



Evolve Business Group
Elevating Extraordinary Entrepreneurs

52 Steps to Exceptional **Customer Service**

By Marty Park

Transform your performance | Grow your business | Lead your marketplace

INTRODUCTION

What is your business without customers? Without sales? The answer is nothing. In order to get sales and grow your business, improving customer service, building stronger relationships with customers and providing an excellent customer/client experience is incredibly important. Not to mention, the impact that great service has on customer advocacy and referrals! The general rule is that it costs five times more to attract a new customer or client than it does to retain an existing one. So, the profitability of your business is also directly linked to the quality of your customer service.

Throughout the following pages, we've outlined 52 ideas or steps for you to use as a guide to improving your customer service and help you grow your business to its ultimate potential. Please read through each step in this document and if at any point you have questions, simply email us at bigresults@evolvebusinessgroup.com with the subject line, "Customer Service." We are here to help you put these steps into place in your unique business!

1) SERVICE VERSUS HOSPITALITY

Business owners are typically concerned with the steps involved in a particular service action such as, how a customer is greeted, how the phone is answered and how a package is delivered. Together, these steps form the client experience component. However, hospitality is a key factor that influences all these steps. Hospitality is the attitude and commitment that someone displays. When someone just goes through the motions but doesn't seem to mean it, it's easy to tell. The secret to hospitality is to mean what you say. Focus your team on hospitality and if they can't be hospitable, then reevaluate your team.

2) EXPLAIN THE WHY

When companies implement a new service standard or initiative they may choose to name it something clever like, customer overwhelming. Everyone chants this new theme and management is excited to discuss it at meetings, quarterly retreats and in the annual report. Unfortunately, the most important piece that will ensure the success of these new initiatives is often left out, explaining why it matters to employees.

Explain why each step of the process is important and let employees know that top-notch service will help them get a raise next year. There's often a disconnect between the service steps needed and the success of the business. As a result, employees fail to recognize how the company's success can be their own success. When you explain how great service benefits everyone, employees put in greater effort.

3) USE A SCRIPT

It's easy to answer the phone, "Hello, ABC Company, this is the receptionist speaking, how can I help you?" Is this the message you want to share every time someone calls? What about each time someone walks through the door of your business or each time a salesperson sits with a prospective client? Are your messages consistent? Sales and service scripts are priceless.

It's essential to have a well thought out, consistent script and roll it out with your staff. People will sometimes have their own way of doing it, which is often unacceptable. Words like, hi, hello, hey, yeah and what, all have a different connotation and indicate a different level of service. Once a script is ready, it must be practiced so that it doesn't sound like a script! Repetition makes great actors; they review scripts so often that when it comes time to film, it flows naturally. Your staff and their service scripts should be thought of in the same way.

4) BE UNIQUE

Have you ever received a package from a company with a thank-you note saying, "We really appreciate your business and wanted to say thanks."? Simple gestures like thank-you notes make your business stand out and leave your customers and clients with a good feeling.

Have you noticed how a happy and welcoming staff member can make you want to stay and shop longer? Whether you are in service, sales, or inventory management, you can make your customer's experience unique. Personal touches set your service apart. When you make your business more unique and personal, it will increase the perception of the quality of your service.

5) CUSTOMERS DON'T CARE ABOUT YOUR DAY

Have you ever asked a server at a restaurant, an employee at a hotel or a bank teller how their day is going, only to have them tell you the brutally honest truth? As they are responding, with complaints, you think, "It was just a plesantry, I really didn't want to know."

Often employees don't realize that having a bad day shows through in the quality of their service, and client experience. It might be harsh but, staff need to realize that customers aren't interested in how their personal life is affecting the customer experience.

They really just want efficient, quality service above everything. Talk to your team, let them know they have one chance to make a good impression every time they speak with a client.

Anything they say will affect client experience and they must be able to put the customer's experience above their own emotions.

6) USE THEIR NAME

Everyone wants to feel special and treated as such. If people say they don't, do not believe them. So how do you make every customer feel special? Start with personalized touches like using their name. This is a common practice on airlines and hotels but what about in your business? If you don't know their name, ask them. Asking for someone's name and then using it, works. Being addressed by name can make someone feel significant and special.

