

Customers are vital to every business, and every employee, sales professional, manager and business owner must know how to deliver excellent service at all times in order to keep customers for life.

Attracting customers in the first place can require a significant amount of resources. Consider all the advertising that you do via your website and other media, then add the cost of your salespeople who either canvas clients by phone, spend time cold-calling face-to-face, or in the case of retail, wait patiently for people to walk into the store. You will also have spent time and money recruiting and training your staff so that they can better serve your customers.

Let's face it, up until now everything is a cost to your business, and the only avenue for a return on your investment comes from customers who are continually willing to pay you for your product or service. Most people may not realise, however, that making customers want to come back to their business is not done in a single transaction – it is an ongoing process. Providing excellent customer service involves having a solid plan to meet and exceed customers' needs and expectations.

What does it take to provide excellent customer service and ensure your customers, especially your most ideal ones, continue to come back and therefore help keep you in business?

### 1. Let customers know what you can do for them.

In simple terms, "customers buy what we show and tell them about". If people don't know you are a great hairdresser, the best plumber in the area, have the best cakes in Australia or can save their company money, you won't have them as a customer in the first place.

Advertising and salespeople help set expectations in the customer's mind of how your products will either make them money, save them time or money, or bring them pleasure in some way. If you can do all three, then you have a very happy customer and possibly one for life.

### 2. Focus on being of service.

Yes, there are sales targets that need to be achieved, but what would happen if you focused on providing your customers with the best solutions and the best experience possible? Wow every customer with what you have to offer and how you offer your products or services. Personalise the service to create a unique customer experience. When most people's experience nowadays is of transactional sales, excellent and personalised customer service always stands out.

### 3. Be confident and have a positive, can-do attitude.

Confidence in yourself and in what you can offer earns customers'

## 10 Steps to Providing Excellent Customer Service



trust. When customers see that you have excellent knowledge of your products/services and how you can meet their needs, you become a go-to resource for them, thus eventually earning their loyalty as well.

### 4. Listen to the customer.

Great communication involves both presenting (talking) and listening well, although anyone in a sales role must do 80 per cent of the listening and 20 per cent of the talking when interacting with a current or potential customer. Good questioning techniques and active listening are skills that great salespeople use before they think about offering a solution to the customer's needs or wants. It is interesting that the more you know about and can empathise with your customer, the more they end up buying from you. Remember, everyone in a business – from the receptionist to the director or business owner – is IN sales.

### 5. Know how to read the customer and demonstrate initiative to take control.

Be aware of the customer's nonverbal communication and adjust accordingly. You must know how to effectively deal with all types of personalities so that they respond to your proposed solution.

### 6. Understand every step of the sales process, including objection handling and closing the sale.

It is vital that you are confident in guiding the customer through every step of the sales process. Customers almost always have objections, so be prepared for them to successfully close the sale.

### 7. Make customers want to continue coming back to you.

Like any relationship, businesses and customers can have a "honeymoon" period, when the customers are over-served, much loved and nothing seems too much trouble to keep them happy. But how long can you keep it up? In retail, the customer's expectations can be shattered within seconds of walking into the store, so be mindful of every detail of the customer experience.

### 8. Create advocates.

When people have a bad experience at a store or any service provider, they tend to talk about it more than the good ones. But when customers have a great experience, it stays with them even though they might not be as vocal about it – until a family member or a friend asks them for recommendations.

### 9. Follow up on your customers.

After the product has been delivered or the service has been fulfilled, check back with the customer and get their feedback on the product/solution and the manner in which it was provided to them. Ask them to complete a quick survey to measure their satisfaction and take note of any areas where you can improve.

### 10. Look after your staff.

Loyal staff often means Loyal Customers. Both customers and staff will evaluate on a regular basis why they want to be with your business. Customers can often "outlive" your salespeople in a business sense and will interact with three or more staff members over the time they do business with you. Customers don't want to train your staff and will leave if they feel they are also working for you and not being paid for it.

Never stop training your staff in the skills of asking questions to dig deeper into your customers' current situation and future needs. Anyone who talks to a customer needs sales and customer service training!



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