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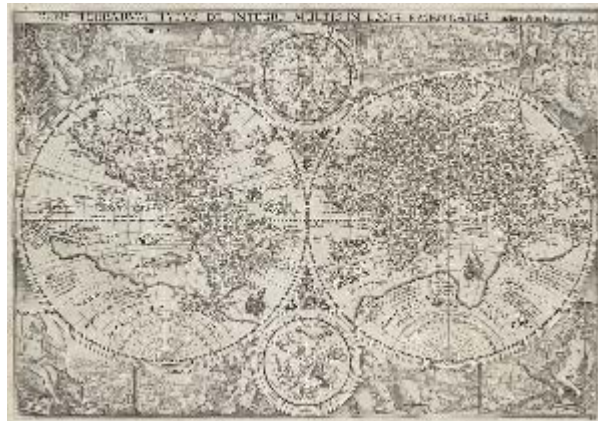
Continents of the Contract Service World



We're 8% into the 21st century and it's time to map the continents that make up the contract service world. Charting these land masses helps customers and contractors get more from their investments.

The four continents are Expectation, Promise, Engagment and Customer Experience.

You're location on a particular continent depends on what you want done, what you're doing, or trying to do. You can reach each continent from any other, they're equi-distant from one other.



Though none of these continents were discovered by [Vasco da Gama](#) or [Amerigo Vespucci](#), they make up the contract service world this century.

In our Revenue-IQ article this month we'll take a quick travelogue look at each continent.

Regards,



Chris Arlen, President, Service Performance

Here are the four continents in no particular order.

Expectation

This land mass existed before any service was performed, and it's still there. Even if customers haven't bought or received service before, they'll have expectations.

No one lives in a vacuum. Customers hear about a service before hand from friends, acquaintenances, media, and advertising. And that creates expectations; rightly, wrongly, accurately, falsely. Expectation is always there.

Most of us end up on Expectation by WORD OF MOUTH. The mouths of friends, family and trusted colleagues guide us there. And some words may come from the mouths' of marketers, media, trade associations and industry experts.

We also end up on Expectation by having experienced another service, even a very disimilar one. From prior services our expectations are partially formed.

Be wary of anyone saying Expectation doesn't exist. That they have "no expectations". Hearing someone say "I didn't know what to expect" tells you they were expecting something different. Something they normally wouldn't associate with the upcoming service - maybe an elephant jumping out of a birthday cake.

They just haven't spent the time and effort to figure out what their expectation was. They're going to let someone else figure it out for them and then surprise them. But they're most definitely expecting something.

Promise

Promise was once part of Expectation, but tectonic shifts over millenia split it off to become it's own continent.

Where large parts of Expectation are covered in perpetual fog, Promise is mostly clear and sunny - that's where promises are made.

On this part of Promise customers promise to:

- Pay on time
- Reward contractors' performance with loyalty in contracts of 10-15 years
- Communicate openly, honestly & immediately with contractors
- Work with contractors as true & equal partners

Also in this sunny spot on the continent contractors promise to:

- Perform each service fully and on schedule
- Provide service flexibly when and where needed (sometimes beyond specifications, shifting labor from areas where required service wasn't needed)
- Deliver more than expected (ever heard contractors' say "we exceed our customers' expectations"?)

These customer and contractor promises are often made in good faith. It's keeping them that's the hard part.

There are also parts of the Promise continent where it's dark and rains continually - that's where promises are broken. But we don't see that side until much later.

Now let's head off to Engagement.

Engagement

This is one of the smaller continents but an important one. It's where the contracting process starts.

How you spend your time on the Engagement continent has a great bearing on the quality of your time on Customer Experience.

The luggage from Expectation is never lost en route to Engagement. It's already there with you. And it can make or break Engagement.

If customers and contractors are adversarial on Engagement, the relationship suffers. The first victims are openness and honesty. To be followed later when on Customer Experience by inferior performance, low value and minimal return on investment.

For contract services, the reverse auction is a sink hole in the middle of Engagement. [It's clearly posted](#) and marked on maps, and is to be avoided at all costs. It can only harm the relationship once both customer and contractor are on Customer Experience.

However, time spent on Engagement doesn't have to be gray and gloomy. Engagement can be the beginning of a relationship of respect and trust.

And counter-intuitively, to earn trust one must give it first. So Engagement is where that starts, and it's carried over to Customer Experience.

Customer Experience

This is the big continent. It's where all contract service becomes reality. It's the fruit of time spent on Expectation, Promise and Engagement. And it's where the life of contract relationships take place. From honeymoons to anniversaries, first steps to graduations, retirements to funerals.

Customer Experience is where Promises are kept, or not. Expectations met, exceeded, or conveniently forgotten. Where Engagements create relationships to be worked at and valued, or cut and trashed.

Customer Experience is the sum of all contractor interactions with their customer. It's made up of 1,000s of daily connections between contractors' hourly-paid work force and customers. Not just contractors' account managers. But by the people who work physically hard and a \$0.25/hour raise is meaningful.

It's the service employees who make or break life on Customer Experience, no matter what the contractors' marketing promised.

Unfortunately for contractors, these interactions are carried out without fully understanding their impact on Customer Experience. The contractors' work force does the best they can, working the way they've been told, but their interactions can have unintentional, and often detrimental effects on Customer Experience. Think of that road paved with good intentions.

Yet contractors put most of their effort into policies, procedures and training rather than specifically influencing the Customer Experience.

Funny that, the Customer Experience is literally the ground under the contractors' feet. Maybe that's why so little effort and resource goes into intentionally shaping the Customer Experience - it's common as dirt so it's not noticed.

Customers notice. It's the determining factor for their assessment of time on

Customer Experience. And how they feel about contractors' as a result of their time together.

And remember, customers now have more info for when they're next on Expectation, Promise or Engagement.

The Contract Service World

It's a big world out there. And the contract service part of it hasn't been properly navigated or charted.

Customers or contractors who pay attention to the Expectation, Promise, Engagement, and most importantly, to Customer Experience will enjoy greater business success in results and process.

Image by [Norman B. Leventhal Map Center at the BPL](#)

About Service Performance

We help customers and contractors get the most out of their service engagements and relationships.

- For more info on Contract Service Engagements call Chris Arlen @ 206-780-2963, or email carlen@serviceperformance.com
- More contractor insights, visit: <http://www.serviceperformance.com/blog>
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