Start by addressing a person with their title, for example, Mr. or Mrs., ask if they will allow you to use their first name and if all else fails use, Sir. Friends call people by their first name and that is your goal — get the first name and create a friendship.

7) SYSTEMIZE PERSONALIZED

To make personalized touches consistent, try systemizing them. As an example, think about thank-you notes. Set reminders or alarms so you don't forget to send a thank you. The inside of your card should have a message of two to three sentences. Put a system in place so that envelopes and the addresses are done by someone else in the office.

Be sure your team knows that the system requires thank-you notes to go out the same day or week as the meeting. Systemize the responsiveness. Customers won't know you have a thank-you card system in place; they will simply be delighted as they read your personalized message.

8) ANTICIPATE CLIENT NEEDS

When working with clients, the same issues come up repeatedly, yet no one actively anticipates them. Imagine the impact of a phone call or supporting document that addresses the immediate issues of the client. It's easier to do than most people think. First, review the top five issues past clients have had and use that as a guide to determine what will help clients in the future.

The next step after a client purchase or first meeting is to have a phone call or email and

share information the client will likely need going forward. Even though the issues you address are common to most clients, your proactive response and action will make you look like a genius.

9) LANGUAGE COMMUNICATES SERVICE LEVEL

Have you ever stood in line at the bank and anticipated the level of service you are about to receive after hearing one sentence? Consider the difference between the following statements: “Next in line,” “I can help the next person in line,” “I’d like to help the next guest” or “I’d love to help the next lucky customer?” When was the last time you called somewhere and they said, “It’s a great day at ABC Company, how can I help you?” The language people use sets the tone for the level of service we expect to receive.

We don’t just want our staff to help because it’s their job; staff must demonstrate that they actually want to help. When customer service is delivered in a genuine, energetic, and enthusiastic way, it makes customers and clients feel truly valued. Clients and customers want to interact with staff that want to work with them. Try it for yourself, call your office or business as a customer and see what tone and words are used.

10) WELCOME BACK

Think of the retail shopping system where someone asks, “Can I help you?” The customer responds, “No thanks, I am just browsing,” and the staff leave the customer alone. It’s a conditioned routine that hurts every business with prospective customers. Try using a new, clever, or interesting phrase to achieve higher customer service marks.

An excellent greeting to use when a customer comes into your business is, “Welcome back!” People assume one of two things: either, you recognize them and are instantly glad to be welcomed back. Or, they say, “I’ve never been here before,” and it opens the conversation. Both assumptions result in further conversation and engage the customer. Find a new and interesting way to greet people and watch service and as a result, sales rise.

11) GOOD, BAD AND EMOTIONAL

If you ask people to recount a memorable service experience it will usually involve phrases and descriptors that are tied to their emotions. If you ask people about a bad service experience it usually involves phrases and indicators that have left people upset, hurt, or offended. Teach your team that customers and clients judge your level of service based on their emotions. People will remember your business based on how it made

them feel. Knowing the emotional triggers of your target customer before your customer service interactions can change your whole approach. Wondering what impacts people emotionally? As a starting point, look at your reviews and ask your current clients.

12) WOW THEM TO SHARE

People don't recount a story about service unless it is memorable. Positive, fine, and even great service doesn't get people talking. You must go above and beyond what they expect each time. Start by explaining your customers' expectations to your team, then look at each expectation and determine what the next level is. Set your standards to a higher level and watch as people communicate about your business.

13) EDUCATE YOUR TEAM

Have you ever been in a store where a service person could not answer basic questions about their own products? The service staff could be friendly and cheerful but unfortunately, knowing little about the product creates a bad service experience.

Energy, enthusiasm, and demeanor all hold critical places in excellent service, but so does having knowledge about your product. Hold monthly educational sessions about your product lines. Share stories, facts, guidelines, reviews, testimonials and specifications. Exceptional customer service requires knowledgeable staff.

14) RELATIONSHIPS ARE MORE THAN SERVICE

Many businesses talk about relationships with their clients, but often those relationships are non-existent. How much information do you and your team know about your clients and customers? If you have no profile developed for your clients, then you are not building relationships with them. When dating someone, you learn information and slowly build a library of critical facts that help to strengthen the relationship. The same approach should be taken with your business relationships and service. Get to know your clients so well they don't want to shop anywhere else. Create a relationship that goes beyond price, poor product, late deliveries, or any other challenge.

