

Customer Service Training



with examples and
hands-on exercises

WEBUCATOR

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Class Files

Download the class files used in this manual at

<https://static.webucator.com/media/public/materials/classfiles/SRV101-1.1.0.zip>.

Errata

Corrections to errors in the manual can be found at <https://www.webucator.com/books/errata/>.

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LESSON 1

Customer Service Basics

Topics Covered

- The definition of customer service.
- The difference between internal and external customers.
- How to interact with customers.
- To understand what the customer wants.

Introduction

There are many things that can be said about customer service, but one quote by Peter Drucker¹, management expert, rings particularly true:

“Quality in a service or product is not what you put into it. It is what the client or customer gets out of it.”

This course will give you the skills and tools necessary to help you provide excellent customer service.



1.1. Defining Customer Service

Customer service is:

1. Any interaction between the customer and the organization.
2. Something that everyone in the company is responsible for. Customer service is not a single department in an organization!
3. Important for both internal and external customers.

1. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter_Drucker

The goal of an organization should be that of positive customer interaction, resulting in satisfied customers and repeat business. The old adage of the “customer is always right” no longer applies, but that does not mean that customer service is a lost art. Even when customers are not right, they still deserve to be treated with respect and integrity.

Some things you can do to help you provide good customer service include:

1. **Use good listening skills.** A good listener will take the time to hear what the customer has to say without interrupting and only then ask questions to clarify the issues the customer brings up. Good listeners pay undivided attention to the customer, showing him or her that, at that moment, he or she is the most important person the employee is dealing with.
2. **Look for ways to help the customer.** Always be on the lookout for things you can do to assist the customer without being intrusive or overbearing. Pay attention to what is being said, and be prepared to go an extra step in order to resolve the customer’s issue.
3. **Ask for feedback.** Feedback can help you improve your service and give you information or ideas about new services you can provide. Also, asking for feedback shows the customer you care about his or her comments and opinions.
4. **Say you are sorry.** If you make a mistake, or something goes wrong in a transaction, apologize. Customers will appreciate your honesty. When a customer complains, your job is to listen, express empathy, and apologize. Remember, you can apologize without accepting responsibility even when the error is on the customer’s side. Telling the customer you are sorry he or she is having a bad experience and then moving forward and asking how you can help resolve it will let your customer know you care and want to work toward a solution.
5. **Do the unexpected.** Provide something for the customer that was not expected. This is how you keep your customers coming back. Think about something that your organization offers that others don’t and offer it to the customer. Another way to surprise the customer with unexpected service is to follow up after the interaction just to make sure everything is going all right. You might do this even if the interaction did not result in a sale or resolution of a problem.

Exercise 1: Check for Understanding: Defining Customer Service

⌚ 5 to 10 minutes

In this exercise, please read the following scenario and then answer the following questions.

SCENARIO:

Martha was late arriving at work one morning and, when she arrived, she found a customer, Mr. Jones, waiting for her. Mr. Jones was obviously agitated about something. The following conversation took place:

Martha: Oh! Mr. Jones, I did not know you were coming in this morning.

Mr. Jones: Yes, I have been waiting for you for over ten minutes! Are you always this late for work?

Martha: That's really none of your concern, Mr. Jones. Now, what can I do for you?

QUESTIONS:

1. Was Martha's response to Mr. Jones' question appropriate?
2. What could she have done better in order to provide good customer service to Mr. Jones?
3. When providing customer service, it is always important to:
 - A. Treat the customer as though he or she knows nothing about the company.
 - B. Understand that the customer is always right, no matter what.
 - C. Go the extra mile, providing unexpected service.
 - D. Resolve issues with the customers who spend the most money first.

Solution

1. No, Martha's behavior is not appropriate.
2. Answers will vary, but should include something about Martha apologizing and moving on to resolve Mr. Jones' problem.
3. C. Go the extra mile, providing unexpected customer service.



1.2. Internal and External Customers

Not only are customers the people who pay you for your product or service, they are also the people you work with, the people you work for, and the people who work for you.

❖ 1.2.1. Internal Customers

Colleagues, superiors, and subordinates depend on you just as you depend on them so it is important to provide good customer service to them as you go through your work day. Some effective methods of providing good customer service to your internal customers are:

1. **Thank them.** Showing colleagues appreciation for their work lets them know how important they are to the company and to you.
2. **Treat them with respect.** Co-workers who are treated with respect will in turn treat customers with respect.
3. **Create a work culture that encourages internal customer service.** A work environment that rewards respectful, polite behavior and discourages rudeness and other unprofessional behavior will foster good customer service skills and behaviors.
4. **Provide clear guidelines regarding roles and responsibilities.** When employees know what is expected of them, they not only will perform better, but will also be more satisfied with their own work environment. That satisfaction will translate into good customer service practices, both internally and externally.

Communication is key to providing excellent internal customer service. In a business environment in which individuals work together, agree on methods of doing business, and cooperate rather than compete with each other to achieve common goals, internal customer service plays a huge role. Some of the benefits of creating an environment where internal customer service is practiced daily include:

1. Increased productivity.
2. Decreased costs.

3. Improved communication.
4. Higher employee morale.
5. Goals aligned among departments.
6. Better external customer service.

❖ 1.2.2. External Customers

An external customer is an individual or organization that either uses or purchases your product or service. They have a choice when making the decision to purchase from your organization and they take their business elsewhere if they choose.

When thinking about your external customers, keep the following points in mind:

1. External customers purchase our products and/or services from outside the company not inside.
2. External customers, even though they may be loyal, still have options to go elsewhere at any time.
3. Marketing and advertising efforts are directed to external customers, not internal customers.

It is harder and more expensive to bring a customer back who was not happy with the treatment received than it is to maintain a positive relationship with current customers. As such, it is good business practice to make sure not only that your customers get the product or service they want, but that their experience is excellent. Happy customers will stick around and talk to others, and word of mouth advertising is not only the best advertising, it is the least expensive.

Negative news travels twice as fast as positive news. In order to ensure that word of mouth advertising is positive, follow these simple guidelines:

1. **Start with excellent internal customer service.** Remember, happy employees will be more likely to treat customers with respect. Even employees who do not have direct contact with customers can impact the image of the company through their interactions outside the company, their treatment of other employees, and their loyalty to the company.
2. **Establish a positive company image.** This can be done through marketing and advertising, community relationships, and positive interactions with customers.
3. **Treat customers as if they are people, not dollar signs.** Relationships with customers do not stop when they walk out the door after making a purchase. You need to continue to build those relationships through follow-up contact and feedback so the customer knows where to come if the need for your product or service comes up again and so your customers know where to send their friends.

4. **Be responsive to concerns.** When your customers come to you with problems or concerns, be ready and willing to quickly work toward resolution. Do not brush them off or ignore their complaints.
5. **Always be professional in your dealings with customers.** Professional behavior in all interactions with your customer is always the right choice.

Exercise 2: Check for Understanding: Internal and External Customers

⌚ 5 to 10 minutes

In this exercise, please respond to the following questions:

1. Which of the following is NOT a method of providing good customer service to internal customers?
 - A. Treating them with respect.
 - B. Creating a culture that does not encourage internal customer service.
 - C. Providing clear guidelines regarding roles and responsibilities.
 - D. Thanking them.
2. Consider the following scenario and then write down your thoughts on the effect of this kind of behavior on external customer service: Although salary and benefits at XYZ Corporation are excellent, employee turnover is quite high. A review of exit interviews conducted by the HR department showed that employees did not stay with the company because they felt intimidated and threatened by some of the managers.
3. External customers can be defined as:
 - A. Individuals and companies who purchase our products and services.
 - B. Individuals and companies who purchase products and services from other companies as well as ours.
 - C. Individuals and companies who have no use for our products and services.
 - D. A and B.
4. Consider the following scenario, then write down your thoughts on the effect this kind of behavior can have on internal customer service: A customer calls with a complaint and asks to speak to a manager. The manager tells the employee to tell the customer that he is not in and that the customer should call back next week.

