



All About Customer Service

Welcome to fall - and to the beginning of the holiday season!

We hope you enjoy the articles below about customer service and mystery shopping. We'd LOVE your feedback and suggestions for enhancing our newsletter and our service to you.

[Judi](#)

What constitutes good customer service: Here are 8 tips.

The process of using a mystery shopper to evaluate your business usually focuses on the customer service you and your employees are offering. But just what constitutes good customer service? This article highlights eight top areas to evaluate in your business:

1. Answering the phone: Whenever possible, make sure a human being is answering customer calls.
2. **Keep promises. Always!**
3. Listen to your customers. Let your customer tell you what he/she wants. Listen.
4. **Deal with complaints.**
5. Be helpful.
6. **Train your staff to be helpful, courteous and knowledgeable. Always!**
7. Take the extra step. For example, don't point to Aisle 3. **Lead** the customer to Aisle 3.
8. **Throw in something extra. Whatever you can offer - a coupon, a discount, a smile - if it surprises the customer, you'll probably win him/her back.**

By Susan Ward, About.com

[Complete article](#)

Customers don't want excuses, they want service.

Customers do not want to hear about your problems when you fail to meet their expectations. They don't care that it was your ... suppliers' employees', weather's fault. They want you to do what you said and, when you can't, set it right. No matter what went wrong, if you own the business, you are responsible and, so, offering excuses is not the answer. If you take responsibility, you are building a customer's confidence in you. In this ongoing recession, good customer service is key. Sluggish sales are the leading challenge facing small businesses. To improve them, make your customer service stand out. When something goes wrong, take full responsibility. It builds confidence in you and your business. You must make each customer feel as though their

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business is the business that's most important to you.

By Jeff Cornwall, [The Entrepreneurial Mind](#)

If you have concerns about your customer service, it may be time to employ a mystery shopping business like [Customer Perspectives](#)

You've had a mystery shop done at your business. Now what?

So, let's say you've had a mystery shopper come to evaluate your business through a business like Customer Perspectives. Then what? How do you best approach your employees about making improvements or to get their feedback on the types of things measured in the mystery shop? [This article](#) list 10 different way to approach the discussion!

1. One-on-one meetings
2. Email
3. Staff meetings
4. Internal campaign meetings
5. Interviews
6. New associate training
7. New manager training
8. Ongoing training sessions
9. Training videos and web-based training
10. Role play

Number 1, one-on-one, is considered one of the best ways to approach the results of a mystery shop with an employee. Managers can provide coaching in the areas of deficiency and seek input on any mystery shopping expectations that are brought up. Reports from a mystery shop can easily be emailed to all involved. You might turn the results into a competition or "campaign", as outlined in #4, where results can be shared across groups of employees and then offer reward or recognition when results improve.

Mystery shop evaluation results are also good training material for new hires or new managers and should be mentioned in interviews with job applicants. Results may also be turned into an informal training involved role plays, where groups learn from watching others act out the various customer service evaluation areas.

By Confero Inc.

8 Things You Should Never Say to Customers

Great customer relationships: Hard to establish, easy to ruin - especially when you say the wrong things. Here are eight things you should never say to customers (even if you would secretly love to):

"No." A boss once told me, "Never tell a customer no. Always say, 'Yes we can. Here's what that will cost.'" If you absolutely can't provide a certain product or service, you can't, but often you can't simply because

you don't want to. (In the example above I didn't want to. What the customer had asked for was certainly possible but would have been a real pain to pull off.) Price unusual request accordingly: If you can make a decent profit, why not? Making a profit is why you're in business.

"Are you sure?" Customers are often wrong. Too bad. Never directly doubt their statements or their feelings; all you'll do is make an already bad situation a lot worse. Instead ask questions or seek to better understand. Saying something like, "Can you walk me through that one more time so I can make sure I can take care of what went wrong?" validates the customer's position while helping you keep the conversation objective and solution-focused.

"What you should do is..." Don't tell me what to do. Help me. That's why I came to you.

"That's against our policy." Maybe it *is* against your policy... but if the customer wasn't aware of the policy ahead of time, who cares? Any terms or conditions not spelled out in advance are irrelevant to the customer. Imagine you're a customer who finds out after the fact that special order items can't be returned - how would you feel? Refer to policies or conditions when the customer was fully aware of and agreed to those conditions; otherwise, find a way to fix the problem. Unstated policies are your problem, not the customer's.

"No problem." Maybe this is just a pet peeve, but I'm always irritated when, say, I ask a waiter for dressing on the side and he says, "No problem." I know he means "yes" but "no problem" still implies I really am causing a problem. When I'm the customer, I'm favoring your business with my patronage; your business isn't doing me any favors, so never imply you are. Replace "no problem" with "yes".

"Let me try to do that..." Customers care about results, not effort. Tell me what you *will* do. "Trying" creates greater uncertainty, and uncertainty is the kiss of death to a customer relationship. If a client requests an accelerated delivery, say, "I'll call our distributor and get the best schedule possible." All you can do is all you can do. Don't imply you're working extra hard on my behalf by "trying."

"Let me know if you have any other problems." If a customer comes to you with a problem and you think you've resolved that problem, great. But don't expect the customer to contact you if other issues pop up; follow up a couple days later to make sure all is still well. Solving a customer's problem meets expectations; following up to see if they need further assistance shows you care.

"I'll get back to you as soon as I can." Maybe you will... but in the meantime the customer is left wondering what "soon" means. Always specify a time. If, when that time comes, you still don't have all the information you need, contact the customer and say so - and say when you'll follow up again. Customer relationships are based on managing expectations; "as soon as I can" sounds good but fails to set an expectation the customer can count on.

By Jeff Haden, BNET
[Complete article](#)

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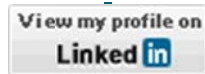
IIR's annual conference, THE MARKET RESEARCH EVENT 2011 - Nov 7th - 9th in Orlando, FL. [Click here](#) for more information.

ESOMAR qualitative research conference - Nov 13th - 15th in Vienna, Austria. For more information, [click here](#).

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