People will remember your business based on how it made them feel. Knowing the emotional triggers of your target customer before your customer service interactions can change your whole approach. Wondering what impacts people emotionally? As a starting point, look at your reviews and ask your current clients.

15) PEOPLE BUY EXCEPTIONAL CUSTOMER SERVICE

Some skeptics will ask, “If someone has already bought the product, then why does service matter?” It’s actually the service a client receives, more than the product itself, that will keep people coming back to purchase.

If service is poor, customers will look for alternatives. When you provide a quality service, people become long-term clients and long-term relationships are created. It is important to know the lifetime value of a client and share that with your staff, so they understand the value of each happy customer.

16) CUSTOMERS ARE FORGIVING – TO A POINT

One of the most powerful things you can do is apologize. When you or your team make a mistake, be quick to apologize and try to make it right. Generally, people start off with excuses, reasons, complications, or disownership, instead of a simple apology. “I am really sorry,” is the best way to find a resolution quickly.

Saying sorry is also the best way to get more chances with your customers. Customers want to be heard and shown that you recognize they deserve more. Although, if apologies become too frequent, you risk losing customers and need to think about systems and staff quality.

17) INDIVIDUALS OWN SERVICE PROBLEMS

Issues are bound to come up in every business. Have you ever had an issue and heard the response, “Oh, that’s not my department, let me transfer you,” and the next person says, “Oh Joe is who you need to talk to, can you call back?”

A common response is to shift responsibility. Great service begins with the willingness to own a service problem. Don’t transfer, redirect, or send your clients to voicemail. Instead, assist them — that’s what all customers want. If you need help finding a solution don’t hesitate to seek input from others but make sure that the issue is resolved.

18) THRILLED NOT SATISFIED

Successful service isn't measured by customer satisfaction. Instead of a customer satisfaction scale, think of it as a client happiness or guest delight scale. If the customer is only satisfied with your level of service or business, there is a risk of them leaving. Your competitor is going to brag that they do more, and your customer will believe them.

Engineer your service program so that it evokes responses like, "Wow!" or "Unbelievable!" "Really?!" Those are the types of responses that result from a customer delight program. That's what generates referral business and loyal, long-standing customers.

19) GIVE THE CUSTOMER SIGNIFICANCE

People want to know they are special. They want to feel like they're a VIP. They want to be noticed and recognized. The emotional driver that most people want in service is significance. BMW went so far as to allow customers to create customized, one-of-a-kind cars for a premium price and they sold thousands.

Start with knowing your clients by name. Make special exceptions a regular practice and watch the impact when you create significance for your customers. Tell them, "We don't usually do this, but we will for you." People don't care what you do for others, they care about what you do for them. Show them they are special and they will tell all their friends and continuously drive new business to you.

20) CONGRATULATE, THEN THANK

COACH is a premium brand of handbags, accessories, and swag. Many people know exactly what COACH offers. The COACH brand has mastered an important part of service that many people miss; they have learned to congratulate their customers before they thank them. It is important to congratulate someone who has bought from you. Saying congratulations reinforces a customer's decision, it says the customer is smart, they are insightful, and they have good taste.

Congratulations is recognizing they made a good choice. A thank you is about you appreciating that choice. So, while it is important to say, "Thank you for buying from me, and for supporting me." It is even more important to make about the customer, and congratulate them on buying first!

21) SHARE STORIES TO DEMONSTRATE STANDARDS

Traditional service standards are outdated. The typical customer service manual is tiring to read and boring to listen to. If you really want to connect with staff and give them service standards they can embrace, tell stories. Did you know that “story” is the first multiple syllable word children learn in most cultures?

People learn about service levels from stories of right and wrong. Make it a monthly part of your service program to tell stories and give examples of situations. First-hand examples from your team’s performance are always best so, document stories as they happen. Give your staff options and let them choose how they would approach the situation before sharing the right answer. This will help your staff to see why their actions matter.

22) SERVICE THROUGH SIGNAGE

Why is service only defined in terms of people? A great service business offers instructions, help, and ideas to its customers at all points: on the website, in the change rooms, at a display, and on voicemail. People measure great service by the number of times they are assisted — both personally and through your service-oriented systems.

