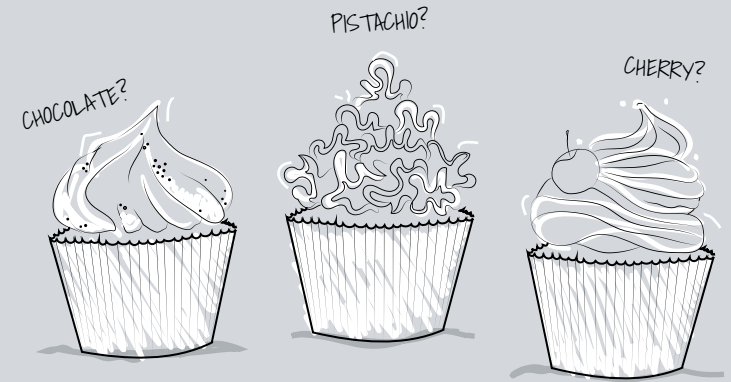
During the mystery shop visits, the teams based on site delivered the perfect finishing touches during the interactions and landed in our top three. Unfortunately, those who did not forgot two key ingredients:

- Asking relevant questions in relation to the customer's original enquiry to fully support and guide the shopper.
- After providing the basic information, going that extra mile to ensure a memorable customer experience.

During the judges' visits, it was then evident why these retail destinations achieved perfect scores as they were able to demonstrate their basic customer experience had a full strategic approach from top down, one that was embedded throughout the whole team. Their approach included some common key ingredients, be sure to read on to find out more!



Key ingredients.



The first ingredient for the recipe is understanding your customer.

Start by asking yourself what type of retail place are you, and who are your customers?

Then, think about the following:

- When did you last check in with your customers to find out about their particular tastes and desires? As we know from personal experience, tastes change – constantly!
- What do you know about your local community?
- What are their specific and special social needs?
- How can you truly connect with their desires and wishes?
- Do you understand their journey? What and where are their challenges?

It's important for you to support your customer's needs to ensure their experience is smooth.

Research can be done in many ways:

- Using external resources, you can gain further insight into their journey.
- Internally, you can run focus groups or carry out customer journey mapping, incorporating process reviews of their physical journey. Think about the customer's point of view, not yours.
- Ensuring the team on the floor engage with your customer is extremely important. It will provide you with clear and detailed feedback. Engaging day in, day out with your customers through your onsite team is important.
- Ask your retailers and operators. Don't forget, their customers are your customers.

It was clear during our visits, that those who undertook customer research regularly, offered the best experience. This research was also discussed at team meetings.

Your workspace and equipment.

Once you understand your customers, it's important to then ensure your offering is right, such as:

- **The start of their journey.** Think about your signage. Ensure it's clear where to park, what the cost is and the entrance and exit. Customers want to enter your retail place quickly, and leave even quicker.
- **Clear information provided.** Information should be provided at all entrances and situated appropriately around the retail place.
- **A clean, safe site.** The retail place should be maintained to the same standard that you would expect anywhere, with extra care and attention given to the toilets – that's always important!
- **No litter.** Bins should be located around the retail place offering recycling facilities. Customers should never see litter on the floor.
- **The facilities on offer.** Ask yourself, do they help social or lifestyle needs? Have you installed sensible seating for your all customers? Is the space accessible, do you have many customers who suffer for autism and may look for a quite space? Alternatively, think about your space from a wider perspective. For example, are you in a town with eager football fans – a central football ticket booth in your retail place could draw in some less frequent shoppers?
- **Ground control.** Do you have enough people on the floor? Is there a customer help point conveniently located? Can they communicate easily and quickly to help your customer?

And, it's not just your customers you should think about. Improving your customer's experience starts at the core of your retail place – your staff. It's important to make them feel relaxed and at home. Ensure the environment is engaging and filled with positive messages about happy customers. Recognise their efforts to continue to inspire them every day.

The customer experience mix.

Now you have a clear vision and your fundamental offering is right, it's time to think about the key ingredients for your recipe. Think about:

- **Strong leadership.** Lead by example and always have the customer's experience at the forefront of your mind.
- **Standards.** Define your level of service and communicate it regularly. Include your own personal mission statement, highlighting clear goals and objectives around customer experience.
- **The right people.** Recruitment is key. Ensure your in-house team and/or service provider support your vision. Do they have passion and is it a key strength for them?
- **Training.** Equip your team with the correct skills to support your customers, whether it's multi-cultural behaviours or helping people with disabilities for example. Also think about multi-lingual skills if your retail place needs them.
- **Empowerment.** Your team carries the reputation of your customer experience offering. Support them and they will support you and most importantly, support your customers.
- **Recognition.** Keep it simple. You don't need to go overboard and it doesn't necessarily need to be a financial reward. Focus on thank-yous and highlighting great efforts.
- **Communication.** Be fast and efficient in all customer communication. Provide the information they want in a clear and engaging way. Do you have all the information available and if not, can you help them find what they need?

Remember, as owner or manager, you are the leader. There are no set quantities to the type of customer experience ingredients you need to put in your mix. Experiment and add more of one particular ingredient, if required.

The 2017 ACE Award winners put in greater quantities of recruitment, training and empowerment into their customer experience mixes. Is that right for you?

