

Creating Customer Service Excellence

In a fast paced, dynamic environment like a customer facing group, there is potential for great wins and some losses as far as attracting, gaining and retaining customers go. So who is responsible for customer service? Anyone who touches the customer, either directly or indirectly is providing a level of service. This includes the people in such varied roles as: product planners, IT staff, shippers, billing clerks, human resources and service team members. Bottom line: service is everybody's responsibility. The service chain includes all people and functions that link up to final delivery to the customer. To find out who is in this chain begin at the end: who delivers the product to the customer? Then ask who provides a product or service to that person? Continue tracing it back to the originator. You now have your service chain. It is critical that everyone in the service chain know the impact of their actions. Each person in the chain should focus on creating excellence in the following areas:

1. Create customer focused processes, not company focused processes. If what you are doing is done to make the internal processes work better and not better for the customer, how long will they be with you? Your customer wants to know that you put them above the inner workings of the company. Focus your efforts on your customers; then let the internal processes follow.
2. Respond to your customers inquiries quickly. Statistically the longer it takes to respond, the less likely your customer is to deal with you in the future. And remember, for every 1 customer that tells you they are dissatisfied there are 24 more out there that will never tell you something is wrong. But they will tell their colleagues and friends. And that hurts business, one way or the other.
3. Keep a positive service delivery attitude. It's a moment by moment attitude choice: you can present yourself positively, or allow yourself to get caught in the stress of the day. Don't be fooled: your customers hear what kind of day you are having.
4. Ask your customer how you are doing and Listen to the response. It's important to stop and check in with your customer. Ask how you can serve them better or better meet their needs. And then Listen to what they tell you. Respond to what they say. (Did you notice the capital L in the word Listen? That word is so very important, as is the action that goes with it that we decided it deserved a capital.)
5. Treat your customers with respect and integrity. This goes for customers both within your organization and outside it. Imagine what it would be like if all the interactions you ever had were based on mutual respect and integrity... So you get the point: focus your efforts on your customer; make them feel special by listening to them and solving their problems. Be their champion and treat them well. Customers see it, feel it, know it and want to share it. So go ahead, make their day. Show them how you feel about them. It will make both your day and theirs a better one!

About the Author

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