

Keep Truckin: Collaborative Approach: Going Over The Cliff For Customer Satisfaction

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Abstract

The current case is about the company Keep Truckin which is offering fleet management services, but the company is now facing a dilemma with a valued client, Tim Hathaway. He got angry after reading an email from Keep Truckin about the extra charges that were due on Nippon Express (Tim's company), and in a state of frustration and aggression, he contacted Keep Truckin. Tim furiously communicated his concerns and grievances by claiming that this company had turned out to be fraudulent by charging wrongfully on a monthly basis while the subscription was on a yearly basis. This issue accelerated when Tim wanted to unsubscribe from the services. However, Bryan, a customer success associate at Truckin, set up an audit team to investigate the details that spurred such a conflict. Following the audit report, it was concluded that Tim was right about the subscription issue, and the fault lay on the service provider's end, i.e., Keep Truckin. The delay in updating the records was a significant element, but Tim's claim about internal employees from the department being involved in malicious activities to make money off clients was a severe concern for Bryan and the company.

The case study highlights issues regarding the importance of negotiation and communication skills and the adoption of efficient and effective conflict resolution measures to retain valued customers and protect the company from credibility. The reputation-related inquisitions and identifying the perpetrator put him through a standard progressive discipline process to ensure the implementation of the policies.

Prologue

Tim Hathaway, a forty-five-year-old Executive Officer of land services and trucking at Nippon Express, returned to Seattle from a week-long stay in New Orleans. Like every other morning, he was sipping tea while reading the newspaper in his backyard when he was notified about a forwarded mail from Keep Truckin that instantly made him furious. Nippon Express had been Keep Truckin's customer for

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KEYWORDS

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Disclaimer

This case is written solely for educational purposes and is not intended to represent successful or unsuccessful managerial decision-making. The authors may have disguised names; financial and other recognizable information to protect

over seven months and believed that Keep Truckin had simplified things by reducing the detention time, filling IFTA (International Fuel Tax Agreement) and vehicle diagnostics. The current services of Tim's company include land services, freight forwarding, sea transport and trucking. The service quality provided by Keep Truckin was far better than any other company that he had dealt with in his eighteen years of experience in the business.

Keep Truckin's Background

Keep Truckin is a San Francisco based tech company which started as a startup back in 2013 and has achieved fast-paced growth in a short period. The organization is on a mission to modernize the trucking industry. Now, Keep Truckin ranks among the topmost Electronic Logging Device (ELD) firms in the USA, valued at about \$2.3 billion. Up to August 2021, the Keep Truckin ELD connects over 400,000 vehicles. Keep Truckin products serve as an all-in-one fleet management tool delivering integrated ELD solutions to a diverse array of transportation industries. Its leading-edge associated hardware and software use the latest artificial intelligence and computer-assisted video to resolve numerous previously unsolvable issues related to commercial vehicles. Overall, the products provide solutions to ELD compliance, driver safety, fuel & maintenance, dispatch, GPS tracking, and driver performance. So many features at a reasonable price explain why more than 100,000 corporations use Keep Truckin's services.

The organization has built the largest network of connected trucks in the world. The operational office started in Islamabad back in 2017. The Islamabad office has multiple departments, including sales, engineering, customer success, billing and accounts, with around 500 employees.

The cost of the Keep Truckin device is \$150, and then there are several monthly plans: a Free Plan, the Starter Plan costs \$25 per month, the Pro Plan costs \$40 per month, and the Enterprise plan costs \$50 per month. The yearly subscription fee costs \$420, and the Dashcam price is \$300.

Customer Success As A Department

Customer success is a strategic and proactive department. It understands each customer's desired outcome and sets personalized benchmarks for success. The department handles and monitors customers' issues with their accounts, like improper usage of a feature or declining usage overall, and reaches out to offer guidance. They onboard each new account and help them get value out of the product as soon as possible. They review the software with each of their accounts regularly throughout the year to demonstrate the business value it has been delivering. The primary focus of this department is customer retention.

Emergence Of Conflict

The email that Tim received was regarding the receipts of the surcharge amount forwarded by his manager. Tim's company signed up with Keep Truckin at the beginning of 2019 and chose a prepaid annual billing cycle, but to his utter dismay, a monthly bill was being charged. Keep Truckin had been facilitation, but it was now an expense. With confusion and mixed emotions, Tim called his manager to inquire about the

issue, but the manager seemed clueless. Instead of letting his manager deal with the issue, Tim took it upon himself and contacted Keep Truckin. His call was transferred to the Customer Success department and answered by Bryan, a customer success associate who is an expert in customer handling. Bryan has been working with this organization for about two years.