Solution

1. B. Creating a culture that does not encourage internal customer service.
2. Answers will vary, but should include discussion of the fact that employees who work in a negative environment, in which they feel intimidated and threatened, are not likely to provide good customer service because they aren't likely to be loyal to or care about the company as a whole.
3. D. A and B.
4. Answers will vary, but should include discussion of employees wondering about other things management might be hiding or lying about. If the customers are being lied to or avoided, how does management treat the employees?



1.3. Interacting with Customers

Customers come with all kinds of personalities. There are customers who:

1. Are easy to get along with.
2. Have unreasonable expectations.
3. Seem to be always angry or upset.

No matter what kind of customer you are dealing with, the key is to treat him or her professionally and with respect.

The relationship with the customer needs to remain positive whenever possible. Following is a description of three kinds of customers and a discussion of how to handle each of them.

❖ 1.3.1. Amiable Customers

Characteristics of amiable customers include:

1. Amiable customers like to work with you.
2. They ask lots of questions and are interested in you as a person.
3. They like lots of attention.
4. They like to hear suggestions from others.
5. They avoid disagreement.

6. They are generally easy to work with, but will not tell you if they are having a problem because they do not like confrontation.
7. Amiable customers may spend a lot of time visiting if you let them.

Strategies for working with amiable customers include:

1. Listen carefully to what an amiable customer is saying. You may have to read between the lines to determine if there is a problem. If there is, then fix the problem without a lot of discussion.
2. Keep your conversations with amiable customers focused. If they start to talk about unrelated things, you can say something like: “That is very interesting, and I would like to talk about that with you some other time. Right now, let’s get back to the reason you called.”
3. When you do discover the problem an amiable customer has, be sure to reassure him or her that the problem is going to be resolved. Amiable customers depend on you to fix things without a lot of fuss and bother and need to be reassured that it will happen.

❖ 1.3.2. Aggressive Customers

Characteristics of aggressive customers include:

1. Aggressive customers often speak loudly.
2. They can be very demanding.
3. They might even resort to slamming doors or pounding on a desk.

Strategies for working with aggressive customers include:

1. Focus on getting aggressive customers to calm down before they escalate into anger.
2. Don’t focus on the things you cannot do, but rather on the things you can control. For example, if you cannot resolve the issue the aggressive customer brings to you, do NOT tell that customer you can’t help them and that he or she needs to talk to someone else. Instead, calmly tell the customer that you will connect him or her to someone who can help them. Then do it. Don’t expect the customer to make the call to the other person.

Assertive customers are often mistaken for aggressive customers. Assertive customers are direct, but generally much calmer when asking for something. They like quick resolution and direct answers and will not spend a lot of time chatting, but they are not apt to be rude or obnoxious.

❖ 1.3.3. Angry Customers

When an aggressive customer does not achieve what he or she wants through simple aggressive behavior like using a raised voice or making unreasonable demands, his or her behavior might escalate into anger. Angry customers are very difficult to deal with because they are so involved with their angry emotions that it is hard to get through to them.

Strategies for working with angry customers include:

1. Remain calm and respond politely.
2. Echo their concerns to show you understand them.
3. Show empathy by apologizing politely for their situation and what they are feeling.
4. If they do not calm down, consider telling them you are not able to continue working with them because of the way they are acting, and asking them to come back another time.

❖ 1.3.4. Handling Stress

People respond to stress in different ways. While some people have a higher threshold for stress than others, all people deal with stress. Some guidelines to keep in mind for handling stress when working with customers are:

1. **Ask yourself what it is that you can control or change about the situation.** If the situation is one you have no power to change, there is no point in continuing to work on it. Both you and the customer will become even more frustrated. When this happens, it is time to involve someone who does have the power to control or change the situation.
2. **Ask yourself what it is you want to achieve by continuing.** Once you have determined your goals or desired outcomes, you will have something to focus on, which will decrease the level of stress.
3. **Discover what actions must be taken to achieve the desired outcomes.** If you focus on specific actions that will help you achieve the desired outcome, you will spend less time focusing on the behavior that caused the stressful reaction.

Exercise 3: Check for Understanding: Interacting with Customers

⌚ 5 to 10 minutes

In this exercise, please respond to the following questions:

1. Of the following kinds of customers, which one prefers to avoid confrontation?
 - A. Angry customers.
 - B. Aggressive customers.
 - C. Amiable customers.
 - D. None of the above.

2. What is a benefit of asking yourself what is needed to accomplish the desired outcomes of a customer interaction?
 - A. A reduction in stress.
 - B. More customers.
 - C. Improved customer service.
 - D. A and C.

Evaluation
Copy

Solution

1. C. Amiable customers.
2. A and C.

**Evaluation
Copy**

Exercise 4: Check for Understanding: How Would You Handle It?

🕒 5 to 10 minutes

In this exercise, please review the following conversation that took place between Maria, a customer, and Raul, an employee.

Raul: Good afternoon. This is Raul. How may I help you?

Maria: This is the third time I have tried to contact your company. Your stupid computer answering system is completely impossible to get through! I want to talk to a human! Right now!

Raul: Hey, lady, I am a human! Now what do you want? We are really busy here, you know.

Maria: Look, young man, you don't have to be rude to me! I am a customer, and I have rights! Now, put someone on the phone who can help me!

Raul: I am on the phone with you now, but I can't help you unless you tell me what is wrong. So, what do you want?

Maria: Well, this is the last time I ever use the services your company provides! Good bye!

Raul: Good riddance!

1. What went wrong in this conversation? Where did it get off track? How would you handle Maria?

Solution

1. The conversation took a bad turn when Raul was rude to Maria after she complained about the phone system. Consider ways Raul could have responded to Maria in order to move past a discussion of the phone system and on to the reason for her call.



1.4. Understanding What the Customer Wants

Often what a customer says and what the customer really means are two different things. The same thing happens when we are talking about customer wants. It is important to listen carefully to customers to understand how their wants and needs relate to the products and services you have to offer.

For example, when you go to the cell phone store to purchase a new phone, the salesperson could:


1. Assume you want a new smart phone with all the features available.
2. Ask you what you would like to do with your phone so he or she can help you decide on the right one for you.

If that salesperson is practicing good customer service skills, he or she not only will ask, but will also listen to your response and show you phones that will meet your needs.

Some questions to ask yourself when trying to determine what a customer wants include:

1. **What are a minimum of three things the customer has stated he or she needs?** One of these things should not be price requirements. Some examples of needs might be convenience, ease of use, portability, timeliness, perishability, or attractiveness.
2. **What was said to convince you of these needs?** Listen to the customer; don't just recite the benefits of your product or service. Knowing the attributes of the product or service is not enough; you also need to know how the needs of the customer relate to the product or service.
3. **When closing the sale or deal, how did the customer respond?** In closing a sale or deal, it is always a good idea to ask if there is anything more you can do for your customer. Listen to the response; you may discover that the customer has another need that you can accommodate.

