

World Class Customer Service

By Charlie Page

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Every day we hear reports about a "soft" economy. One expert predicts a long recession, then 15 minutes later another expert predicts a quick recovery. All of which leaves customers confused. How can we ensure that we will attract and maintain customers during good times and lean times too? By giving them WORLD CLASS customer service. Let's look together at three "rules" of world class customer service and see how we are doing.

===== The Customer Is Still King (Or Queen)

The first thing we must realize is that customers need to feel important. Many of them feel that *their* business is what keeps us in business, without regard to the size of their purchases. Some customers don't mind reminding us of that fact every time they see us! g

They're right to a large degree. Most businesses today could lose their largest client and survive. Not many businesses could lose the smaller, regular customer that is the lifeblood of their cash flow.

Rule 1 -- Never Forget the Customer is King

===== Stop Small Problems At The Source

No matter how hard we try, we won't please all of the people all of the time. This is where our problem solving and communication skills come into play. The rule here is to nip problems in the bud before them bloom into disasters.

We all know the stories of a simple miscommunication that, when passed down the line, becomes something much more than simple. The sooner we intervene in problems, the better. Wal

Mart does especially well at this, instructing associates to literally walk a customer to exactly what they are looking for, thus preventing confusion and any hint of less than excellent customer care.

The more we are willing to invest the small amount of time necessary to stop small problems from growing, the more time and lost business we will save in the long run.

Rule 2 -- Prevent Small Problems From Becoming Disasters

===== How Well Are You Doing?

Finally, there is customer feedback. Rarely will you see a customer more delighted than when you spontaneously ask them how YOU are doing. Many of us are afraid to ask, thinking that the customer may unload on us and waste our time. Yet nothing is farther from the truth. While they may unload, this is **no** waste of time.

Customers almost always feel that their opinion (good or bad) is not being heard. Let customers know that not only is their voice being heard but that policy is being shaped around that opinion. We always hear from the minority that believe they must complain to get what they want. Here's a chance to let our customers know we value them and hear from that "silent majority" of happy customers as well.

Rule 3 -- Ask Customers How YOU Are Doing

There you have it. Three quick "rules" which, if we follow them, will ensure that we are in touch with our customers, can prevent small problems from growing and help us learn what our customers **really** think of us.

When we adopt an "attitude of gratitude" and actually THANK customers for no more than simply being our customers, relationships bloom and good things begin to happen.

Your clients may never meet you in person. Yet, the more personal the attention you give them and the more informed you are about their needs, the more loyal they become.

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