

## 5 MINUTE FACTSHEET - FIRST IMPRESSIONS

After a while it is difficult to see our business as others would see it for the first time.

Customers are constantly coming to get to know your business for the first time and will either have a positive or negative view of it, or somewhere in between.

### CUSTOMER JOURNEY – PART 1

The “customer journey” starts for the customer well before they come through the door of your business – it starts the first time they come across your business. For example, this can be –

1. Word of mouth from friends or family
2. When a potential customer phones or emails your business, gets in touch by Facebook messenger or other means
3. Seeing signs at your business entrance, near to your business
4. Finding you online e.g. a google search
5. Finding you on social media platform e.g. Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, You Tube
6. Review site such as Trip Advisor, reviews on social media and booking sites
7. Article in newspaper or magazine

The way your business is presented in these examples above can influence whether a customer takes the journey any further or decides never to use your products or service. In this way, you may not be aware that customers are turned off from using your business in the first place.

Many businesses have a poorer virtual experience than the reality is - while this is a pleasant surprise for customers, if the virtual experience prevents customers from actually using your business, this is a big problem!

**So, a key point is a lot of first impressions are made BEFORE a customer uses your business.**

**Some tips –**

- ✓ Respond quickly and professionally to phonecalls, emails and other communication
- ✓ Make sure you respond to reviews customer have made about your business consistently
- ✓ Ask as many customers as possible to review your business on review sites to iron out any extreme examples of negative experiences
- ✓ Have an identifiable brand and portray your business in line with your brand & values
- ✓ Have an up to date website which demonstrates what you offer and why customers should use your business
- ✓ Post regularly on social media, positive images and stories from your business
- ✓ Make sure you have claimed your business on google and Trip Advisor
- ✓ Well branded, professional, sizeable signage near to your business will attract customers
- ✓ Have information (business cards or postcards for example) which your customers can take home
- ✓ Be clear about accessibility
- ✓ For an agritourism business, tell your story and the story of your farm/family and the food your produce = stand out from other rural tourism

### CUSTOMER JOURNEY – Part 2

For an agritourism business, customers will visit your farm tourism business, either for an hour, a day or to stay overnight.

So the second part of first impressions is when a customer comes on to your farm, drives up the farm road and parks the car.

On-site first impressions like the virtual first impressions, may be a view on your business that you have never even thought about. Examples might include –

1. Was the farm road so rough I nearly took the bottom out of my car?
2. Was there no signage or poor signage and guest got lost and therefore I arrived in a bad mood?!
3. For farms, people appreciate it is a farm but it does need to look tidy with no litter. Areas selling food and drink or where people are sleeping need be very clean.
4. High quality, clean toilets with changing facilities for children in both male and female toilets (or in disabled toilet).
5. What is accessibility like?
6. A warm welcome – what did the first owner or member of staff say to customers? A smile, cheery face and a hello and welcome. Or did they ignore visitors? Or seem grumpy?
7. What is the look and feel of the business?
8. Is the business offering evident? For example, is it clear its for children, adults only, opening times are clearly displayed?
9. For businesses offering food and drink, is it obvious what food and drink you are selling? Menus on display outside premises, in queue, at till, on tables. Use of your own farm produce or local farm produce, local food and drink.
10. Is the price displayed, do customers know how much goods and services cost?
11. Is it clear you are a farm? How are you telling your farming story?
12. Is the business safe to visit?

The critical element here is to ensure your customers are leaving your business having had a positive experience where they will both return and they will encourage others to use your business.

While you will never please everyone all of the time, you should be pleasing most people most of the time. Your aim should be a 1<sup>st</sup> class experience.

Really annoyed customers will give feedback. Really delighted customers will give feedback. It's those in the middle who maybe had an "alright" experience who were mostly satisfied but something niggled or annoyed them that you need to engage with. Was there one thing which puts them off coming back or frustrates them but the rest was great?

**Some tips –**

- ✓ **Encourage feedback**
- ✓ **Train your staff to ask for feedback, engage in a conversation with customers "how did you find everything?" "is there anything we could improve on?"**
- ✓ **Give out Trip Advisor business card asking for a review at the till/on departure**
- ✓ **Capture details of customers by holding competitions, asking their permission to hold their details and undertaking annual customer survey with a benefit (e.g. 10% off or £50 voucher)**
- ✓ **Organise regular focus groups in your business asking for honest feedback and ideas for future developments and improvements.**