Exercise 5: Check for Understanding: Understanding What the Customer Wants

 5 to 10 minutes

In this exercise, please respond to the following questions:

1. Customer needs and wants are the same thing.
 - A. True.
 - B. False.
2. When trying to determine what the customer really wants, it is important to do what?
 - A. Listen to the customer.
 - B. Focus on what your product or service provides.
 - C. Avoid discussion of the price of the product or service.
 - D. Convince the customers that the product or service will meet their needs, regardless of what they are.

Evaluation
Copy

Solution

1. False.
2. A. Listen to the customer.

Conclusion

In this lesson, you have learned:

**Evaluation
Copy**

- The definition of customer service.
- The difference between internal and external customers.
- How to interact with customers.
- To understand what the customer wants.

LESSON 2

Developing Responsible Customer Service Skills

Topics Covered

- ☑ How to develop a positive attitude.
- ☑ About going a step beyond what is expected.
- ☑ How to deal with customer complaints.

Introduction

Customer service is the bridge between the customer and the company. A variety of responsible customer service skills are required for successful customer service. In this lesson, we will discover how the following general skills will enhance any employee's abilities to provide excellent customer service.

1. Good people skills.
2. Active listening.
3. Problem resolution.



2.1. Developing a Positive Attitude

A positive attitude is much more than just being happy. It is a state of being that will provide you with multiple benefits, such as:

1. Improved health.
2. Improved relationships.
3. The ability to focus and get more accomplished.
4. The satisfaction of succeeding more often.

A positive attitude comes from your subconscious mind; it is not something you can put on and take off at will. It is difficult to have a positive attitude at work if you don't have a positive attitude in the rest of your life.

Some techniques you can use to help develop a positive attitude include:

1. Using positive self-talk.
2. Eating healthy foods and exercising regularly.
3. Taking time for yourself away from work.
4. Surrounding yourself with positive people.

❖ 2.1.1. Good People Skills

One of the most important skills to have to provide great customer service is the ability to get along with people. People come with different attitudes, personalities, and communication styles.

In the last lesson, we discussed dealing with a variety of customer styles. Some additional tips on dealing with customers are:

1. **Smile.** Greeting the customer with a smile and pleasant voice will put the customer at ease and could even diffuse any unpleasant reaction the customer may be having.
2. **Don't take the customer's negative comments personally.** Chances are the customer is feeling frustrated about something else entirely and taking it out on you. You are the company to the customer, and therefore comments made about a product or service may be directed to you, but are not about you personally.
3. **Don't let a negative experience influence your reaction to the next customer.** Everyone will experience a negative interaction at some time, but it is important to be able to let it go and greet the next customer with a smile, regardless of what happened in the last customer interaction.

Exercise 6: Check for Understanding: Developing a Positive Attitude

🕒 5 to 10 minutes

In this exercise, please respond to the following questions.

1. Good people skills do not include which of the following?
 - A. Don't take customer's negative comments personally.
 - B. Smile.
 - C. Play the game and pretend to care about your customer.
 - D. Don't let a negative experience influence your reaction to the next customer.
2. Consider the following scenario and then respond to the following questions:

SCENARIO:

Miranda: That last call upset me so much! I am still shaking. I just don't think I can take any more. This job is too hard on me.

Michael: Wow, I am sorry you had such a bad call. Are all your calls like that?

Miranda: No. But when I do get a call like that one, I just want to quit! The customer insulted me and called me "incompetent."

Michael: Well, I'm sorry about that, but you need to remember that the customer was just venting, and not personally attacking you.

Miranda: It sure sounded like he was attacking me.

Michael: Take a deep breath, shake it off, and remember all the nice things most of your customers say to you.

Miranda: You are right, Michael. Thanks. This job really isn't so bad. I just need to stay focused and have happy thoughts.

QUESTIONS:

- A. What was Miranda doing that made her feel so bad?
- B. How did Michael help Miranda's attitude become more positive?

Solution

1. C. Play the game and pretend to care about your customer.
2.
 - A. Miranda was taking the customer's negative comments personally.
 - B. Michael reminded Miranda that the customer was not attacking her personally, and that she had many positive interactions with customers.



2.2. Going a Step Beyond What Is Expected

Excellent customer service can make the difference between a satisfied customer and a loyal customer. A satisfied customer will still seek other options if they are available, but a loyal customer will come to you first and is likely to stay with you, even if the price is higher. Going above and beyond what is expected is a great way to turn satisfied customers into loyal customers.

For example, imagine two hotel chains that offer comparable rooms and services, but one of the hotel chains emphasizes the importance of providing excellent customer service in all employee training. Now imagine that in both hotels a guest shows up at the pool in their swimsuit just as a hotel staff person is closing the pool for the night. The employees at the two hotels react as follows:

1. Employee #1: "I'm sorry. The pool closes at 10 pm. You just missed it. It will be open again at 7 am. Have a great night's sleep."
2. Employee #2: "You made it just in time. I was about to lock up, but I can come back in ten minutes to do so. Enjoy your swim!"

Employee #2, who works at the hotel that emphasizes the importance of providing excellent customer service, went above and beyond what was expected. If a guest receives this level of customer service in all dealings with the hotel's employees, he or she is apt to become a loyal guest of that hotel.

❖ 2.2.1. Active Listening

One way to determine how to go that extra step is to listen to your customers. Active listening skills will help you discover things you can do that mean something to the customer, don't cost the company a lot, and are not offered by your competition. Some active listening skills include:

1. **Focus on the customer.** Don't try to multitask when you are talking to a customer. If you are preoccupied with your keyboard, a computer screen, or even other customers, you will not be paying attention to what your customer is saying.

2. **Make eye contact.** Looking at your customer and acknowledging what he or she is saying by nodding your head, using small words like “ok” or “uh-huh” will let your customer know you are paying attention.
3. **Don’t interrupt.** Let your customer finish what he or she is saying before you speak and then ask questions or make comments that are appropriate to the discussion, again letting your customer know you are paying attention.
4. **Provide feedback.** Use paraphrasing or parroting skills to clarify what the customer is saying. This will not only ensure that you have the right information, it will also show your customer that you care about him or her.

Going the extra step does not mean you have to spend a lot of money or even go far out of your way; it is the little touches that will make the difference between a satisfied customer and a loyal one. Here are some examples of how to ensure your customer leaves with a lasting good impression of you and your company:

1. Smile and make eye contact as the customer enters your business. Many times a customer is not greeted at all, or the receptionist just pushes a sign-in sheet in front of the customer without making eye contact and barks out, “Sign in please.”
2. Before ending a conversation with someone on the phone, ask if there is anything else you can help with. If something you hear during the conversation makes you think of something you can offer that will help the customer, be sure to mention it.
3. Efficient and effective problem solving will impress your customer. Looking at problems as opportunities to either teach or learn something, and making the resolution process a pleasant one will give your customer the feeling that you and your company are competent and easy to work with.
4. When your customer asks questions, never mislead him or her by making promises you cannot deliver on or stating information about your product or service that is not true. If you can’t do what the customer wants, say so, and then find someone who can, even if it is the competition.

Exercise 7: Check for Understanding: Going a Step Beyond What Is Expected

🕒 5 to 10 minutes

In this exercise, please respond to the following questions.

1. What does active listening mean?
 - A. Listening while walking or performing some other activity with the customer.
 - B. Multitasking while listening to a customer.
 - C. Paying close attention to the customer and acknowledging what is being said.
 - D. Listening to more than one customer at a time.

