









Customer Service Skills

Training Manual

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The single most important thing to realize about any enterprise is that there are no results inside its walls. The result of a business is a satisfied customer.

Peter Drucker

Training Outline

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Workshop Objectives

At the end of this module, you should be able to:

- State what customer service means in relation to all your customers, both internal and external
- Know the importance of customer service to a business.



Introduction

Whether you realize it or not, there is only one boss – It is the customer! Maybe a person shines shoes for a living or heads the biggest corporation in the world, the boss remains the same. It is the customer.

The customer is the person who pays everyone's salary and who decides whether a business is going to succeed or fail. In fact, the customer can fire everybody in the company from the Chairman (CEO) down, and he can do it by simply spending his money somewhere else.

"Literally everything we do, every concept perceived, every technology developed and associate employed, is directed with one objective clearly in mind – pleasing the customer."

Sam M. Walton - CEO Wal-Mart

Credo from Sam Walton, the owner and CEO of Wal-Mart – an international chain of department stores and the most successful company in the retailing world.



Who are you?

A lot of focus in subsequent modules will be on delivering exceptional service. Nonetheless, it is important to look at 'you' who would be rendering this service.

Who are you? This question evokes a lot of emotions when it is asked partly because for most, it makes them very uncomfortable thinking who they really are. As a service person, you have a call beyond that of duty. Therefore, service (exceptional service) springs forth from not just your paycheck, allowances, perks

etc. but mainly from your unwavering commitment to making life better for other people. This commitment should define who you are.

Extra-ordinary feats are achieved by humans who have distinguished themselves from just doing the ordinary; they do beyond and above. In service, since there is no limit to the provision of excellence, every opportunity to serve should be met with the knowledge and commitment that you can perform better than your last service encounter. It can and must always be better.



Who are Customers?

A customer is, in this day and age, anyone who uses a service. Anyone who relies on you to do a job that will have an effect on their life, their job, or their use of a product is your customer.

There are different echelons of customers – external and internal, corporate and personal, regular and occasional. These are always people that you will be well advised to keep very happy.

It is important to recognize the importance of both external and internal customers because both contribute to the customer service of an organization.

External Customers

External customers are the customers you interact and do business with outside your organization. External customers are considered 'traditional' customers. They are the customers you mostly think of when you consider whom you serve. Some characteristics of external customers are:

- They pay for your products and services
- They usually exist outside the confines of your organization
- They are open to approach from your competitors
- They may not always be dependent upon you for products and services and may switch to your competitors

Though, external customers have the power to enhance your reputation and bring new business, they are not the only customers that you serve.

Internal Customers

Every day, you interact with a special group of customers who frequently go unrecognized. These customers are your internal customers. Your internal customers are the people you work with throughout your organization. They are important to your success in providing your external customers with what they need. If internal customers do not see the importance of completing work promptly and of treating others with respect, it becomes very difficult for you and your organization to provide outstanding customer service to external customers.

If for example, you work in a branch of a department store and receive a call from someone working in a sister branch of the same store wondering if you have a stock of a particular item – one which their branch has run out of, for example, then that individual is your internal customer. That person wants something and is hoping that you can deliver it. Internal customers can also be referred to as co-workers.

An internal customer may therefore look for any of the following from you:

- Materials
- Information
- Instruction
- Participation
- Assistance



What is Customer Service?

How you define service shapes every interaction you have with your customers. Limited definitions of service based on exchange of monies for goods or service misses the overall point of customer service. 'Service' should provide the customer with more than a product or action taken on his/her behalf. It should provide satisfaction.

In essence, the customer should leave a service encounter pleased at the result of the transaction - not just content but actually happy. A happy customer will continue to be a buying customer and a returning customer.