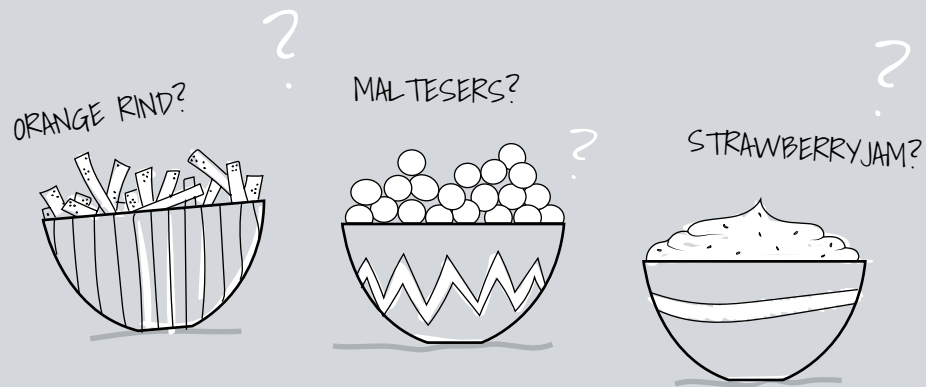


What ingredients do your customers like and prefer?

- **Community connections.** Think about ways in which you can support and connect with the wider local community, not just charity initiatives.
- **Retail connections.** Encourage and motivate your retailers to ensure they engage in a strong customer experience strategy.
- **Sustainability.** How does your retail place support the environment on both a local and global front? It's a key topic on your customer's minds.
- Customer **time reclaiming services** and support.
- Customer **life enhancing experiences** and support.

Using the correct method to get the right mix.

- **Pre-heat your oven.** Ensure it's warm, friendly and inviting for both your team and your customers.
- **Research, engage and understand.** This doesn't have to be through an external source. Talk to your customers, run focus groups, ask indirect questions to find out about their lives and not just their shopping habits. This will help you to understand them and shape your customer experience accordingly. Think about how easy is it for customers to communicate with you, to feedback both positive and negative experiences. How do you capture this? How do you review this with your team to ensure you are acting on both constructive and positive feedback?
- **Mix your ingredients together.** Combine your research, measurement methods and leadership skills to ensure you a clear vision. Get this stage right and it will help you to ensure your recruitment, training and empowerment techniques are even better.



What's next?

- **Recruitment.** Recruit based on attitude and if you use a service partner, ask if they do the same. As the leader, ensure you influence the team on site to be positive and have a willingness to help at the same time as possessing a natural enjoyment in serving and interacting with customers is hard to teach.
- **Training.** Think wider, do not just focus on customer service. Take into consideration accessible retail practices such as cultural differences or how to handle disabilities. Would training around mental health equip your team to further support your unique customer?

The next stage is critical.

- **Reward. Reward again.** Support your team. This proactive action was a key differentiator amongst the retail places visited. Most left this to chance however, the winners didn't.
- **Advise.** Customer expectations change daily however it's important to ensure you value your staff and empower them. Does your team know how they can proactively assist your customers? Can they help naturally without fear or reprimand? Can they help a customer quickly and speedily without causing themselves difficulties? Is helping, supporting and delivering great service actively talked about throughout the day?
- **Listen.** Talk about experiences in your weekly meetings and think about creating customer champions to give additional support, encouragement and motivation.
- **Feedback.** Both positive and constructive feedback is helpful. Do you always work as a team to understand what you can do to improve on both areas for the next time? Is this communicated properly to help them understand their role? Do they know what they can do and the key role they play in positively impacting customer experiences?

Add your own unique creative zest!

If you've done your research, you'll know what your customers are looking for and how you can fulfil their needs. Think about the little things such as customer service lounges that feel welcoming, free wifi, valet parking, a prayer room, shop mobility, help and support for both visual and hidden disabilities or other community support. Do they need assistance in booking tickets, or finding out about local restaurants and hotels? How about water bowls for their four-legged friends?

And don't forget, you can create art spaces, creative community hubs, reading libraries, book clubs – the list is endless. Technology is also key in enhancing the shopper experience, why not give virtual reality a go?

IT'S AN OLD ADAGE
BUT THE PROOF IS
DEFINITELY IN THE
PUDDING!

And now here's something for you.

Hopefully our endless talk of ingredients and mixes hasn't made you too hungry, but if it has, here's our very own Revo recipe. Why not bake something for the team?

We can't wait to hit the road next year to test and try out your own recipes. Remember, it's all about ensuring you have the right mix for your retail place and making sure the ingredients are in line with the expectations and demands of your customers.

Be real. Ensure it's all about the people and you can't go wrong!

Classic Victoria Sponge recipe.

200g caster sugar
200g softened butter
4 eggs, beaten
200g self-raising flour
1 tsp baking powder
2 tbsp milk
For the filling
100g butter, softened
140g icing sugar, sifted
drop vanilla extract (optional)
half a 340g jar good-quality strawberry jam
icing sugar, to decorate



1. Heat oven to 190C/fan 170C/gas 5. Butter two 20cm sandwich tins and line with non-stick baking paper.
2. In a large bowl, beat all the cake ingredients together until you have a smooth, soft batter.
3. Divide the mixture between the tins, smooth the surface with a spatula or the back of a spoon. Bake for about 20 mins until golden and the cake springs back when pressed.
4. Turn onto a cooling rack and leave to cool completely.
5. To make the filling, beat the butter until smooth and creamy, then gradually beat in icing sugar. Beat in vanilla extract if you're using it.
6. Spread the butter cream over the bottom of one of the sponges. Top it with jam and sandwich the second sponge on top.
7. Dust with a little icing sugar before serving. Keep in an airtight container and eat within 2 days.

For general queries about the ACE Awards
including sponsorship contact:

Stacey Marney

+44 (0)20 7227 3463

stacey@revocommunity.org

revocommunity.org/aceawards

Charter House, 13-15 Carteret Street

Westminster, London SW1H 9DJ

+44 (0)207 222 1122 hello@revocommunity.org