2. How would you handle the following situation? You are talking to a customer on the phone when another customer comes in and asks you a question about the product you sell.
 - A. Turn your back on the walk-in customer, and keep talking to the customer on the phone.
 - B. Say, “Can’t you see I’m on the phone? Just wait a minute, please.”
 - C. Ask the phone customer to hold just a minute and then take care of the walk-in customer.
 - D. Smile at the walk-in customer and politely tell him or her you will be available in a few minutes. Then finish your conversation with the phone customer.

Solution

1. C. Paying close attention to the customer and acknowledging what is being said.
2. D. Smile at the walk-in customer and politely tell him or her you will be available in a few minutes. Then finish your conversation with the phone customer.



2.3. Dealing with Complaints and Problems

It is inevitable that sometime in your career dealing with customers you will have a customer who has a complaint. When this happens, you need to be prepared to handle the complaint without alienating the customer.

The problem resolution process is no different in customer service than it is anywhere else in the business. No matter how perfect your processes are, there will be problems. The key with customer service and problem resolution is to create a process that will be so painless for customers that they will not be afraid to come to you with future problems.

❖ 2.3.1. Problem Resolution

Things to consider when creating a problem resolution process for dealing with customers' complaints include:

1. **Speed.** The process should convey to the customer that you feel his or her problem is urgent and you will work to resolve it quickly and efficiently.
2. **The customer is right.** Make the assumption, at least to start the discussion, that the customer is actually right. Conduct your initial investigation with the idea in mind that the customer's complaint is valid.
3. **The customer is wrong.** If you discover a customer is wrong, remember that we all make mistakes. Do not blame the customer, but use the experience to teach him or her something, if appropriate. Focus on resolving the problem, not on the cause of it.
4. **Take ownership of the problem.** Even if you are not the one who will eventually resolve the problem, you are the first contact the customer has and you need to take ownership of the problem, moving it along to the right person, and then following up to make sure it is taken care of.
5. **Follow up.** After the problem has been resolved, take the extra step and call the customer to check and see if everything is still OK. Find out if the customer needs further assistance and inform the right people if more help is needed.

6. **Continue to serve.** The next time the customer comes in, make sure everyone is aware of the history and acts accordingly, continuing to provide excellent customer service.

Customers will remember how they are treated when they present a problem to a company. If the company representatives act responsibly and treat customers fairly and with respect, no matter what the outcome of the process is, customers will respect and appreciate that, remaining loyal to the company.

Exercise 8: Check for Understanding: Dealing with Complaints and Problems

⌚ 5 to 10 minutes

In this exercise, please respond to the following questions:

1. Even if the customer is wrong, fair and respectful treatment by the company will result in:
 - A. Losing that customer to the competition.
 - B. A loyal customer.
 - C. An angry customer.
 - D. A customer who will demand retribution.
2. Taking ownership of a problem means:
 - A. Paying the customer for the problem.
 - B. Resolving the problem.
 - C. Sending the customer to someone else.
 - D. Taking responsibility for the resolution of the problem and following up with the customer.
3. Consider the following scenario and respond to the questions at the end:
 - A. McKinley hired your company to create a resume, cover letter, and job application packet for a job he is interested in. He provides you with some information and then tells you to make up the rest. He says he needs to look good for this position, but does not have the proper educational credentials. He says it is OK, everyone does it. When you refuse to lie on his resume, he threatens to complain to your supervisor that you are not doing the job he hired you to do. How do you handle the situation?

Solution

1. B. A loyal customer.
2. D. Taking responsibility for the resolution of the problem and following up with the customer
3. Answers will vary, but should include discussion on the ethical dilemma of creating a false resume and the effect it could have on the credibility of your company, as well as ways to handle McKinley without alienating him.

Conclusion

Evaluation
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In this lesson, you have learned:

- How to develop a positive attitude.
- About going a step beyond what is expected.
- How to deal with customer complaints.

LESSON 3

Developing Verbal and Nonverbal Communication

Topics Covered

- ☑ The basics of communication.
- ☑ How to communicate with customers.

Introduction

Excellent customer service depends on excellent communication skills. The first step in developing excellent communication skills is to realize that communication does not happen in a vacuum. Communication is a two-way process that depends on these three elements:

1. Speaker or sender.
2. Listener or receiver.
3. Feedback from one to the other.

Evaluation
Copy

In any interaction, whether with internal or external customers, there are four things you can do to ensure good, basic communication:

1. **Watch.** It is not enough to just look at the person you are speaking with, you must also pay attention to how the person is reacting and what nonverbal signals are being sent. What kind of impressions are you forming that may or may not be accurate based on how the person is dressed, behaving, or speaking? A good communicator will observe without judging, waiting for more information before making an evaluation.
2. **Hear.** Listening is not just hearing the words, but paying attention to them. If you are focused on how you want to respond to the speaker, you will not hear what is being said. If you are daydreaming, you will miss entire passages. Stay focused, listen, hear, and understand what is being said.
3. **Open your mind.** We are bombarded daily with information from many sources. In order to sort through and make sense of all of it, we must keep an open mind to new ideas. Effectively working with people depends on thinking creatively and using new information in ways that improve and/or enhance current processes.

4. **Understand.** When we are conversing with our customers and colleagues, we need to clarify the information we are receiving to make sure the message we are hearing is the message that is being sent. Paraphrasing or parroting the information will help us understand and clarify the meaning with the speaker.

In this lesson, we will look at both verbal and nonverbal communication and how they, combined with the information above, contribute to the success (or failure) of good customer service.



3.1. The Basics of Communication

Dr. Albert Mehrabian, Professor Emeritus at UCLA, determined that communication happens as follows:²

1. 7% of the meaning is determined from the actual words that are spoken.
2. 38% of the meaning is determined by the way the words are said.
3. 55% of the meaning is determined by facial expression.

Given this information, it is important to understand the role nonverbal communication has in communication as a whole. This applies even when speaking on the phone. Tone, pitch, and volume in your voice will provide your listener with more information than the words you are speaking.

❖ 3.1.1. Tone

Tone refers to the characteristic style of your voice. You can convey a lot of information by the tone of voice you choose to use. For example:

1. A conversational tone.
2. A business tone.
3. A sarcastic tone.
4. A condescending tone.
5. A hushed tone.
6. A jubilant tone.
7. A soothing tone.
8. A harsh tone.

2. <https://www.businessballs.com/communication-skills/mehrabians-communication-theory-verbal-non-verbal-body-language/>

Think of it like this: a baby cannot understand the words you speak, but will react to the tone of voice you use when you speak, just as a person who does not speak the same language you do will react to the tone of voice you use. It is not true, however, that if you speak louder, a foreigner (or baby) will understand what you are saying better than they did before.

❖ 3.1.2. Pitch

Pitch refers to the modulation of your voice while speaking. A monotone voice is hard to listen to because it is boring, just as a sing-song voice is difficult to listen to because of the repetition of the variations in pitch. The key is to find a pitch pattern between these two extremes. Pitch can be utilized through a variety of techniques, such as:

1. **Inflection.** Your voice should go up and down throughout the conversation, emphasizing certain words or forming questions. Be careful that you do not develop a sing-song speech pattern, however.
2. **Pace.** As you speak, pay attention to the speed with which you are talking. Using a variety of speeds, slower when making an important point, faster when you want to move the conversation along, will help to keep your listener interested and help them determine what is most important.
3. **Feeling.** Using a warm and feeling voice will give your customer a sense of being liked and respected. Conversely, if your voice is cold and unfeeling, your customer will pick up on that as well, and will form a negative opinion.

You can practice using proper pitch by recording your voice and listening to it to hear where the pitch is off and then re-recording it. Try recording a conversation you are having with a friend and then listen to it, paying particular attention to pitch.

