



The message was sent



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Customer-focused business process management helps us designing and delivering high quality business processes. We design effective and efficient processes to handle customer care. However, do we really care for the customer?

Tokyo

Last Wednesday, we returned from a trip to Tokyo, Japan. A first visit and a really great experience.

For us Europeans, there are many things that make a trip to Japan somewhat a cultural shock. Indeed, there are many aspects where the Japanese society and culture are quite a bit different. However, what surprised us most was the friendliness of the Japanese people and their absolute commitment to deliver superior quality in everything they do, even in the smallest tasks.

Visiting Japan, you immediately understand that the Toyota Manufacturing System is not about a "system" or about some kind of methodology. It is about an *attitude* for service and quality and therefore, extremely difficult to replicate in another environment.

Quality in all we do. Most European companies claim they do. Customer-focused business process management is the approach that will help them delivering this quality.

Unfortunately, the problem with BPM is that there is a process. Having a process in place most often eliminates any further ambition to look beyond the process boundaries. We design great processes to handle customer care, but do we really care for the customer?

Caring for the customer

This difference in attitude became all too clear while returning to the old continent.

On our return flight, we had to make a stop in Heathrow, London to catch a connecting flight to Brussels. Once on the plane, the captain had to inform us that our departure was being delayed, likely for more than an hour, due to the presence of a heavy thunderstorm in the neighbourhood of the airport.

For an older couple on the plane, this delay was causing some problems and they needed to contact someone in Belgium, but apparently, they were not able to make the call themselves. So they asked someone of the cabin crew whether it was possible to inform this person in Belgium about the delay.

After a couple of minutes, the crewmember returned, stating that they had sent a message to their colleagues in Brussels.

"Yes, but could they be sure now that the person in Belgium was indeed informed about the delay?" they asked.

The crewmember replied "We have sent a message to our colleagues in Brussels. Hopefully, someone will take care of it."

The message was sent.

Same as for e-mail, in most cases, asynchronous communication is OK. However, sometimes, you really want to know that your message did indeed reach the final destination.

In Japan, you would have known. They would have told you that your problem was solved.


With a bow and a smile.

About the author



Marc Buyens is analyst, management consultant and owner of Xpragma. Marc started Xpragma in 1999 after a 20+ years career in the IT sector. Today, he provides advice, training and mentoring services focusing on the intersection of technological evolution, organisational change and business strategy: a messy world of unfulfilled promises.

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