



# Book Super Service

## Seven Keys to Delivering Great Customer Service

Val Gee and Jeff Gee  
McGraw-Hill, 1999

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### Recommendation

Val and Jeff Gee bring their extensive experience in employee training to a simple, yet effective book version of the training sessions they designed for top corporations. They offer seven critical ideas - keys - to providing outstanding customer service. Each one builds upon the premise and actions of the previous one, making these lessons sensible, precise, and natural to put into practice. The book illustrates each key with anecdotes, case histories, boxed lists, cartoons, and exercises. This creates an interactive learning experience. Nicely written in an upbeat, conversational style, it does not talk down to the reader or take the tone of a cold, authoritarian "employee manual." Neither is it condescending by being overly simplified in thought or tone. *BooksInShort.com* recommends this book to anyone whose position involves serving customers, or supervising those who do.

### Take-Aways

- The benefits to delivering great customer service include good business and the service provider's personal and professional improvement.
- Sixty-eight percent of customers who quit patronizing a business are lost because of only one thing: bad service.
- The first key to delivering super service is to have "the right attitude" and maintain a positive frame of mind.
- The second key is "understand the customer's needs," listen, verify, clarify, and know what you can offer.
- The third key is to "communicate clearly," be simple, clear, honest, friendly, and knowledgeable.
- The fourth key is to reach an agreement by creating a win-win solution.
- The fifth key is to be sure you understand and to give customers the opportunity to confirm that the solution meets their needs.
- The sixth key is to "take action" and be efficient, organized, honest, and reliable.
- The seventh key is to "build on satisfaction" and use situations that previously resulted in customer satisfaction as a foundation for the future.
- Building your skills in selling, telephone use, and interpersonal communication enhances customer service. You should avoid and relieve stress and burnout.

# Summary

## The Basics

Delivering great customer service has many benefits and can enhance the service provider personally and professionally. If you're a service provider - or a manager of service providers - who has grown weary and disillusioned, now you can revitalize your outlook and increase your enjoyment. You can experience being at your best by using these guidelines:

- Choose to give good service. You are in control of how you feel at work and in your personal life. You can choose to think positive thoughts or negative thoughts about providing service.
- Have a positive approach to make your life easier, more fun and meaningful.
- Customers and bosses will notice that you're providing great service and you will become known as an asset to your employer.

## You, The Server

A customer is "anyone who isn't me." This includes everyone inside and outside your company. People either benefit or suffer from the service you provide. It is not demeaning to serve; in fact, one definition of the word "serve" is "to be of assistance, to help." With this attitude, customer service can feel good. You should feel good, also. Balance is important to your wellbeing. Service isn't about giving until you're burned out. Renew your energy by taking breaks and taking good care of yourself at work and at home.

“When you deliver Super Service, the person feeling the best is you.”

When you are honest with yourself about how you feel about your customers, your awareness can help you improve your experiences with customers. You can connect with a customer's heart and soul and realize that you, too, are frequently a customer who wants to be treated well.

Sixty-eight percent of the customers lost by businesses are lost because of only one thing: bad service. Each dissatisfied customer tells between ten and twenty other people about it. Each customer interaction provides you with a "moment of truth," an opportunity to satisfy and keep a customer. "Serving takes great courage, power, leadership, and a strong spirit." This requires extra effort when you are not feeling your best. Techniques to relax and clear your worries can help you "serve up your best, even when feeling your worst." Great service requires taking responsibility for your commitments to customers, as well as for your mistakes. Treating customers well depends upon seeing them as people who always deserve your assistance. Think of each customer as:

- Someone I can learn from.
- Someone I can be objective about.
- Someone I don't fear.
- Someone I can be open to helping.
- Someone I can accept.

“Serving is about being a giver instead of a taker. If you think about it, we all serve other people.”

## Seven Keys to Delivering Super Service

1. Have the right attitude - This is the most important key to great service, and it relies on maintaining a positive frame of mind, being prepared, wanting to help, and being sincere.
2. Understand the customer's needs - Pretending you are the customer is the basis for understanding any customer's needs. Prepare yourself by knowing how to solve typical problems, and knowing what your customers' options are. Keep an open mind, listen, and learn how to recognize the difference between a need and a desire. Verify and clarify what your customers say, so that you will not have misunderstandings. Overcome your customers' negative attitudes by staying focused on your goal, which is to help solve their problem. Be truthful.