❖ 3.1.3. Volume

Some people are more naturally soft-spoken than others. Some have excellent radio announcer voices without even trying. The volume of your voice, along with the tone and pitch, will either push your customers away, or draw them in. It is important to be aware of how the volume of your voice is affecting those you are speaking to. Watch for these signs:

1. People back away from you, frown, or look around to see who is listening when you talk. You might be talking too loudly. Try lowering your voice a bit and watch to see if the listener relaxes.
2. People move closer, turn their heads so their ears are pointed at you, or cup their ears when you talk. You might be talking too softly. Try raising your voice and watch to see if the listener reacts appropriately.

3. If you have been told your voice is too loud, or too soft, practice speaking in more moderate tones.

Another thing to keep in mind when moderating the volume of your voice is the space you are speaking in.

1. Is it outdoors with a lot of traffic or other distracting noises?
2. Are you talking in a crowded restaurant?
3. Are you presenting in a large conference room?

Louder voices are needed when there is a lot of distraction, but not so loud that you become a distraction for others in the area.

1. Are you having a private conversation in a corner of a break room?
2. Are you in a one-on-one meeting in your supervisor's office?
3. Are you chatting as you walk down the hall in the office?

Use softer voices in smaller, less crowded areas.

Exercise 9: Check for Understanding: The Basics of Communication

⌚ 5 to 10 minutes

In this exercise, consider the following scenario and then respond to the subsequent questions.

Marcus and his supervisor, Ms. Diaz, are having a meeting in a small conference room. Marcus is explaining the process he took to complete a task that was assigned to him. Ms. Diaz is listening, and her facial expression is one of deep concentration. Marcus, however, interprets her expression to be one of confusion and he keeps talking, growing more anxious and nervous as he continues to explain himself over and over again.

1. What is happening in this scenario?
2. Why does Marcus keep talking?
3. Why is he so nervous?
4. What might Ms. Diaz have done differently in this scenario that would have been helpful to Marcus?
5. What could Marcus have done differently?

Solution

1. Marcus is responding to the facial expression Ms. Diaz is making.
2. He thinks she is confused or maybe not understanding what he is saying. He is misinterpreting her expression, possibly because she is using an expression that is hard to understand.
3. He is talking to his supervisor, who he thinks does not understand him. He is nervous about creating a bad impression by not speaking clearly.
4. Ms. Diaz could have affirmed, either via an expression or verbally, that she understood what Marcus was saying. Better yet, she could have restated it back to him in her own words.
5. Marcus could have asked Ms. Diaz if his explanation made sense to her and if she had any questions.



3.2. Customer Communication

Communicating effectively with customers impacts the relationship you have with them. Customers are more willing to do business with someone they have a positive relationship with. To create that positive relationship, you need to build rapport and establish your credibility with your customers.

❖ 3.2.1. Building Rapport

Rapport is mutual trust in a relationship. It is something that must be built and maintained, not something that happens as a result of one or two interactions. There are four steps to building rapport with customers:

1. **Break the ice.** When you first meet a customer, take a minute or two to get to know him or her. Don't start the conversation immediately with business talk. You want to put the customer at ease and help him or her relate to you first. It only takes a minute to comment about something general. Some possible ice breaker topics are:
 - A. The weather.
 - B. Mutual friends.
 - C. Families and/or pets.
 - D. Common business interests.
 - E. *Avoid talking about religion or politics.*

2. **Listen actively.** Focus on what the customer is saying, listening for clues about what he or she needs or wants. Customers will respond to someone they know is paying attention to what they are saying.
3. **Mirror the customer.** If you share some common mannerisms, like posture and tone of voice, the customer will feel more comfortable communicating with you.
4. **Be sincere.** If you are not being sincere when you talk to the customer, he or she will pick up on that and any rapport that has already been established will be gone.
 - A. Be yourself.
 - B. Show you are genuinely committed to your customers.
 - C. Treat customers with genuine respect.

Your customers will be genuine and respectful back to you.

❖ 3.2.2. Establishing Credibility

Your customers need to know not only that you will do as you say you will do, but also that you have the skill, knowledge, and resources to do it. Credibility with your customers will go a long way to establishing a trusting relationship. Some ways to do this include:

1. When asked a question you don't know the answer to, say, "I don't know, but I will find out and get back to you."
2. Follow up on your promises and keep your customer apprised of the progress you are making, especially if it is taking longer than you first anticipated.
3. Admit it when you are wrong. Accepting responsibility for a mistake and then working to correct that mistake will establish your credibility quickly in the mind of your customer.
4. When voicing opinions or values, be consistent and sincere. Don't waver in an effort to gain an advantage or to be liked by more people.
5. Always behave in a professional manner by not gossiping.

Not only will your credibility serve you well with your external customers, but your internal customers will also benefit from it. By establishing your credibility, you become a resource for your company. Your colleagues will come to you with questions, or refer their customers to you!

Exercise 10: Check for Understanding: Customer Communication

⌚ 5 to 10 minutes

In this exercise, please respond to the following questions:

1. Why is it important to break the ice when talking to a customer?
 - A. There is not enough time to break the ice, so don't try.
 - B. To help put the customer at ease.
 - C. To establish rapport.
 - D. Breaking the ice is a silly time-waster thought up by overzealous motivational speakers.

2. What is the appropriate response when a customer asks you a question and you don't know the answer?
 - A. Make up an answer so you don't lose credibility.
 - B. Pretend not to hear the question and change the subject.
 - C. Say you don't know and offer to find out.
 - D. Say you don't know and leave it at that.

Solution

1. B and C.
2. C. Say you don't know and offer to find out.

Conclusion

**Evaluation
Copy**

In this lesson, you have learned:

- The basics of communication.
- How to communicate with customers.

LESSON 4

Customer Service Best Practices

Topics Covered

- How to create customer service standards from best practices.
- How to implement service standards.
- How to monitor service standards.
- How to maintain service standards.

Introduction

Best practices are those techniques within a particular industry that, when applied consistently, produce the best results. When applying best practices in customer service, we look at the methods used to perform certain activities that will result in loyal customers, happy employees, and successful businesses.

In this lesson, we will look at best practices in customer service and turn them into service standards that will help employees across the company provide the best possible customer service experience for all customers, both internal and external.



4.1. Creating Customer Service Standards from Best Practices

Best practices in customer service will vary by industry, but there are some broad practices that can be applied to all industries:

1. **Service with a smile.** While this might sound old or even trite, smiling when serving customers can make a big difference in the customer's perception of the company.
2. **Listening to the customer.** Truly listening to what the customer is saying and showing the customer you have heard and understood him or her shows that you care about the customer's ideas and opinions.

3. **Empathizing with the customer.** Being sincere when using empathic statements such as “I am sorry you had this experience,” or “I understand how you feel.” will go a long way toward creating a connection with the customer.

When establishing the best practices for your customers:

1. Consider the standard best practices listed above.
2. Review your company’s mission and vision. The mission will help you focus on the results you wish to achieve with the standards. For example, if the mission of the company is to grow the company by offering an excellent product and creating excellent customer relationships, your standards must all track back to that mission in order to help achieve both the standards and the mission.

Once you have developed a list of best practices that make sense for your company, it is time to create a series of service standards that can be used throughout the company to ensure a satisfactory customer service experience. Standards are similar to goals in that they share some of the same characteristics:


1. **Specific.** A standard must be clearly written and specific enough that everyone understands it.
2. **Measurable.** There must be some kind of measurement included in the standard in order to know if the standard is being met.
3. **Attainable.** The standard must be challenging enough to make employees work to meet it, but not so challenging that it is impossible to meet.
4. **Relevant.** The relevancy of the standard will be determined by how it tracks to the company’s vision and/or mission.

