

**Service Marketing: A practical approach**  
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**Lecture-29**  
**Managing integrated marketing communications-II**

Hello there, welcome to the session on services marketing with a practical approach.

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Lesson 29 Managing Integrated Marketing  
Communications – II

The Communication Mix

Making the Right Communication

We will now go to Lesson 29, that is managing integrated marketing communications part two, the **com** this includes, the communication mix and the making the right communication.

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**The Communication Mix**

We can communicate about our services to our prospects and customers using the marketing communication mix. The marketing communication mix consists of (i) advertising, (ii) sales promotion, (iii) events and experiences, (iv) public relations and publicity, (v) direct marketing, and, (vi) personal selling. Let us discuss each element of the mix in the following sections.

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i. **Advertising** is a paid form of indirect communication which can be done using mass media like newspapers, newspaper inserts, magazines, television, radio, billboards, cinema, internet, mobile phones and mobile broadcasting. Advertising can reach a large population in a short time although it is very costly. Advertising can be effective when the right message is given to the target audience.

ii. **Sales promotion** includes window display, coupons, discounts, sale, money off, rebate, happy hours, free gifts, buy-one-get-one-free deals, club memberships and frequency points. While advertisement entices prospects towards the service, sales promotion give incentives for purchasing and trying the service. Sales promotion primarily allows some kind of financial saving for the customer, although some customers might find redeeming deals as an interesting and 'smart' buy.

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We must note that internet advertising is also an important form of advertising which is being done to a large extent in the current scenario. Then we have the sales promotion, this includes window display, coupons, discounts, sale, money off, rebate, happy hours, free gifts, buy-one-get-one-free deals, club memberships and frequency points.

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**iii. Events** include trade shows, road shows, inaugural functions, etc. that are meant to enhance sales during lean periods. **Experiences** include inviting guests for a visit to the service facility and experiencing its services with the aim of creating awareness and positive associations in the minds of the visitor and positive word-of-mouth about the service.

**iv. Public relations** include the communication of company spokesperson to the public particularly about the resolution of erstwhile problems with the service or to notify them about investments made towards upgrading the service. Publicity includes third party communication, including editorial communication about the service for public consumption. Usually, media reporters are invited to a press conference of the company and are made to visit the facility and give literature about the service business. The reporters then write about the company in the media. The audience believes this type of communication at most, as a third party, not directly involved with the business communicates about the business and is likely to be communicating the true scenario.



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v. **Direct marketing** includes sending telephone, mail or email communication including catalogues, to the target audience about the service business and requesting them to act on it by replying back with some information, subscription, etc. Direct marketing also includes infomercials on television where the service is explained at great length and prospects are requested to dial telephone numbers appearing on the screen to make a purchase. This is a personal form of communication which can be very effective if it is sent to the right people.

vi. **Personal selling** involves visiting the prospective customers and selling the services. We may be familiar with the personal sales activity undertaken by insurance agents. Although costly, personal selling can be very effective if the salesperson is able to communicate the benefits of the service business for the prospective customers.



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## Making the Right Communication

We have discussed about service quality gap 4 which deals with the mismatch of what was communicated to the customer and the actual delivery of the service. This goal of the service business should be to deliver services at a level equal to or more than the promises that are communicated to the customer. This can be achieved through the following four strategies

1. Management of Service Promises
2. Manage customer expectations
3. Improve customer expectations
4. Manage internal marketing communication



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First management of service promises, second manage customer expectations, third improve customer expectations, and fourth manage internal marketing communication.

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## Management of Service Promises

**1. Management of Service Promises:** As discussed earlier, inadequate service promises can be caused either due to puffery or the inability of the organisation to fulfill the promises. Again, the inability of the organisation may be due to lack of preparation or because different arms of the organisation are unclear about what has been promised by another arm and how the same can be fulfilled by the service personnel. In 1999, Professor Banwari Mittal has broken down the intangible characteristic of services into five aspects and forwarded a communication strategy to address each aspect as follows:

a. Services have an incorporeal existence without physical form. Accordingly, the service outcome must be clearly exhibited with the right associations.

b. Service benefits are abstract, like fun, security, health. Hence, the communication must demonstrate how people actually benefiting from the service.





