**Use Interactions as an Opportunity to Identify Needs**

Instead of merely talking to customers, listen to what they say so you can accurately identify their needs and help them find solutions. Through the course of a simple conversation, you may discover that you offer a specific product or service that would make your customer's life more convenient. By offering that service, you raise the level of satisfaction and successfully cross-sell for your company at the same time.

**Customer Expectations + Service Performance = Customer Satisfaction**

The quality of your customer service is almost wholly determined by your ability to meet your customer expectations. You can have the greatest service team, but if your customers perceive their needs are not being met, your service reputation suffers.

By the same token, companies that don’t spend much time worrying about customer service – but manage to meet customer expectations consistently – are perceived as offering good customer service.

Service quality is largely determined by customer's perception, which is why meeting customer expectations is an essential part of the process.

**Identifying Customer Expectations**

Because customer expectations are an ever-evolving process, it can be very challenging to know precisely what those expectations might be. The best course of action is to take the question directly to your customer base through a variety of customer service research techniques.

Have customers complete surveys about your products and service. Provide incentive for them to complete that survey, such as entry into a drawing for an enticing prize. Next time you see a customer, ask if his expectations of your business are being met. If not, find out why and what you can do to make your service better.

**Common Expectations to Consider**

Some of the most common and basic expectations customers have for most businesses include:

• Fast, efficient and accurate service  
• High quality products at a competitive price  
• Friendly, helpful service staff to provide information and answer questions  
• Prompt responses to their inquiries, whether online, by phone or in person  
• Sufficient stock to meet their needs without long waits  
• A trained staff that can handle their questions without referring them on  
• A clean facility or easy to navigate website

All of these expectations comprise the minimum of what your top-notch service should look like. Additional expectations may arise from your customer research, which you can address on an individual basis.

**Benefits of Meeting Expectations**

When you are able to accurately identify and adequately meet your customers' expectations, your customer service reputation will automatically be enhanced.

Some of the benefits of meeting your customers' expectations include:

• Customers that transform from first-time visitors to loyal clients  
• Increased sales as customers feel more comfortable doing business with you  
• More referrals from satisfied customers who bring in additional business by word of mouth

There is no doubt that adequately meeting customer expectations is an essential part of a robust customer service department. By accurately identifying those expectations, and meeting or exceeding them consistently, your company is likely to enjoy happier customers and a healthier bottom line.

- **atisfied Shareholders**

Satisfactory response from consumers means increased sales, which ultimately leads to increased satisfaction of shareholders. They tend to invest more in your organization, which can dramatically improve the ROI of your business.

**Increased Business Growth**

Quality service can boost your business growth. Quality services can help you expand your client base but great customer service is the key to retain your clients and stand out of the crowd.

**Successful Business Strategies**

Encouraging consumers for feedback and comments is an integral part of quality customer service. Following consumers’ feedback for analyzing the strengths and weaknesses is probably the best way to understand the expectations of consumers and adopt successful business strategies.

**Critical Learning Experience**

Customer service can provide business owners a critical learning experience to understand the dynamics of the corporate world and keep up with the latest business trends.

**Reduced Risk of Business Failures**

Understating the expectations and mindset of consumers can considerably reduce the risk of business failures and losses.

**Consumer Satisfaction**

If your customers are happy, your investors and business partners will be happy as well, and this ultimately leads to higher profits. With a strong client base you can win the trust of investors and make the most of every viable business opportunity.

**Reduced Employee Turnover**

With increased sales and higher profits, you can offer employees good salary packages and additional bonuses, thus reducing employee turnover.

**Employee Motivation**

Client satisfaction directly influences the working environment of business organizations. With decreased pressure of meeting targets and financial stability, employees can work in a comfortable corporate atmosphere, thus encouraging them to work to their maximum capacity.

**Increased Efficiency**

The above mentioned benefits lead to overall increased productivity of the organization.

Now that you are familiar with the ways through which quality customer service can benefit your business, implement creative and innovative strategies to value your customers.

- Meredith Estep

**Train Your Employees to Answer Inquiries Efficiently or to route to appropriate party**

There are certain questions from customers that probably come up time and time again, so make sure your front line customer service reps know the correct answers to those inquiries. Empower your staff to be able to handle a customer's needs without having to refer them to someone else in the company. The quicker customer interactions are completed, the happier your customers will be.

**Keep Customers Up to Date**

Engaging customers means notifying them of policy changes or upcoming promotions that may be relevant to them. It means treating your customers more like a partner in your business, rather than someone who must be serviced every time they walk through your door. Your front line reps are the perfect place to begin educating and updating your customers on information about your company that specifically applies to them.

**Allow for Speedy Transactions**

Time is money, and the more efficiently you can serve your customers, the more money you save them. Customers do not have time for slow service or habitual mistakes, so teach your customer service reps to handle their needs quickly, accurately and courteously. This step alone is sure to bring customers back to your business time and time again.

Raise your customer interactions to the next level, and you transform merely satisfied customers into loyal, engaged clients. Those contact points make all the difference in keeping your client base coming back to your business over and over again.

**Consider Your Supply and Demand**

One of the easiest metrics for measuring the quality of your customer service is simply your number of sales. Happy customers tend to purchase more products, so if sales are increasing, it could be attributed in part to your level of service.

However, this method alone will not give you the most accurate assessment on the quality of service; an increase in sales could also be attributed to the season, economic climate or recent price markdown. This gauge is more effective when combined with other measurement tools.

**Ask Your Customers**

One way to determine whether customers are happy with your level of service is to simply ask them. You can do this informally, by inquiring when they come into your establishment. You can offer follow-up phone calls or emails to ask customers about the quality of their last visit to your business. Or you can make the process more formal by creating surveys that ask questions about different aspects of your service and ask customers to fill them out and return them to you.

**Number of Customer Complaints**

Some companies evaluate the quality of service by the number of complaints they receive.  A common assumption is that when the number of disgruntled customers is decreased, that the quality of services has increased.  Take note: by not paying attention to your quality of service, you may be inadvertently sending those disgruntled customers down the street to a competitor.

**Identify Your Weaknesses**

Effective measurement of the quality of your customer service will help you identify specific weaknesses within your operation. For example, perhaps customers are not happy with the length of time they have to wait for assistance, or they are frustrated because a certain product always seems to be on backorder. No matter what metric tool you use to evaluate your current level of service, it should be able to help you identify very specific areas where you have room for improvement.

**Assess the Competition**

Knowing what your competitors are offering in terms of customer service can also help you know whether you are on track with your own service level. Send an employee down the street to act as a customer and find out how they are treated.  Talk to customers who have worked with both businesses and ask them which company's service they like better and why.

Measuring your customer service will help you know if your service level is on par and where it can be improved. Through these easy tools, you can get an accurate idea of whether the quality of your customer service is where it needs to be or what you can do to raise the bar on your current service level.