

6 Steps to Great Customer Service

By Aaron Turpen

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by Aaron Turpen of Aaronz WebWorkz

In all of my reading of sales, marketing, and other materials that include the topic of customer service, I have noticed a trend. In my own business, I have also noticed a trend of things about which I receive comments or praise. These things are what I believe to be the key to great customer service. I've broken them down into six "steps" or "categories." They aren't in any sort of order as each is as important as the other.

These steps are fairly simple and are either obvious or overlooked. All small businesses have one thing in common: they provide superior customer service. If they don't, they will not be around for long - their larger competitors will eventually drive them out. Customer service and the ability to personalize are what mark a small business and draw many customers to them. Small businesses online, especially, can set themselves apart from their competition if they provide superior customer service.

The six steps I've formulated with my own experience are:

1. Drop everything to answer email, phone, or whatever... No matter what you are doing, if you receive a phone, email, or other communication from a customer or potential customer, drop whatever you're doing to answer that communication. Even if it's just "OK, I'll get on it," you'll convey to that customer that you are there for them and quick to respond. This is especially true with prospects who may be asking a question or requesting a

quote.

2. Do a little extra.

This "go the extra mile" bit has been repeated over and over. It is repeated often because it is one of the simplest and most tried-and-true methods of making contacts into customers and making customers into repeat customers. Throw in a little extra - you don't have to give away the farm, just do the little things that make people know you paid them personal attention. Include a thank you note in your shipping box, do some extra "bonus" work on their website, give them a branded pen... do something extra and they'll appreciate you for it.

3. Keep your promises.

If you make a promise to have something done at a certain time, in a certain way, shipped at a certain speed, etc., do your best to make sure it gets done. Stay up all night, get to the post office early, do whatever it takes to get it done the way you said it would be.

4. Address problems immediately.

Sometimes this one falls in with step number one. If a customer comes to you with a complaint, change, etc., jump on it and fix it as quickly as you can. The faster you get it fixed, the better off you'll be. Customers like to know that you are on top of things and will take care of their issues quickly and fairly. Do this and you'll always be number one to them.

5. Follow up on problems, questions, etc.

If you answer a question, fix a problem, etc. then you should follow up on it later. Send an email, make a phone call, or send a thank you note to the customer and let them know that you appreciate their concerns and hope that your fix was to their liking. This piece of customer service is also a great tactic to use after quoting a project or answering a question about a product. It can create follow-through on the customer's part and mean a sale or contract!

6. Personalize communications.

This may seem obvious, but a lot of people using mass-marketing techniques (especially auto-responders) fail to do this. Personalizing communications makes the communiqué seem more...well, personal. When I read email which starts "Dear Sir," I immediately get defensive and think of it as more SPAM or junk to throw away. I may not remember asking for it in the first place. If the email starts out "Dear Aaron" or "Dear Mr. Turpen," I become interested because I know that there's a good chance I either asked for this or know the person sending it to me.

These six steps are great ways to boost your customer service from average to great. Start implementing them and see the results!

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