

Proactive Customer Service Leads to Improved Experience

Flavio Martins

Anticipating needs, learning about the customer and listening to your employees are all keys to customer service success.

Are you ready to take your customer service from reactive to proactive? Providing [exceptional customer service](#) goes beyond reducing call center wait times or diffusing conflicts with angry customers.

If you're ready to improve your customer service, take some notes from a few businesses doing it the right way:

- Budget Airlines and Copa Airlines provide instant answers to inquiries from prospects via a Web self-service tool. As a result, wait times have been reduced for customers who need to speak to a live agent, and the companies have experienced a decline of 28 and 40 percent in incoming call volume, respectively, according to Forbes.
- Hub Runner's live chat option is available to immediately answer questions from website visitors, so they won't grow irritated when they can't find what they're searching for.
- AT&T utilizes a technology called Sunday SkySmart to minimize "bill shock" experienced by new and existing customers upon receiving an invoice for an amount much greater than what they anticipated. Each bill sent out includes a link to an interactive breakdown of that bill and explains charges, line by line.

Identify even more opportunities for your business with the tips below:

Do Your Homework

Even if customers seem satisfied and you receive minimal complaints, dig a little deeper to identify areas that could use improvement. Sending out a bland survey in exchange for a free item won't cut it. Instead, Forrester Research suggests using data tools to analyze all three phases of the [Customer Life-Cycle](#): the pre-purchase, purchase, and post-purchase periods.

This could include data mining of social media activity or a thorough analysis of purchasing trends to discover unmet needs—and most importantly, learning how you can fill the voids. The goal is to learn as much about the customers as possible and anticipate their needs.

Another great option is to implement a customer service platform with [analytics and CRM integration](#), like Aspect Workforce Management, to identify call center trends and develop a plan to implement proactive changes.

Solicit Input from Employees

Prior to implementing changes to your customer service strategy, solicit input from your employees. Doing so could potentially reveal problem areas you weren't aware of beforehand and demonstrate to employees that you value their opinion.

As a result, they may be motivated to collaborate with one another to achieve results in the most rapid manner possible.

Join the Online Conversation

If you're not already actively involved in the [online conversation about your business](#), now's the time to get started. Comments made by followers, both positive and negative, reveal how they really feel about your company and are a goldmine when it comes to determining how to best serve existing and potential customers.

So the next time a disgruntled customer leaves a poor review, don't just overlook it. Instead, reach out promptly to learn how you can make things right—there's a possibility they're not the only customer who has experienced a problem of this sort. As for satisfied customers, express your gratitude for their business and ask about ways in which you can serve them better.

Implement and Rework

As you make the shift to a proactive customer service model, pay attention to how customers respond. Are they more receptive to a particular form of communication? Do call times seem to be much briefer? Are they positively responding to your new approach and letting the world know through online reviews or social media interactions?

These are just a few of the questions to ponder as you continue to transition from a reactive to a proactive customer service model.