The next time you walk into a coffee shop, look for places they could have signs that read, “If we don’t have your favourite sweetener, ask us — we will order it for you!” If you don’t think that sign would show service commitment, you’re not reading it right. It’s an extension of all the things your staff should be saying and may not be.

23) SOLVE THE PROBLEM

Have you ever had an issue with a product or service and contacted a customer service representative and they told you but inevitably just made an excuse for being unable to help, or passed the buck? One of the biggest issues in service is the unwillingness or lack of empowerment to solve a problem.

Don’t just try to solve the problem. Solve it. Good service is not about trying to fix customer problems; it is about climbing over, around, through a problem and getting it solved to a customer’s satisfaction. Start to create a culture where problems get solved and watch your business explode as others settle for, “I tried.”

24) SERVICE IS EVERYONE WE CAN SEE

Is there an invisible shield at your bank? You know the one. It allows you to see all the employees behind the counter, but they think they are behind an invisible shield and don't acknowledge any customers. You watch them walking and talking and think, why don't they help one of the 37 people in line?! Many companies act like this.

Customers don't know an employee's role, they don't know if someone is designated as a service person so they assume everyone they see is in service, and you know what? They are! Great service companies realize that service is not a department or a role. It is the responsibility of every employee that can see, hear, touch, or talk to a customer. Take down the invisible shield and have every person on your staff offer service to every customer.

25) TAKE EXTRA VALUE TO THE CUSTOMER

When times get tough people start spending less; and they often wrongly spend less on their customers. This is the time to start spending more on customers and offering them value. It is time to initiate a service program that does something special for clients every month. It doesn't even have to relate to your product or service.

Everyone loves cookies. Everyone loves a thank you. What extra information could you give your customers? What bonus feature, product or amount could you offer? Don't wait for the customers to ask for these services because they won't; they will migrate to someone else. Before they leap you need to take new value TO the customer. If you don't know how to get started, ask us at Evolve.

26) KNOW EVERYTHING ABOUT YOUR PRODUCT

An amazing service experience happens when an employee has knowledge of their product. Imagine shopping in an exclusive cheese shop. What if the employee you were speaking with knew the names of each cheese, the region it was made in, the way it was made, even the number of goat herds used in each batch of specific goat cheese? Would you be impressed? Knowledge of the product shows that an employee cares.

When employees know the answer, are enthusiastic, and can speak to a product, customers are more likely to purchase and come back. Knowledge and stories create a relationship with the product and help your customers fall in love with it. Are you an expert in your product or service? You need to be in order to maximize your influence on the client and also their service experience.

27) POLICY AND PROCEDURES

Don't you just love it when someone creates a new policies and procedures manual to help your team to function better, and no one reads it? Well, why would they?! When you are working with a client and trying to solve their problem or provide good service the last thing you would do is stop, open a huge binder, and read through pages of instructions to find an answer. To integrate policies and procedures protocols with good service, you must make everything a cheat sheet.

At each station within your operation, have a one-page cheat sheet. Something that helps staff remember the steps and information needed to provide great service and solve problems. Build a system that matches how people work.

28) ROUTINE

The nemesis of great service and an attitude of hospitality is routine. When offering service to clients becomes routine it starts to lose the spirit of serving and hospitality. If you've been to a business that has a high volume of client interaction, you start to notice that people become just another transaction.

Each customer needs (not wants) to feel special. They want their transaction to be special and to feel like they are the most important customer. Find ways to ask each client questions and take an interest in them. Find ways to make your service personal. This strategy will ensure that routine doesn't start to corrupt your hospitality and service levels.

29) IT'S MY PLEASURE

Since when did, "No problem" become an acceptable response to helping someone? This phrase suggests that normally things are a problem but, in this case, it is not a problem. The Ritz Carlton has it right; when staff help a guest and then respond with, "My pleasure sir/madam."

They know that this simple change of words makes each customer feel valued, deserving, and respected. It's never an effort to help at the Ritz. It is the reason they are there, and it is a pleasure to help. You will create a different experience and instill the spirit of exceptional service when your team starts to respond to customers with, "It was my pleasure!"

