

## 6 Steps of Customer Service

MASTER THESE PRINCIPLES & YOU WILL SUCCEED

Customer Service. It's a phrase freely tossed around by everyone from multi-million dollar corporations to mom-and-pop businesses in hopes of luring customers with the promise of exceptional service. All too often, it's an empty promise that results in customers who disappear, taking with them any hopes of increased sales and profits.

Customer service includes everything from greeting a customer and thanking her for her business to delivering what you promise and doing whatever it takes to satisfy the customer. My company has developed more than 26 customer-service training programs for clients throughout the world. Providing your customers with exceptional service will give you and your organization a competitive edge by increasing customer loyalty.

When I launched my first customer-service training program in January 1980, I based it on six principles. Those principles are as valid today as they were then. They are as follows:

1. **FEEL GOOD ABOUT YOURSELF** - We live in a negative world and we tend to think negatively. It's critical that you feel good about yourself, that you are confident, enthusiastic, and positive. Each of us is responsible for how we feel about ourselves. You must believe in yourself, concentrate on your strengths, and recognize the importance of your role. Use affirmations and visualizations. Read books on self-improvement and strive to be the best you can be. See yourself as you can be, not as you are.
2. **BE COURTEOUS** - It takes no more time to be nice and polite than it does to be rude. Every customer wants to feel important to you and your organization. Treat them with courtesy and respect. When you do, they will return to you time and time again.
3. **GIVE POSITIVE COMMUNICATION** - Smile, call customers by name, and give specific, genuine, sincere, and timely feedback. When you communicate positively, you form a connection with the customer that says, 'I am pleased that you patronize my organization, I value you, and I am here to ensure your needs are met.'
4. **PERFORM FOR THE CUSTOMER** - Customers have the right to demand performance, they aren't interested in your problems and excuses; they want you to take care of them. You can be polite and courteous but, if you don't do what you say you will do, you will not meet the standards of good customer service. If you say you'll call a customer on Tuesday, do it. If you say you'll ship the product on Friday, do it. Do what you say you will do—and do it with speed and accuracy. If you ship a product when you say you will, but you ship the wrong product, you've taken a giant step backward.
5. **LISTEN CAREFULLY** - Few employees do this, and if you don't listen to what the customer is telling you, you cannot give that customer what he needs. Listen to the customer, then clarify what he has said by repeating it: 'Ted, let me repeat what you said so I'm sure I'm on the right track.' Ask questions, get involved, and show that you care.
6. **LEARN AND GROW IN YOUR JOB** - If a customer asks you to explain the difference between product A and product B, she's asking you to provide more than the difference in price. Study your organization's products and services—as well as those of your competitors—so that you can provide your customers with the information they need to make a purchase decision.

I admit that these six principles might appear to be common sense, but common sense seems to be in short supply these days. If you focus on these principles, these fundamentals of customer service, you will keep your current customers and attract new customers. You also will greatly increase your chances of being promoted. **RO**

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