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c. Services are described generally by saying 'wonderful service', 'complete customer satisfaction', etc. without pinpointing the specifics. The service performance episode showing service personnel at work must be exhibited along with parts of the system documentation and performance statistics including certificates of recognition, etc.

d. Services cannot be searched and previewed before purchase. Performance documentation and customer testimonials should be exhibited. Service sampling can be offered to prospective customers through trial, visit to the service facility, etc. For instance, some educational institutes let future students attend a class session to preview the same.

e. Services suffer from mental impalpability, i.e. they are a set of complex procedures. This requires communication about the service process and past stories about what the firm did for her customers.



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In addition to the above, effective advertising would include narrating stories about the service and creating a clear mental picture of the service process and outcome. Physical evidence and artefacts can be associated with the service. As service employees are the face of the service, they must be featured in communication messages. At the same time, service customers should also be featured along with testimonials of their experience with the service. Service communication can be humorous and witty, thereby becoming a subject of people's discussion.

It is important to make consistent communication using various elements of the communication mix, such that all messages are consistent with each other. Finally, service communication should make promises that the service business is ready to fulfil and all employees of the company know what has been promised and what they have to do to fulfil the same. One way to make meaningful promises to customers is to offer service guarantees and fulfil them. This would help customers perceive our service business as fair, honest, trustworthy and enhance its credibility

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**2. Manage customer expectations:** Realistic communication builds up the right expectations in the mind of customers. In case, the service is going to deviate from its earlier promises, it can give choice to the customer such that the alternative chosen by the customer can be fulfilled. Service outcomes and their levels can be separated out and customers can be offered different service outcomes at different levels for various prices.

Hundreds of mobile phone service plans are an example of the above concept. When customers choose an alternative, they are clear about what they can expect from the service they are about to receive. At times, customers try to negotiate the price of a service to bare minimum levels. In those circumstances, service managers should communicate the unique benefits and value that the customer would derive from the service as compared to alternative ways of fulfilling the same need. Then he should indicate how the price is less than the value that the service business is delivering to the customer.



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Then he should indicate how these service is less than the value that the service business is delivering to the customers. Improve customer expectations. Customers must be educated about their role in the service business. They have to be given clear step-by-step guidance as to what



they should be doing as part of the next step. Service providers must understand that if the customers fails to play his or her role in the service process.

The service remains undelivered and unsold! Therefore, customer education must ensure that customers know about remember when and how to discharge their actions. Since customers dislike waiting, they can be taught about the benefits. They can receive if they consume the service during 'happy hours'. The business must not assume that customers know about their role in the service process or any other information unique to the service delivery.

Next, customers must be communicated about service standards and guarantees that the business adheres to. It must also communicate to the customer when the service is over and communicate how the service has been delivered. As per the standard and any guarantees about the permanence of the outcomes. This keeps customers updated regarding what to expect from the service business. The customer would also tell this to others and the word would spread by mouth, thereby creating wide knowledge about the delivery standards of the company

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**4. Manage internal marketing communications:** As discussed earlier, it is important that all arms of the company are aware of marketing promises and initiatives that have to be fulfilled for customers. This requires real time communication, both vertically and horizontally.

Several companies work with the concept of creating zone-wise or product-wise contact person or account executive, who is the one-point contact for the customer. He/she elicits customer expectations and communicates the same to the relevant service personnel across the company, so that the service is delivered by a cross-functional team.

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In this lesson we have discussed the communication mix and how to make the right communication to the customers about the service delivery. Making the right promises and delivering slightly more than what was promised can close any gaps between promise and delivery thereby enhancing the credibility of the service organisation. In the next lesson we will discuss the 7<sup>th</sup> P of the services marketing mix, i.e. the price, which is the source of revenue from the services of the company.

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That is the price, which is the source of revenue from the services of the company. Thank you for listening to this lesson, I hope it helps. Thank you very much.