As an example of creating a service standard from a best practice, with the mission stated above (to grow the company by offering an excellent product and creating excellent customer relationships) in mind, let’s look at the generic best practice, *Service with a Smile*. In order to make this specific, measurable, attainable, and relevant, we might write it like this:

Calls will be answered courteously with a smile within three rings whenever possible.

The standard states specifically how calls will be answered, and is measurable (within three rings), realistic, and attainable. Finally, it is relevant to the mission statement in that it is intended to provide a satisfactory service experience.

Exercise 11: Check for Understanding: Create a Service Standard

 10 to 15 minutes

In this exercise, you will create a service standard.

1. Think of a broad customer service best practice.
2. If possible, review your company's mission statement.
3. Write a service standard for your company that is specific, measurable, attainable, and relevant.

Solution

Standards will vary, but should include the four elements of a service standard.



4.2. Implementing Service Standards

All employees should be aware of the standards and how they affect job responsibilities. There are several ways to implement the service standards across the company, including:

1. Incorporating them in job descriptions.
2. Making them part of new employee orientations.
3. Providing ongoing training.
4. Including them in annual goals for performance reviews.

❖ 4.2.1. Service Standards and Job Descriptions

One key element to the successful implementation of service standards is to incorporate them into job descriptions. New employees will be aware of service expectations from the beginning if the standards are built into the job duties. Some examples of job descriptions that include service standards are:

1. Answers customer calls courteously and in a timely manner.
2. Understands the product or service and appeals to potential customers by accurately answering questions and offering information.
3. Resolves product or service problems by clarifying the customer's complaint, determining the cause of the problem, selecting and explaining the best solution to solve the problem, and following up to ensure resolution.

As you are creating or revising job descriptions, review the service standards document and incorporate each of the standards into the job description. The standards should also be incorporated into interview questions for use during the hiring process.

❖ 4.2.2. Service Standards and Employee Orientations

Activities during new employee orientation can be structured around the service standards. All new employees should be given a copy of the standards document followed by discussions of the standards and how they will be used to evaluate performance throughout the employee's tenure at the job.

Mentorship programs are good ways to help new employees understand and follow the service standards.

1. Mentors can show the new hires how to follow the standards.
2. Mentors can coach new hires if they are having difficulty understanding how they work.
3. Mentors are also instrumental in monitoring the performance of new employees during their first few weeks on the job.

❖ 4.2.3. Service Standards and Ongoing Training

One of the barriers to successful implementation of the service standards is lack of commitment by employees. In order to ensure commitment, it is important to keep the service standards in front of employees at all times, not just in the interview and orientation process.

By implementing an ongoing training process that focuses on the service standards, the company shows the employees that it is committed to the standards. Some possibilities for ongoing training are:

1. Quarterly training sessions focusing on particular standards or refresher sessions reviewing all the standards.
2. Semiannual review and updating sessions where the standards are revised if necessary.
3. Role-play activities at monthly meetings focusing on one or two of the key standards.

❖ 4.2.4. Service Standards and Performance Reviews

Another way to gain employee commitment to the standards is to incorporate them into annual goals that will be used in the performance review process. Some examples of annual goals that include service standards are:


1. Prepare a minimum of six service reports by collecting and analyzing customer information.
2. Contribute to team efforts by participating in a minimum of four service team activities.
3. Open a minimum of nine new customer accounts by updating account information accurately and completely.
4. Maintain all customer records in the company's database by updating account information as new information is collected.

Performance goals that are tied to the service standards will encourage employees to continually review and monitor the standards. Service standards that are incorporated throughout the company's procedure will help ensure consistent behavior and service throughout the company. Employee expectations will be clearly understood by employees when they are part of every step in the employee hiring and management process:

1. The initial job description posting.
2. The orientation process.
3. Ongoing training activities.
4. The performance review process.

Evaluation
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Exercise 12: Check for Understanding: Implementing Service Standards

 5 to 10 minutes

In this exercise, please respond to the following questions.

1. Service standards should be included in which of the following business processes?
 - A. Job search for upper management positions.
 - B. Job search for customer service positions.
 - C. New employee orientations.
 - D. Performance review processes for all employees.
 - E. Ongoing training efforts.
2. Service standards are applicable to only the customer service department.
 - A. True
 - B. False
3. Which of the following can be considered as a service standard?
 - A. Customers will receive return calls within 24 hours on regular business days.
 - B. Customers may be given the option to be put on hold or called back if the lines are busy.
 - C. Meetings will be organized, run efficiently, and conducted in a professional manner.
 - D. Regular business hours will be posted and observed.

Solution

1. A, B, C, D, and E. Service standards should be included throughout all listed business processes.
2. B. False. Service standards are applicable throughout the company.
3. A, B, C, and D. All of these are service standards.



4.3. Monitoring Service Standards

As discussed in the previous section, monitoring service standards can be done through the performance review process, but an annual review is not enough. The management team and the service team both have a responsibility to monitor the services standards throughout the year.

❖ 4.3.1. Management Role

The management team is responsible for scheduling training and ensuring the service standards are part of that training. Supervisors and managers can also monitor service standards in the following ways:

1. Through daily observation.
2. In one-on-one meetings.
3. During regular staff meetings.
4. During informal discussions.

Monitoring of the service standards is an on-going process that will regularly provide information to the management team about the effectiveness of the service standards and employee performance.

❖ 4.3.2. Service Team Role

The service team is made up of the employees. Sometimes a company will have designated service teams in the customer service department, but all employees are essentially part of the service team and are responsible for providing service, whether to internal or external customers.

The service team role in monitoring the service standards starts with each individual employee, who is responsible for his or her own:

1. Knowledge of the service standards.
2. Adherence to the service standards.

3. Performance relevant to annual goals.

Every time an employee interacts with a customer, internal or external, that employee is making an impression. The interaction may be through email, phone conversations, at meetings, or hallway encounters. It is the responsibility of the employee to ensure that the quality of the service provided meets or exceeds the customer's expectations.

Exercise 13: Check for Understanding: Monitoring Service Standards

🕒 5 to 10 minutes

In this exercise, please respond to the questions.

1. Monitoring service standards is the responsibility of which of the following groups?
 - A. Managers.
 - B. Customers.
 - C. Service Teams.
 - D. Financial Partners.
2. In the following scenario, which method of monitoring service standards is the manager using?
Manager Bob calls a meeting of the department supervisors to discuss a problem he noticed when walking through the call center. Several of the employees were on break at the same time and the phones were ringing without being answered.
 - A. Observation.
 - B. One-on-one meeting.
 - C. Regular staff meeting.
 - D. Informal discussion.
3. Each employee is responsible for his or her own performance relevant to the annual goals. How is this related to service standards?
 - A. There is no relevance. Annual goals and service standards are different responsibilities.
 - B. Service standards are the same thing as annual goals.
 - C. Annual goals are tied to service standards.
 - D. Performance levels are calculated based on service standard adherence, not annual goal achievement.

Solution

1. A and C. The managerial staff and the service teams are responsible for monitoring service standards.
2. A. Observation.
3. C. Annual goals are tied to service standards.



4.4. Maintaining Service Standards

Once the work of creating a service standards document is completed, it must be maintained. Standards can become obsolete as business practices change. Regular review of the standards by management teams is critical and should be communicated to employees on a timely basis.

