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Toyota Brake Recall Fiasco Latest Example of Big-Company Customer Service Deficit

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In the last few days, as the extent of the problem with the brakes on Toyota's Prius and other popular models has become widely known and finally acknowledged by the company, the media has rightly critiqued the automaker for its failures in leadership and public relations management.

What's been talked about less is how Toyota has dropped the ball in its customer service. I found this segment by Prius owner and CNN reporter Jessica Yellin quite revealing. It shows her struggle to first reach a real, live person to state her case, and then to get some accountability and next step recommendations. Check it out:

As usually happens when a customer is also a member of the mainstream media, once Yellin told a manager that she was with CNN, she started getting some answers – and an acknowledgement of the problem by Toyota.

But what about the "little guy" (or girl) who doesn't have the clout that comes with a press pass? I liken the customer service experience of regular Toyota customers in this situation to the Titanic not having enough lifeboats for every passenger.

Not having enough reps in place, and not equipping the ones that are with sufficient, actionable information for the customer – on a normal basis and especially in a massive recall situation like this – is not just Toyota's problem. It's a persistent issue for most big companies.

Consequently, **when smaller companies provide enough people or improve their processes so this hurdle is removed, they greatly increase their competitive advantage in customer satisfaction.** This, in turn, has a profound effect on new customer acquisition and revenue from repeat customers.

At our annual conference last year, the chairman of midsized company Rackspace Hosting, Graham Weston, called their main phone number to show attendees that they, in contrast to Toyota, do have enough "lifeboats" in place to keep everyone afloat, in good times and when disaster strikes. [Buy Accutane](#). Check out the video of this compelling demonstration:

The Bottom Line: Small businesses have an inherent workforce effectiveness advantage over their larger peers when it comes to communications team building/employee engagement innovation so that when crises hit, they're ready to continue providing excellent service. This preparedness can mean only a negligible impact on sales and reputation.

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