

5 Ways to Improve Customer Service



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The lifeblood of every successful business is customer service. Without good customer service, you can forget about ever trying to retain customers for the long term. Instead, excellent customer service should be the centerpiece of your business model. Sadly, many companies fail at this important task. If you are lacking in this department, there are strategies you can implement to greatly improve your business's customer service. Below are five.

Vet and Train Your Employees

Customer service is essentially a people service. It all hinges on exactly how your employees interact with customers in a variety of different contexts. It's no secret that excellent customer service seems to be much rarer today. You

have probably experienced plenty of very unhelpful employees in retail stores and elsewhere that simply could care less about what you want. Overall, customer service begins on this personal level as a one-to-one relationship between the customer and the employee. If you hire the wrong people with the wrong attitude, that will reflect poorly on your company as a whole. Employees must also be trained well on how to help customers with what they need. Without this training, you can really only blame mismanagement when your reputation as a business sours.

Consider Outsourcing Some of Your Customer Service Needs

Customer service can also become a problem when your business's customer base expands beyond the capabilities of your own in-house staff. You may, for example, feel swamped with customer phone calls all day long. If that is the case, you should consider outsourcing that area of customer service to inbound call centers. However, make sure to take an active hand in developing the customer service protocols that will be used when your customers call into those call center employees. You know your products best, and it is your job to help train outsiders on how to properly provide service for your own products.

Track Online Reviews and Social Media Mentions

96 percent of consumers say that customer service is an integral part of their brand loyalty. One way you can track people's customer service experiences is by reading online reviews and social media mentions. Doing so is extremely important. The experiences of individual customers can determine whether or not they come back to your business.

However, the fact that those experiences remain online where people can see them means they can influence scores of other people as well. Negative online reviews can certainly affect a business's revenue for months or even years into the future. Adjust to what is said about your service and reach out to those individuals with poor experiences so you can fix their issues.

Integrate Customer Feedback

A lot can be said about a company's brand and products online. There are certain times when you should ignore negative feedback. Twitter, for example, tends to whip up "outrage mobs" of people who have never purchased a company's products and only join in with negative scorn due to the social aspect of agreeing with one another. The feedback you should listen to and integrate, though, is the feedback you receive from honest individuals trying your service for the first time or longtime customers that are trying to give you constructive criticism. If they had a genuinely negative experience with your products or service, try to see what you can change to prevent such a negative experience from happening again. There is always room for improvement.

Institute a Customer Loyalty Program

Everything you do as a business should be about building long-term customer loyalty. It is that loyalty that will give your business the revenue it needs to survive far into the future. Without that loyalty, changing trends could wipe out your business overnight. One way you can build customer loyalty is by launching a program specifically to foster it. A customer loyalty program that allows consumers to accrue points, freebies, discounts, gifts and more is an excellent choice. This will give those customers an incentive to continue

choosing your business over your competitors, and they will feel like the organization truly values their loyalty as a result.

Customer service is the cornerstone of every successful business. There is of course no business without customers. Keep that in mind when you hire and train employees. Consider new ways to improve customer services such as using loyalty programs or outsourcing. Never ignore the experiences customers have with your services and products as expressed through feedback both online and offline.

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