Just when Bryan answered the call, Tim started yelling aggressively, accused him and his company of defrauding him, and said he would take the case to court. Some billing mishap previously occurred as well, but Tim had ignored it when he was informed that it seemed to be an honest mistake after Keep Truckin did make up for it. Added to this, Tim kept repeating that he would make sure that he informs other customers get to know of this incident so that Keep Truckin doesn't get away with such activities. Tim clearly told Bryan, that Tim would lodge an inquiry and ensure the legal system duly treats the personnel from the sales department. Simultaneously, he demanded the cancellation of the subscription right away. Such kind of misconduct and aggressive attitude from the customer was not new for Bryan because of his specific departmental job role. However, he realised that if this matter were not timely tackled, it would have severe consequences for Keep Truckin.

Bryan understands the value of a key customer, so he intelligently and patiently handled his harsh words. On a very polite note, he requested Tim to explain the reason behind his call. In his high-pitched tone, Tim clarified that over a brief period, Keep Truckin had turned out to be maliciously overcharged over things that his company had not even signed up for. Tim explained that now charges were billed on a monthly basis when in reality, the subscription is on a yearly basis, and he thinks his company would not be able to afford and deal with such fraudsters. Bryan took a brief moment and told Tim that he would look into his status on Salesforce.

Salesforce is a cloud computing-based customer relationship management software being used by Keep Truckin that brings customers and companies together. It is one integrated CRM platform that gives all your departments a shared view of every customer. Salesforce's services allow businesses to use cloud technology to better connect with customers and vendors. The software has become the number one for customer success and helps businesses track customer activity. Details Bryan received were not according to Tim's statement, as the billing cycle for his company was on a monthly basis, and his company was appearing as a new customer in the second month. There was a considerable gap between the data-driven details and the details given by Tim verbally.

Role Played By Quality Assurance Department

Bryan understood that a valid conflict is there, and it had to be managed since such a key customer was necessary, and the consequences of not retaining it could be fatal for Keep Truckin. He could not get to the root of it and wanted to probe further details by analyzing the gravity of the situation. The argument from Tim's side was heating up, and Bryan realized that it was not the right time for an investigation, so he requested Tim to give him two days, and he will get back to his manager with positive feedback. The situation was not usual and led to losing a key customer, ultimately negatively impacting the company's image. To avoid loss, Bryan did not waste any more time and forwarded the case to the Quality Assurance department to conduct an internal audit on an emergency basis. When a case is sent to the audit section of

the quality assurance department, every detail will be verified from the day of customer subscription till the to-date. Basically, a report of every transaction made by the customer, along with every request submission and phone call made by the customer to the company, is prepared.

Bryan received the audit report from the quality assurance department, and when he profoundly examined it, he found that the customer was not new. The subscription was signed at the beginning of 2019 on a prepaid annual basis, and the lost product was filed in the previous month. As per the company's policy, a minimal amount must be paid as the security fee to keep the device, and a complete fee for the product is only to be charged if it is lost since the product is in the company's ownership and be returned at the time of cancellation of a subscription. Details showed that Tim's manager initially communicated with the sales department instead of the customer success department. Furthermore, the sales department made a mistake when Tim's subscription was renewed, charging all costs from the start, including the product security fee and monthly billing cycle. Instead of a new product allotment, Tim's company's subscription was renewed with unnecessary expenses.

Outlook

Bryan is at a critical stage because he is dealing with an unsatisfied key customer. Bryan is not supposed to create any trouble for the company by highlighting the sales department's mistake in front of the client because it would directly affect its credibility. Having said that, as part of his job, Bryan is supposed to retain the client and ensure that conflict is resolved and negotiated to keep up with the company's mission of ensuring customer satisfaction. A conflict has arisen between the company and the customer, which would affect the company's brand image. Your customers expect to have the same experience whenever they deal with your brand without confusion. This consistency then, in turn, leads to customer reliability and trust. In this case, the customer does point out that a similar mistake had been previously ignored by Nippon logistics when they viewed it as an honest mistake, but it seemed more like an everyday thing for Keep Truckin. Would keep Truckin be able to maintain a consistent brand image and give an explanation for consistent mistakes?

Additionally, if Bryan takes this issue to his manager, internal conflict may arise between the two departments, which could affect employee motivation. Moreover, if such negative emotions are not rightfully dealt with, they may result in lost productivity, disengagement and dissipated effectiveness. Would Bryan be able to adopt a conflict management strategy whereby not only is the customer retained, but the potential internal conflict does not stir up? Or would Keep Truckin ensure that the matter will be solved without holding employees accountable to safeguard their reputation in the market? If the claims made by the customer stand true, then would Keep Truckin rightfully deal with those involved in wrongfully making money off customers and ensure that legal actions are taken according to the policy of the organization?