Whenever a customer makes a purchase, they will have priorities as to what makes their experience a positive one. Obviously the first priority is that they get whatever they have purchased from the point of purchase to their home. If it is a small item that they can take with them, the business's responsibility is to see to it that the item is packaged and presented in a manageable, portable fashion with a minimum of waiting. However, customer service begins before this. When a customer enters the store or the showroom to find what they are looking for, they may require the attention of staff to enable them to find it. Some customers just want to browse. Staff is required to ascertain what a customer wants, how they want to go about it and whether they will need any assistance.

Customer service is therefore any action you take to ensure that a customer is pleased with the transaction on a long-term basis. This includes "after sales service", which entails ensuring that the customer leaves the point of sale with the item that they were looking for and at the fastest possible time, and then have no problem using it. It is easy to ensure a customer goes away from the point of sale with the item they had come to purchase. Ensuring that they are happy going forward may require more care and attention, and this is where after-sales service needs to be at its highest level. Pre-sales, after sales and point-of-sale service are all essential elements of customer service.



Who are Customer Service Providers?

Given the importance of customer service, it will inevitably be the case that every company will have to place a strong focus on ensuring that the people within the business do their jobs as required. Any commercial enterprise may have several layers of staff responsibility, and the jobs done by these members may vary considerably. What they all have in common is their importance to a business in their ability to do what is required, and how it should be done. Just about anyone can get one of these elements right, and most will be able to do two. Customer service providers have to get all three.

In any business, a customer service provider is someone whose performance of their role is important to the overall result for the customer. Most customers will not care much for what happens behind the scenes in a company, so long as they are able to count on their needs being fulfilled. It is therefore the focus of every member of staff to see to it that their job is done without it being necessary for urgent action to be taken. The element of customer service that most customers will notice in any given transaction is that which happens in full view – how the sales people speak to them and how their enquiry is dealt with. But to get to that point, a number of other things also need to be done correctly.

It could be argued that every member of staff within an organization has an element of customer service provision within their responsibilities. It may be something as simple as ensuring that stock is placed where it needs to be placed. It may be something that appears to be entirely divorced from the sales service, such as the work of a security guard who ensures that the store is secure at all times so that everything runs smoothly. One way or another, all of these will impact on the customer experience, and getting it wrong will mean that a company is failing to provide customer service at the level that is expected of them.



The Importance of Customer Service

While most organizations know the importance of customer service, many pay lip service to it. Ask any CEO of a company, manager of an office, minister or a staff member and they will tell you how important the customer is to their operations and success. In meeting after meeting, heads of industry, the service sector and government try to convince the audience in how much they believe in customer service. Unfortunately, these same 'customer friendly' executives fail to employ or initiate a customer service improvement plan.

The result of this is a dwindling revenue base.

Consider these scenarios:

- A customer buys a piece of meat for N2 twice a week. The value of that customer should be N4:00 per week, N208:00K per year or N2080 over ten years! If you do something to anger that customer, the loss to your organization over time would be over N2000

- A customer buys a copy machine for N500 and a one-year service contract for N200. The average life of the copier is seven (7) years. The cost of service contracts is N1400. The copier will also use supplies worth N250 per year. The cost of supplies over seven years will be N1750. Therefore, this customer's worth to your company would be $N500 + N1400 + N1750$ or N3650!

These figures do not include two very important factors that cannot be accurately measured. Those two factors are the amount of additional business or purchases over and above their normal purchases, and the amount of referral businesses they will bring.

Here also are some customer service statistics that underscores the importance of customer service:

- If the service is really poor, 90% of customers won't come back
- There is an 80% chance that customers will repurchase from a company if their complaint is handled quickly and pleasantly
- When people receive good service, on average, they tell eleven (11) people
- When people receive poor service, on average, they tell up to twenty (20) people
- People spend up to 10% more for the same product with better service.



Module One Exercise

- What contribution do you make to customer service?
- What would you like to change so that you could provide better customer service?
- What are your customer service strengths?
- What are your customer service weaknesses?
- How important do you consider the job of a customer service representative?