30) STOP CUTTING CORNERS IN CONVERSATION

Have you been out for lunch and the hostess is so experienced that they are able to bring the whole interaction down to three words? “For four? Menu? Coffee?” And then they are gone. Sure, you understand the meaning of each question but, “For four?” is not the same as “Hi, how are you today? Are there four people in your party?”

Shortening the interaction and the number of words may not lose the meaning but it certainly loses the hospitality. Make sure that everyone in your call center, service center, or client relations team uses full sentences to clearly outline a question, an answer, and a solution. It is a way to ensure clarity and exceptional hospitality.

31) DON'T ASK IF YOU CAN'T FIX – RESOLUTION GUARANTEED

It's common for front desk staff to ask you how your stay was when leaving a hotel. If you respond with an answer that is not exactly positive, the staff might not know how to respond. They might say something like, “Well, I will leave a note for someone, I guess. Sorry about that.”

It actually creates a problem when staff ask for a guest's opinion but have no idea how to respond when they don't receive a positive answer. If staff are equipped with a way to resolve issues and trained in the steps to take when responding to a problem, it creates a good service experience. This is a great opportunity to win over people and make them fans!

32) RUTHLESS CONSISTENCY

Many companies talk about consistency in their delivery and service but what you really need to focus on add to your culture is ruthless consistency. Each time a client interacts with you or your company, they don't just need to have some consistency, they need an experience that is the same as the last time.

Variations should be in the products customers choose, the blend of coffee they have that day, but not in the way it is delivered. They expect a familiar barista, the same wait time, and the same smile. Talk to your team about consistency and think about all the variances in your service delivery, then systemize and train on each point. Watch your sales grow as service level stays the same.

33) WHY ALL THE INSTRUCTIONS?

How many times has your manager or leader said something generic like, “We want to keep the place clean,” only to come back later and be upset with the condition of things? The problem isn’t lack of effort or laziness, it’s often a difference in the way people define things. Some people on the team may look around the store or office and see it as spotless and others will look at the same environment and say, “Wow, this is filthy.” For great service you need to specifically explain the definition of clean, friendly, on time, and solve the problem.

People have different definitions and often they won’t meet the standard of the customer. Aim for a level of service that meets the expectations of the top 10% of your most anal-retentive, picky customers, and you automatically service the other 90% who might accept something less. Great service is about standards that everyone understands.

34) THE POWER OF RANDOMNESS

How many people love surprise parties being thrown for them? Most people. Why is that? Because it is a celebration for them and it is a surprise, it is random and unexpected. So, why can’t your service program incorporate these same fundamental ideas? Randomly, give clients a sample, or a complementary offer.

If you’ve ever seen the look on someone’s face when they are surprised, then you know how effective these actions can be at delighting and retaining clients. It doesn’t have to be big and doesn’t have to be every week.

Random actions of service also get people talking to their friends and family. Good news travels fast, so small gestures can go a long way to helping you grow your business and acquire new customers and clients.

35) ASK YOUR CLIENTS FOR THEIR FEEDBACK

Most companies and their service or salespeople don’t take the time to ask clients what the best service steps can be. Start asking your clients, “How can we improve our service or product delivery? Are there any ways we can upgrade, or make your experience better?”

The answers will surprise you. When you regularly ask clients for their feedback and get them involved in the process of improving your company, and ultimately your business, it will create loyalty, value, AND an ideal experience for them.

36) DO THE WORK FOR THE CUSTOMER

Have you ever asked for something as simple as ketchup at a fast-food place and been told, “It’s over there.” So often, the difference between great service, and the sad excuse that passes for service, is in the efforts made to do the little things for customers.

Load their purchase in their car, walk it over to them, deliver it, package it up nicely, or even walk them through a demo. In our current world of do-less-to-save-money, your efforts to do a little more for customers are enough to generate a warm, fuzzy feeling that they will talk about for days.

37) IGNORE YOUR COLLEAGUES

Have you ever stood in line at the grocery store and watched two cashiers talk to each other? It’s common to overhear employees complaining about something or asking about when their next break is. Sometimes they look up and give you a disinterested, “Hi” and go back to their conversation. This is basic but key, the client is the most important person to talk to.

You may think this doesn’t happen in your business but very likely, it does. Stop your team from talking to each other and get them focused on the customer. This behaviour is enough to make people switch grocery stores and enough to move them to or from your business.