3. Communicate clearly - Keep your communication simple, clear, and honest. Admit to errors when you've made them. Give unwelcome information directly, kindly, and in positive terms. Offer appropriate added service to compensate for bad news. Encourage customers to take part in finding a solution to fit their needs. Acknowledge the customer's feelings. Know when to call your manager for further assistance.
4. Reach agreement - Look for a win-win solution, build upon the customer's proposed solution, be creative, and don't promise what you can't deliver.
5. Check understanding - Give customers the opportunity to confirm that your solution meets their needs. Tell your customers everything they need to know regarding the service or solution. Be aware of your customers as humans with legitimate needs and problems, not stereotypes of any kind.
6. Take action - Don't start something you can't finish. Turn negatives into positives. Use positive words and phrases instead of negative ones. Think before speaking or taking action. Organize, return phone calls promptly, and give customers updates or progress reports and plenty of reassurance. Always thank the customer. Don't criticize your company. Resolve the problem internally. Do follow-ups, verify satisfaction, and check for new problems or opportunities.
7. Build on satisfaction - Don't just focus on problems. Build on situations that have previously satisfied the customer. Offer new, helpful information and services.

"To serve others is to ultimately serve ourselves because when we open our hearts, our spirit grows and becomes stronger."

### **Ten Keys to Handling Unhappy Customers**

1. Show that you empathize and understand.
2. Encourage them to tell you what happened and to vent if they like.
3. Remain objective and don't take anything personally.
4. Stay calm and believe that the problem can be solved.
5. Listen and show that you are attentive.
6. Take responsibility and show that the problem will be addressed quickly.
7. Ask customers how they would like the problem handled.
8. Offer ideas to resolve the situation.
9. Propose a plan.
10. Tell customers that you will inform management of the problem.

### **Selling Skills**

Remember that "you are always selling yourself, your services, or your company." Offer better service and additional service. Ask questions so you can meet needs. Exude friendly, intelligent, upbeat energy and create a good rapport with each customer. When the telephone is a key part of your customer service, keep in mind the following pointers:

- Return calls promptly.
- Keep messages direct, short, and polite.
- Ask for the response you need.
- Be aware of the powerful effect of your voice: your volume, tone, diction, and the speed at which you speak.
- Be understanding.
- Allow people to speak.
- Keep an open mind.

### **Avoid Stress and Burnout**

You can foresee stress and burnout. You can avoid them or cope with them. When you go home from work, you often take the day's stress with you. If you live alone, you might feel lonely because no one else is there. You may feel upset because you have no one to talk to about your day. You may feel depressed because you have nothing to do once you get home. If you have a big family, you might feel confined because you have a house full of people. Or, you might feel frustrated because all the people in your house want you to listen to their problems. Or, maybe you feel anxious because there's too much to do and you have so many family

responsibilities. Whichever scenario applies to you, you are not happy.

“May I open my heart to the needs of others.”

When you get up the next morning and go back to work, you take the unresolved stress with you. Day after day, the stress piles up, and ultimately this becomes a chronic stress situation. You may feel that the only solution is to leave your job and go to work somewhere else. But, if you do that, the same situation may repeat itself.

“When you are feeling down, that’s exactly the time you can make a difference.”

Use stress-reducing strategies at work and at home to help solve this problem and keep the cycle from repeating itself. Identify stressful situations and feelings; then actively plan useful solutions. Choose what will work for you.

If your customers are feeling stressed, let them vent. This will help them and it will keep you from feeling anxious. Realize that they are not really angry with you; they are frustrated and upset by their experience. Do not take things personally. Put your feelings aside and don’t absorb the customers’ frustration. Focus on the positive: serving the customers and turning their stress and frustration into a positive experience for them and for you.

## Use Affirmations

Every day, you are in charge of deciding how you are going to live, which choices you are going to make, what your attitude will be, how you will react, and how you can make a difference at your company and with your customers.

“The energy you put into your voice reflects your attitude, enthusiasm, and willingness to serve.”

You can make a positive contribution by investing your time in making a customer happy and, in turn, making yourself feel good. When you feel good about your work, you can move toward achieving your further goals. These positive affirmations can serve as daily morale boosters:

- Customers are people who deserve respect.
- I can show my customers that I am a caring person who is on their side.
- If I feel angry, I will take a deep breath, hold it for a count of three, then let go. My anger will leave me as I exhale.
- Every morning I will wake up and say, "Today is going to be a great day."
- I am eager to make a difference and happy to help.

## Everybody Serves Somebody

Customer service occurs at all levels of every single profession, even in professions that you might not ordinarily think of as serving the public. Celebrities serve the public. They feel the glare of our attention and our demands to the point where they often feel their lives are "run by their customers," that is, their adoring fans or disgruntled critics. Bankers, presidents, CEOs, kings, queens, generals, doctors, lawyers - they, too, feel that their lives are run by their customers. They probably get as tired of their customers as you do. The fact is "We all serve and we all get tired of it." No one is happy to serve all the time. What is important is "how we serve most of the time." Doing this right will lead us to happy, productive professional and personal lives.

## About the Authors

**Val Gee** is an instructional designer and a regular contributor to Training magazine. **Jeff Gee** is a motivational speaker and trainer with more than twenty years experience. The Gees founded and run McNeil and Johnson, a training company that has trained more than 50,000 people since 1986. Clients include Motorola, 3-COM, Siemens, and Hewitt Associates.

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