The standards can be revised, deleted, or new ones added at any time if sufficient information is available to warrant the revisions. Information can be gathered in the following ways:

1. Through feedback from employees and customers about how the service standards are working.
2. Customer service satisfaction surveys.
3. Review of employee performance processes to assess the effectiveness of the standards and annual goals.

If the standards are revised, the new ones need to be disseminated to the rest of the employees. This can be accomplished by:

1. Regularly scheduled quarterly training sessions.
2. Providing the service standards document to employees through email.
3. Using the company newsletter.
4. Handing out the new service document at regularly scheduled meetings.

Exercise 14: Check for Understanding: Maintaining Service Standards

⌚ 5 to 10 minutes

In this exercise, please answer the following question.

1. Why is it important to maintain service standards after they are created?
 - A. Keeping the services standards updated will ensure continued customer satisfaction.
 - B. Business practices change over time and standards may become obsolete.
 - C. Employees will feel more connected to the company if they continually have to update service standards.
 - D. Well-written service standards do not need to be updated.

Solution

1. A and B.

Conclusion

In this lesson, you have learned:

- How to create customer service standards from best practices.
- How to implement service standards.
- How to monitor service standards.
- How to maintain service standards.

**Evaluation
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LESSON 5

Attracting Loyal Customers

Topics Covered

- ☑ How to create memorable service.
- ☑ How to develop loyal customers.
- ☑ How loyal employees impact customers.

Introduction

There are all kinds of customers, motivated by a number of different things.

1. The **price-conscious customer** is motivated by price and makes purchase decisions based on markdowns or discounts.
2. The **impulse-buying customer** has no real need for something, but will buy based on what sounds good at the moment.
3. The **needs-based customer** has a specific need and will usually just make the purchase and leave.
4. The **meandering customer** wanders in and out with no specific need or want.
5. The **loyal customer** comes to your business first for any of the products or services your company offers. While loyal customers account for less than 20 percent of a business's customers, they account for more than 50 percent of sales.

In this lesson, we will discover how to attract more loyal customers to create repeat business.



5.1. Create Memorable Service

Great customer service is service that exceeds the customer's expectations and becomes memorable enough that the customer talks about it to others.

Continuously exceeding the customer's expectations will help create memorable service. Once a customer has experienced great customer service, he or she will expect that kind of service in the future, and if

it continues to happen, that customer is likely to talk about it. Talking about it is likely to bring in more customers who will also be expecting great service.

❖ 5.1.1. Service Above and Beyond

There are many ways to exceed customer service without costing the company a lot of money. Many of these opportunities to impress your customer with excellent service cost nothing more than time.

1. **Take that extra step with your customer.** If there is an opportunity to help a customer even if there is no immediate profit in it, take the opportunity. The customer will remember it and not only return to your company when he or she needs your product or service, but will tell others about the service.
2. **Follow up with your customer.** Take the time to call or email the customer after the service has been completed to make sure everything is ok. Offer further service, but do not use this opportunity as a hard sales call.
3. **Offer something extra.** If you have to cancel or change the customer's request, offer an incentive as a way of apology. For example, If you have to change a scheduled meeting or event with your customer, offer him or her a free service or product as a way of making up for the inconvenience.
4. **Train your staff properly.** Make sure you and your staff have all the knowledge and information needed to answer questions and make decisions that will please the customer.
5. **Be sincere.** Service that is perceived to be insincere or phony will turn the customer off quicker than poor service will. Let your customer know you mean it when you provide customer service.

Memorable customer service occurs when customers walk away from your company feeling that they have been treated like they are special.

❖ 5.1.2. Great Customer Service Examples


You can find examples of great customer service online, but how often do you actually hear your friends and colleagues talk about great customer service? People are usually more apt to complain about poor service than they are to rave about excellent service. What we need to do is to create more excellent customer service opportunities so our customers have more positive experiences to talk about.

1. **Problems can be opportunities.** If a customer has a complaint or problem, take it as an opportunity to not only resolve the issue, but to go an extra step and offer additional service or incentives. For example, if a customer complains because his or her latest invoice is incorrect, fix the problem and then offer the customer a discount on the next invoice to make up for the inconvenience.

2. **Have a lagniappe handy.** A lagniappe (from Louisiana French pronounced “lan-yap”) is a small token or gift given by a merchant to a customer when it is least expected. Some examples of lagniappes are when the baker adds a 13th donut to an order of a dozen donuts or the receptionist handing a client a long-stemmed rose as she leaves the salon after a makeover. Lagniappes can also be bonuses or unexpected services.
3. **Treat customers like VIPs.** When customers enter your establishment, acknowledge their presence and offer to assist them. Listen to them carefully and be ready to accommodate their needs.
4. **Surprise your customers.** Continually look for ways to surprise your customers by doing something unexpected. For example, in a car rental company, the customer will be expecting a clean vehicle, with a full tank of gas. The customer won’t expect a small welcome kit on the dashboard with a local map and coupons for a local coffee shop.
5. **Respond quickly.** When a customer contacts you with a complaint or problem, respond immediately and have a process in place to provide quick resolution of the problem. Do not make customers go through a long process, especially if it involves providing a refund for a defective product or unsatisfactory service.
6. **Be proactive.** When creating products or service packages for your customers, anticipate their needs ahead of time and be proactive in providing them. For example, a photography studio could include discount coupons to a local hair salon in its bridal packages.
7. **Get to know your customers.** Learn their names and what kind of products or services they purchase. Offer related services or products when appropriate, but do not hard sell them. Follow up with them in a timely manner to make sure they have enough of the product or to see if they need more of the service.

Create great service experiences for your customers consistently and they will become loyal customers, returning to purchase more of your product or service. They may also bring their friends with them.

Exercise 15: Check for Understanding: Create Memorable Service

 5 to 10 minutes

In this exercise, please respond to the following questions.

1. Which of the following can be considered great customer service practices?
 - A. Following a customer around the store.
 - B. Ignoring a customer who needs attention.
 - C. Talking to your friends and co-workers while customers wait.
 - D. Smiling and acknowledging a customer the moment he or she arrives.

2. When providing memorable customer service, it is important to remember to:
 - A. Be consistent.
 - B. Be sincere.
 - C. Be funny.
 - D. Be proactive.

3. An example of memorable customer service is:
 - A. A store giving a customer a coupon for 50% off their next purchase along with a full refund for a defective product.
 - B. A hotel restaurant that does not serve from the lunch menu until after 11:00 am providing a boxed lunch at 7:30 am to a guest who is going to be out of the hotel for lunch.
 - C. A drugstore pharmacist who offers to deliver a prescription to a home-bound customer during a severe winter storm.
 - D. A bus driver who gets off the bus at a stop during a rain storm and opens an umbrella over a rider between the stop shelter and the bus.

Solution

1. D. Smiling and acknowledging a customer the moment he or she arrives.
2. A, B, and D.
3. A, B, C, and D. All of these are examples of memorable service.



5.2. Develop Loyal Customers

As mentioned in the previous section, loyal customers generally make up around 20 percent of the customer base, but provide around 50 percent of the sales revenue. It is important, therefore, to develop those loyal customers, giving them reason to come back and to bring their friends. The following techniques can be helpful with respect to creating loyal customers:

1. Reward loyal customers.
2. Survey customers.
3. Involve loyal customers.
4. Keep in touch with loyal customers.
5. Thank loyal customers.

