

7 Customer Service Tips

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Great service is what encourages repeat customers and a loyal customer base. We can all relate to good **customer service** – friendly, competent, timely, high quality. And we can all give examples of a poor customer service experience – rude, dismissive, etc.

Customers have choices, and data shows that **loyal customers** are those who have their needs met and expectations that are exceeded.

Customer Service Defined...

Customer is defined as “a person who purchases goods or services from another”.

Service is defined as “an act of a helpful activity”.

When you look at the definitions of customer service, you can see that it is simply doing the right thing for the person who is purchasing a product or service from you. Pretty simple if you think about it!

7 Tips for Great Customer Service

1. Hire the Right People

Let’s face it, not everyone is gifted at interacting with the public. And some people simply do better behind the scenes. Make sure the employees you have interacting with your customers (your revenue producers) are “people-people.”

In other words, employees who have naturally good people skills. Knowing the people-people from the paper-people is critical as you structure your customer service team.

2. Find Out What the Customer Wants

Take the time to learn what the customer wants so you can develop a plan to meet their needs. Know what the customer expects and what are they are asking for. Customers want what was promised (implied – suggested but not directly expressed; implicit) to them when they bought the product or service. If you are in the service industry and are not sure what the customer wants, just ask them.

There are many ways to find out what your customers want.

- **focus groups**
- customer surveys
- **comment cards**
- market research
- random phone calls to customers

Any of these forums can provide you with valuable information to help you **improve your product or service**.

3. Train Your Employees

Employee training is critical to maintaining a great service experience. Training sets the expectations for your employees and holds them accountable for those expectations. This includes walking the talk and setting an example for employees.

If they don't see you demonstrating exemplary customer service, they will not view it as important. Provide them with specific behavioral guidelines. For example, create **customer service standards**, and script their answers to difficult questions that may come their way. Your support will help to create a consistent service culture.

4. Pay Attention to Details

Sometimes it is the little things that can make a big difference in the perception a customer has of your business. Try adding a special touch to customer interactions or the packaging of a product. This attention to detail communicates to the customer that you care about them enough to think of the details.

An example of this is when you go to some retail clothing stores, and they wrap the purchased garment in tissue paper. A very small, inexpensive detail, but very powerful in communicating value to the customer.

5. Monitor/Measure Service

Once employees have a good understanding of service expectations and have been trained on how to give good service, the next step is to monitor how service is provided and then **coach employees** for desired behaviors.

There are many ways to do this. And depending on the product or industry, there are automated tools to help you. For example, most phone systems now have recorded monitoring so a manager can listen to phone calls.

Give your employees specific feedback and **provide a phone script** for how you would like phone calls to be answered. A less technical approach is merely observing your employees interacting with customers. You learn a lot when you watch and listen.

6. Solicit Customer Feedback

One of the most valuable things you can do for your organization is **solicit feedback from your customers**. Learn from your customers by asking some simple questions: how are we doing, how can we do better, what needs do you have that are not being met?

By asking these simple questions, you can be proactive in figuring out how to meet and exceed the changing needs of your customers. There are lots of survey software available, Google has a **free survey form** option.

7. Constantly Strive for Improvement

Once you stop striving for excellence, you begin a slow decline. Learn that good is never good enough and that as an organization, you never really arrive at great. It is a constant journey to improve.

For example, have you ever eaten at the new restaurant in town, have a great meal, and over time, when you return for a meal, the quality and service deteriorate? And before you know it, that restaurant is out of business.

That is because they started with a great product or service and got what I'll call lazy in their delivery. This is a sad but true phenomenon with not only restaurants but many small businesses. Keep moving the goal post so you can keep up with the changing expectations of a sophisticated customer!

Remember Who Pays the Bills

Be aware that it is the customers are who pay the bills. Seek to understand what the customer wants, deliver it professionally, and you will find that it can have a significant impact on the bottom line.

Don't ever take your customers for granted. Because as soon as you do, there will be someone waiting in the wings to snatch them away from you. Attract them and keep them so they not only come back but they also bring their friends!