

The Importance of Customer Service

Customer service is one of the most important skills your business can possess especially during times when competition is high and consumers are discerning about where they shop.

“Low Cost” positioning alone won’t cut it. Today, value needs to go hand-in-hand with good customer service, as consumers are now firmly in the driver’s seat in these times of economic woe. Conversely, there is no point in positioning your brand as “high quality” or “luxury” if you do not take care of your customers. Good Customer Service is what will give your company the edge over competitors and make it stand out from the rest.

Top Tips for Good Customer Service

1. Always answer the phone! Put yourself in the shoes of your customer and imagine how annoyed you would feel listening to an endless ringing tone.
2. Make sure the person answering the phone is qualified to do so and can deal with customer queries efficiently or directs them to someone who can. Apply The Grandmother Rule. Its basic principle is simply to “do what you say you’re going to do, do it when you say you’re going to do it, and do it right the first time”.
3. Train, Train, Train. Good customer service requires mentoring. Ensure that all your staff are trained to be polite, helpful, courteous and efficient. Even when they do not know something, they should be able to direct customers to the staff member who can help them. But ensure a proper procedure is in place to escalate questions and issues so that they may be resolved quickly. One of the most annoying experiences for a customer is to be bounced from one person to another in an attempt to obtain information, make a purchase or find answers to resolve a problem.
4. Listen to your customers! They are your most valuable resource for feedback, so whatever they have to say, good or bad, should be listened to.
5. Deal with every complaint and ensure you do so in a timely fashion. Empathy can be effective in diffusing customer complaints. By understanding the customer’s concerns and seeing things from their perspective, it removes the combativeness and aids in moving the situation towards an agreeable solution. Remember, when customers have a positive experience, they are likely to tell 3-4 of their peers. However, when they have a bad experience somewhere, they are likely to tell 7-8 people.
6. Go that extra mile for prospective customers – even those who may not be purchasing immediately. There is no need to be pushy, just make sure you devote enough time and interest to their query so that they know you are interested in their custom.
7. Know your customers. By learning a little about them, you will build a relationship and gain their trust. Even if it’s something small like knowing what they bought the last time they visited your shop, their birthday or the colour they had done the last time they visited your salon. Encourage your staff to capture information about your customers and record it in a central place. This can be as sophisticated as a database or as simple as a card file! Once you have the information, there are lots of easy and inexpensive tools to use in order to stay close to your customers and keep them loyal; for instance email marketing or text marketing or a blog on your website.
8. Make sure Customer Service is rewarded within your organisation in order to maintain a high standard.