Evaluation
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❖ 5.2.1. Reward Loyal Customers

Ways companies reward loyal customers include:

1. Sending birthday greetings with small gifts or incentives.
2. Providing punch cards that offer a free product or service after purchasing a certain number of products or services.
3. Setting up a reward point system that gives the customer a free product or service after earning a certain number of points.
4. Sending a “we’ve missed you” greeting card with an incentive if you have not seen them in awhile.

Short messages or small offerings like these will let your customers know you value them and their loyalty to your company.

❖ 5.2.2. Survey Customers

Ask your customers what they think about your company and/or service. This can be done quickly and simply by asking just two questions:

1. Would you recommend us to others?
2. Why or why not?

Both positive and negative responses will provide valuable information for training purposes. If the customers say yes, the reasons they provide will help you determine what you need to do to continue to provide good service. Negative responses will let you know what you are not doing effectively.

❖ 5.2.3. Involve Loyal Customers

Ask your loyal customers for their input when considering making changes to your product line or service offerings. Customers will like feeling like they have a say in some of the business decisions you make. By considering customer input, you could also avoid making a potentially damaging decision.

❖ 5.2.4. Keep in Touch with Loyal Customers

Target your messages to customers appropriately by sending the right messages to the right customers at the right time. Do not overwhelm them with multiple messages, but do keep in touch by providing helpful information that is customized just for your customers. Find an acceptable balance between sending too many messages and too few.

❖ 5.2.5. Thank Loyal Customers

Use any business transaction, no matter how large or small, as an opportunity to thank your customer and show your appreciation for their patronage. Some other ways to thank your customer include:

1. Support local charities. When your customers see you support the same charities they do, they will appreciate your company more.
2. Get involved in the community. It can be surprising how much you can get in return for giving back to the community.

Exercise 16: Check for Understanding: Develop Loyal Customers

🕒 5 to 10 minutes

In this exercise, please respond to the following questions.

1. Which of the following may not be a good way to keep in touch with your loyal customers?
 - A. Customizing messages so they meet the immediate needs of your customers.
 - B. Sending an email blast to your customers once a week.
 - C. Targeting your messages to the right customer at the right time.
 - D. Surveying customers to discover how they feel about your company.

2. Rewarding loyal customers will let them know you value them and their loyalty to the company.
 - A. True.
 - B. False.

3. Read the following scenario and answer the questions after it. *Two customers walk into a furniture store at the same time. Two sales people are standing near the sofa display talking to each other. The first customer walks to the mattress display and starts looking around. The second customer heads to the sofa department. Both of the sales staff walk away, one following the customer into the mattress area and one going to the office where the phone is ringing. One customer is engaged immediately in a discussion about the mattresses and the other is left standing there for over five minutes while the second sales person answers the phone call.*
 - A. How do you think the second customer is going to react?
 - B. What could the second sales person have done to make the second customer feel more welcome?

Solution

1. B. Sending an email blast to your customers once a week.
2. True.
3. Answers to both questions will vary, but the discussion should include having the second salesperson acknowledge the presence of the second customer, excusing himself or herself to quickly answer the phone, and making arrangements to call the phone customer back.



5.3. How Loyal Employees Impact Customers

Employee loyalty is more than just staying with an organization for a certain period of time. Employee loyalty also means:

1. Wanting to stay with the company.
2. Being committed to the success of the company.
3. Believing that working for the company is the best option for them.
4. Not actively looking for a new position outside of the company.

Customer loyalty is tied to employee loyalty through the customer experience. Employees are the company to the customer and if there is a lot of employee turnover or if employees are obviously not happy at work, their dissatisfaction will be reflected in the customer experience.

❖ 5.3.1. Measuring Employee Loyalty

Job satisfaction surveys can provide information about how satisfied an employee is at work and can be useful in learning about employee perceptions of the company, their loyalty level and how to improve employee morale.

Employees will generally fall into three groups or levels of loyalty. Those three levels are:

1. Loyal.
2. Indifferent.
3. Insecure.

Loyal employees are obviously the most desirable. However, in addition to being loyal, employees must perform consistently and productively. An employee can be loyal to the company, but not be a

productive worker. In order to ensure the employee is productive, there must be performance measurements in place. The ultimate result is a productive workforce that is committed to the customer.

Indifferent employees take the middle road when it comes to commitment to the company or the customer. They will do just what is required, with no thought to providing the extra touch, to get their job done. This segment of the workforce will need extra training and attention in order to move them to the loyal employee segment.

Insecure employees are vulnerable. They will not be productive or committed to the company without encouragement or incentive. Companies will want to minimize the percentage of insecure employees by turning them into loyal employees or encouraging them in their search for employment elsewhere.

❖ 5.3.2. Employee Job Satisfaction

There are some things you, as an employee, can do to create and maintain satisfaction in your job. The happier you are at work, the more committed you will be to the company and your focus on the customer will be more positive. Follow the suggestions below to increase your state of well-being at work:

1. **Take responsibility quickly for your errors.** Owning up to your mistakes sooner rather than later will actually enhance your relationships with your colleagues because the problem won't have time to escalate. Not taking responsibility just creates additional problems.
2. **Acknowledge your colleagues.** When your colleagues do something that makes your job easier, or makes the workplace better, recognize that and let them know you appreciate them. Recognition and praise is an excellent motivator, even among co-workers.
3. **Continually work toward creating a positive workplace.** It is difficult to work in a negative environment, so keep your attitude positive, and share that attitude with your colleagues.
4. **Keep your promises.** Trust is a valuable component in a positive, supportive workplace, so do not break that trust by not keeping your promises.
5. **Encourage your co-workers.** Support your co-workers when they need a boost. Help them by encouraging continued education or training if they feel they don't have the skill set to do something. They will respect and appreciate you in turn, making the workplace a more positive environment.
6. **Understand what motivates or stresses your co-workers.** Recognize your co-workers' communication styles and adjust yours to best communicate with them.

In order to create loyal customers, a business first needs to create loyal employees. Satisfied employees who are committed to the company will take good care of the company's customers; unsatisfied employees may not. A company can't have loyal customers without first having loyal employees.

Exercise 17: Check for Understanding: How Loyal Employees Impact Customers

⌚ 5 to 10 minutes

In this exercise, please respond to the following questions.

1. How does taking responsibility quickly for your errors improve employee loyalty?
 - A. When problems don't have time to fester, everyone involved can move on quickly.
 - B. Once errors are acknowledged and corrected, workplace tension is lessened.
 - C. A workplace without tension is a healthier environment to work in.
 - D. Employees are happier and more loyal when they have healthy environments to work in.

2. What can you do to help insecure, vulnerable employees become loyal employees?
 - A. Find out why they are insecure and do what is necessary to remedy that feeling if possible.
 - B. There is nothing you can do, you might as well let them go.
 - C. Give them all a raise.
 - D. Give them all a three-week paid vacation.

3. Read the following scenario and discuss the questions that follow with the class: *When Susan arrived at work one morning, she was surprised to see her co-worker Paul yell something into the phone and then slam it down. She asked him if that was a customer he was talking to. He said, no, it was his ex-wife asking for more money. The phone rang again, and Paul answered it with a curt greeting and proceeded to talk quite rudely to what was obviously a customer.*
 - A. What should Susan do at this point?
 - B. How can Susan support Paul and help him improve his attitude?

Solution

1. A, B, C, and D.
2. A. Find out why they are insecure and do what is necessary to remedy that feeling if possible.
3. Answers will vary, but should include some discussion of Susan letting Paul know what she heard and what she thinks the customer heard.

Conclusion

**Evaluation
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In this lesson, you have learned:

- How to create memorable service.
- How to develop loyal customers.
- How loyal employees impact customers.