

ARE WE DESTINED FOR QUALITY?

**YOUR GUIDE TO EXCELLENT
CUSTOMER SERVICE**

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After attracting our customers and sales it is time to provide great customer service.

In today's competitive world companies offer similar products and services, on similar locations with similar prices.

Customer service is exactly the thing that can and does make a difference, and therefore represents the source of competitive advantage. One of my favorite definitions of customer service is the one I heard from my client – he said CUSTOMER SERVICE IS MANAGING MISTAKES. And that is what it is all about. We will make mistakes. No machine works with 100% precision, let alone humans. It is about how we handle those mistakes. That is what matters most.

Customer service is a result of **managements** relationship with **employees** which influences how employees treat customers. And customers are the ones who pay all our salaries. Nothing happens in a company until a sale is made. That we already know.

Therefore, it is about PEOPLE. In addition, about COMMON SENSE.

Question: How can we achieve great customer service without sounding like usual blah blah advertisements – we care... we put our customers first... our approach is custom...

The answer: we need KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS and ACTIONS.

What precisely do we need to learn and apply?

1. KNOWLEDGE, FACTS AND INFORMATION WE MUST BE AWARE OF ALL THE TIME ARE THE FOLLOWING

- 68% of customers stop buying because of bad customer service.
- 75% of customers make their final purchase decision based on customer service.

Now that you know this, do you really think anyone can work in direct contact with your customers? How much do you need to educate them? Will your budget plans include educating people in direct contact with customers, people who pay all your salaries?

- Only 4% of customers complain when they are not satisfied. Which means that for every complaint we receive there is at least 25 dissatisfied customers we will never hear from.

Now that you know this – how “smart” is it to set goals to reduce the number of customer complaints?

- Long time ago before the social media era people used to share their dissatisfaction in average with 9 to 20 other people. Doing so, they exaggerated, and the result was that every other person that heard about the bad experience would not buy there anymore. Of course, now this kind of information spreads like wildfire.
- While you are reading this, every other customer is not receiving a proper customer service.
- Also, every third customer, which we managed to attract and get him interested in our product, will lose that interest when he gets into contact with our people.

So, think about that the next time you spend money on advertising. How about allocating some resources to measuring so-called moments of truth, meaning all those contacts customers have with our company.

All above-mentioned information shows us importance and necessity of great customer service in modern business. That is why we are all in a way destined for quality.

Although a number of companies with bad service will survive for a while because of human nature – resistance to change even when it's bad, in the long run bad service is not a sure way to survive and manage your business.

It is more profitable to use this opportunity and brand your customer service to achieve competitive advantage, not only in mature product phase cycles but all the time.

If customer service is so important, why is it so bad?

It's both managements and employees responsibility.

Management often lacks understanding that customer service is a real potential. Also they don't invest (enough) in education, there is no quality manual, pressure to make profit in the short term is always present and management doesn't understand that not everyone can work directly with customers. For direct contact, people must feel empathy. Also, management hesitates or can't fire employees giving bad service.

On the other hand, employees themselves are often not motivated to work; they do not invest time nor effort to learn the necessary product info nor sales skills.

2. SKILLS WE NEED TO HAVE FOR EXCELLENT CUSTOMER SERVICE

First, we need to have great communications skills necessary to build and maintain relationship, both with employees as well as customers.

RELATIONSHIP WITH EMPLOYEES

Did you put your employees on the first place?

The way we treat our employees reflects how they treat our customers.

Are you aware that your employees are your best market research department?

There is no point in sitting in your office, thinking – my doors are always open. Did you set up a system, did you enable your employees to simply and quickly let you know what can be improved, because they are the ones who are in daily contact with your customers. Can they, do they want to, do you reward them for this.

Are you aware that there are no lazy men, just problems in motivation?

As a leader how actively are you listening to people, do you delegate well, do you spend time with your employees? Do we honestly care about people working for us? As human beings?

CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIPS

The most important thing in any company is that everyone knows that customers pay all salaries.

Are the customers being put on the second place? Our employees must be on the first place so they can put our customers on the first place.

Do you know that our customers are our best and FREE OF CHARGE employees?

Is it really cheaper to keep every customer?

If you could, who would you choose – a loyal or satisfied customer?

Do you listen to or do you just hear your customers?

Are you aware that a claim is free consulting?

Do you apply the golden rule (treat your customers the way you would like to be treated) or the diamond rule (treat your customer the way he wants to be treated)?

3. BEHAVIOURS / DAILY ACTIVITIES WE MUST APPLY

How can we improve customer service?

1. The first step is to ask your customer what is important to them and to which extent?
2. After that, we must set up procedures to deliver our customers' expectations and then measure if they are applied correctly.
3. **Besides using traditional surveys measuring subjective customer satisfaction we must use mystery-shopping method** as well measuring performance objectively. Mystery shopping is the only way to find out HOW IT IS TO BE OUR CUSTOMER.
4. Upon receiving all results, we must communicate them to our employees, pointing out what can be improved, not looking for faults and who has done something wrong.

5. Then we must educate and motivate our employees. This circle must constantly be done and improved because competition is getting bigger and customers' expectations higher.

BONUS: HOW TO SOLVE CLAIMS?

We must never forget that a claim is a **gift and free consulting**. (Remember, only 4% of dissatisfied customers complain) so first and foremost: **THANK** your customers. Listen to them, no justifications and interruptions, calm them down, don't take anything personally, take full responsibility, and try to solve, apologize, and give a gift.

95% of customers become even more satisfied then they were before – after a claim well solved.

CONCLUSION

1. You must **CARE** about people, your employees, and your customers.
2. You must set up a **SYSTEM**, because common sense is not so common.
3. What gets measured gets done, so **MEASURE CUSTOMER SERVICE** – because improving your service by only 5% can lead to 25% increase in profits. (Source: HBR)

Only excellent companies are really customer oriented, others just blah blah talk about it. Be among the firstly mentioned.

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