38) BE RADICALLY DIFFERENT

The owner of a local cigar store got to know his clients and discovered that many of them were adventurous and competitive. Many of his clients traveled extensively and had disposable income. He began to organize, plan, and execute adventure travel trips, exclusive to his clients. What do cigars and travel planning have to do with each other? Nothing.

A dentist who liked espresso coffee and cinnamon buns figured his clients would too. So, he built a coffee bar and a bake center into his dental office. Customers raved about going to the dentist. This dentist totally redefined the experience for customers. What do dentistry and espresso have to do with each other? Nothing! You can offer an experience for customers that is completely different and seemingly unrelated, that will make it magical and unique.

39) BUILD RAPPORT

Does everyone on your team know how to build rapport? It sounds like a basic skill, but it is one that can be refined for most people. Many people avoid networking functions and social events because they don't know what to say or what to talk about. It is a critical of service, that your team can initiate, introduce, and lead conversations.

A great meeting activity is to come up with 15-20 topics that you would discuss with clients and then have each person memorize their top five. When you get clients talking, it shows you care and are interested in them. This is two-thirds of customer service, right there.

40) HUMANS FIRST, CUSTOMERS SECOND

When customers show up at your business or call on the phone, they are people first and customers second. This is a critical piece to remember. So often, we build and operate with customer service steps and programs that just herd and manage customers.

Listening with sincere interest, empathy, gratitude, and willingness to help should all come before the answering service, the cue, the forms and the case number.

41) SERVICE PROFILES — KNOW ME BEFORE I SHOW UP

There is a great story in the book, *The E Myth*, where a gentleman arrives at a hotel late at night. He finds they have his newspaper out in the morning, his favourite meals, his fireplace ready and lit, and personalized notes — all the things he loves.

Then, he remembers all the times they asked him questions and how they were building a profile of his ideal stay. How well do you know exactly what your customers want? Ask them repeatedly, listen, and then build it into their experience as a profile.

42) WANT BETTER CUSTOMERS, OFFER BETTER SERVICE

Many businesses don't understand that the level of service they provide is what attracts the right kind of customers. Sure, there is always some weeding out of people, good and bad, but overall, the level of service provided by your business matches the customers.

So, when you want better customers (higher paying, more transactions, more smiles) then you need to upgrade your service. As the service level grows it creates a buzz with people that appreciate it and they begin to refer and tell others. People that don't appreciate it or aren't comfortable with it will fade away. Offer more and it will attract the right people that will support your business.

43) ROLE-PLAY AS THE CUSTOMER

Staff team members often intellectually understand the steps and ideas around service. They mentally accept what needs to be done. But this is not enough. They need to feel and experience the difference for it to really sink in. Role-play with your team, give each person a chance to be the customer. When they emotionally feel the difference in service levels, service steps, and attitude they start to change their approach. Your team starts to get the perspective of the customer and you can see them change their approach and embrace your service commitment.

44) LESSONS FROM THE BOTTLE DEPOT

There is a recycling bottle depot that is operated by a middle-aged man. His elderly father works at the cash register on weekends tallying up what people are owed for the bottles they return. This man is an example of incredible service because as he hands you your money he takes your hands, wraps them in his, and gives them a momentary squeeze with a nod of gratitude.

You can feel how much he appreciates your business and how important you are. His little extra effort in terms of genuine gratitude makes it a very busy, very successful bottle depot. People FEEL the difference.

45) TELL ME THE ISSUE, I CAN TAKE IT

Telling someone you aren't happy with their product or service is tough. Most people would rather say nothing and simply never visit your business again. Your business needs to be courageous and ask people what they didn't like. If you ask someone if they were happy, you can read their face most of the time, you know when someone isn't happy.

It is at that moment that your business and your team needs to be courageous and ask "Can you tell me the issue? I can take it!" When people realize they have someone interested and willing to listen to criticism they will share. That sharing is the moment they start to relax and consider remaining a customer. Courageous conversations need to start with your staff, not with your customers.

46) RELATIONSHIPS AT ALL LEVELS

The problem with many businesses is that customers only know one person. They shop at a store for potentially years and only know the teller or a single department person. When your customers have a relationship with multiple people it makes it harder to leave.

