

Good customer service is vital to success. Research from [Qualtrics XM Institute](#) indicates that 76% of customers will trust a company with strong customer service. Compare that with only 40% of customers trusting a company with poor service

Entrepreneurs and business leaders naturally respond with attempts to improve performance. Yet these initiatives are often top-down and heavy-handed. For instance, poor service mitigation may include overuse of scripts, the opposite of the personalized service we all crave. Worse, it leaves company associates frustrated and lacking personal commitment. No wonder Mercer recently found that customer service leads other industries in [turnover rates](#).

Whether a manager or sole proprietor, there are practical steps you can take to address these issues. Let's look at key elements that create a top-notch customer service experience.

The Basics of Good Customer Service

Who needs customer service training? Everyone who comes into contact with current or potential clients.

If an associate stocks shelves, customers will come to them with questions. They need training to answer them professionally. For more complex matters, the associate will direct the customer to the right person in a friendly, helpful and cheerful manner.

That is, great customer service means that useful, [personalized service](#) occurs at every point of contact. Ensure that each front-facing associate is:

- Attentive
- Open
- Communicative
- A strong listener / empathetic
- Enthusiastic rather than rushed
- Happy to assist

- Able to assist

Adequate training is critical. It's a key component in [learning to love sales](#) and service. Your employees want to be helpful, and most even enjoy the short break from routine. But without the training—the tools—to help, interruptions may become more of a frustration.

But what if you are the sole employee of a startup? Your days are likely full, and even rushed. This is not a good position to be in for best serving your customers. Often, entrepreneurs first hire a salesperson to ease the workload. When doing so, think of that person both in terms of sales and service. And train accordingly to respond independently to as many situations as possible.

Ongoing Increase in Morale

While shopping at a popular chain store, I needed an item I could not find. I approached an associate and asked her, "Do you know where I can find your soap dishes?" Without looking at me, she replied, "No."

She then walked away.

Was this poor customer service? Obviously, yes. But I doubt she behaves this way routinely among friends and family. There's a good chance that poor [employee morale](#) led to her unhelpful response.

Consider the following scenario. An associate won't accept a return. You demand to see the manager. Upon arrival, the manager immediately accepts the exchange. This isn't a case of the associate purposefully refusing to help you. It's a case of [poor management](#). The associate is taught one set of company policies while management abides by another. It leaves both the customer and employee feeling frustrated for no good reason.

The situation is common, but how do you fix it?

Engage in staff meetings. Encourage employees to voice concerns in a safe environment without repercussions. Use the same [active listening](#) and empathy strategies you expect your associates to use with your clients.

Encourage a culture of teamwork and [never-ending improvement](#). No employee should lack the tools to address normal customer interactions. That is, even in the most complex issues that arise, the associate should be trained to respond quickly, courteously and professionally.

Build customer options with self-service technology.

Customers expect your attention, your empathy, and your helpfulness. And yet, customers don't always want to deal with a person. For routine service, such as a product return or an answer to a simple question, customers frequently prefer self-service.

Options for self-service provide an important ingredient to the customer service recipe. And digital technologies offer an array of choices to implement.

Any website or app should include a frequently asked questions section. Base your FAQ on firsthand knowledge of what customers need to know. A live chat feature on your website can also put your service associates in direct contact with a potential client.

If possible, create instructional videos at the earliest opportunity. They serve a dual purpose in offering assistance while also advertising your product. In each case, always include direct assistance options. These may include phone or SMS contact information, email and even a physical store or mailing address.