If customers know the manager, the teller, the shipping guy, and the delivery team they are in a relationship that spans many levels and people. They are more and more likely to feel loyalty to a company that has really allowed them to know all their people. Clients that fire suppliers often only have one point of contact. It is easier to break up with one person than a team so make sure your whole team has customer relationships.

47) BAD SERVICE CAN BE CHANGED NOW!

Too often managers and owners recognize poor service or service issues and wait until the next staff meeting to make changes. Customers need solutions now. When there is a service problem, take action to make changes now. Write over the typed instructions, take a marker to the price tag, use your own car when the company vehicle is busy, and promise to call when email is the norm.

When people see the willingness of their leaders to change a system, they understand how to act, how to respond and what their own commitment needs to be. There is never a need to wait, improved service is available now! Staff also needs to feel empowered to make these changes (with a review at some point). The number one reason people don't act is because they believe the consequences will be negative. Let staff know the consequences will support them and create happier customers.

48) YOUR EXPECTATIONS DON'T MATTER

You and your staff may not think the 24-hour response is necessary. You may not think that expecting delivery is reasonable. You may not want to offer more service because it might have additional costs. It does NOT matter what you, and your team, think is reasonable or what you'd expect. It only matters what your clients expect.

If customers expect someone to call back in 2 minutes but you think 2 hours is a reasonable response time — then 2 minutes is the right answer. Too often the phrase, “That customer isn't being reasonable,” is heard. This means you are putting your expectations ahead of theirs. With the integration of more and more technology resulting in immediate information and response, customer expectations grow in the same way. Get to know what your customers expect, whether you think it's reasonable or not.

49) GOOD SERVICE GOES BEYOND THE STORE

The experience of your customer doesn't start or end at the front door. Often, the experience of the customer starts long before they arrive. It can start at your website, your telephone, or even your parking lot. What is the first impression given and the service delivered through every avenue of your company? Are customers' needs being met or are they just directed to come down to your brick-and-mortar location? Most companies think of their service at the face-to-face level. What options and services can you provide to clients to make their life and experience easier?

FedEx and UPS now allow customers to track their packages online because they realized most calls were about the status of packages. Can I order online? Can I get it delivered? Are answers to frequently asked questions available? Is the staff picking up the phone knowledgeable or just an operator? What are the impacting service ideas that make contacting your company special?

50) WHAT ELSE DO YOU NEED? ANYTHING?

Often when we ask people if they need anything else, we mean it in terms of our existing products or services. For example, as an insurance person, we ask clients about other needs, which suggests to the client it must relate to insurance or something else that they can write a policy on. Occasionally, customers and clients need to be asked what else they really need. It needs to be a wide-open question of what else they'd like to see from

your business and your offering. If we could offer you anything else to fix a problem in your life, what would it be? Maybe it is a service you can locate and refer them to. You are a solution provider, and this type of help builds stronger relationships. Companies often find totally unrelated ways to service their client base simply by asking and taking the time to look for similarities with all their customers.

51) HIRE GREAT SERVICE PEOPLE, DON'T CREATE THEM

People can learn all the steps and methods for great service. They can read a manual and understand all the aspects of taking care of your clientele. What people often can't be trained in is the spirit of hospitality and care that is required. Therefore, many service-based companies and companies that expect strong customer service hire the right attitude first.

They hire people with a disposition to smile. They hire people that love people — people that scream, "I like people!" People that are willing to go the extra mile to please others. These are characteristics that can't be easily taught to some staff. Really committing to customer service may require changing which staff are client-facing or making changes to who works in your organization.

52) CONTINUOUS CUSTOMER SERVICE TRAINING

Many companies believe that customer service training should be a single hour, session, or day a couple of times a year. This is not enough. People do not retain enough information or are not able to change their service habits with only a brief mention every few months. The steps and approach to incredible service need to be practiced, reviewed, improved and discussed regularly. Weekly staff meetings must demonstrate and highlight excellent service stories and poor service stories. Poor examples should come with corrected actions, so people learn what to do differently next time.

Service awards and proactive recognition of great service is also a necessary program to ensure high service standards within an organization. Role-playing, secret shopping, situational assessments, competitor analysis, review of procedures, and individual reviews are some helpful tools to improve customer service. Make it a constant effort to raise the bar of customer service within your organization, and then, raise it again and again.



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