



February 2013 Client Newsletter

Dear Judi,

These customer service tips, from several sources, SHOULD be no-brainers. Are you really sure your employees are adhering to them? A mystery shopping program will let you know!

Judi

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10 CUSTOMER SERVICE RESOLUTIONS FOR THE NEW YEAR

This is the time most of us reflect on the past year's business, and - - if we haven't already - - firm up our plans and goals for the next 12 months. and of course, customer relationships should be high on the list of things on which to reflect.

Here, in no particular order, are the 10 most important commitments you and your staff should make to your customers, and to yourselves, for 2013:

1. Be nice: Seemingly so easy yet, apparently for many companies, so hard. The simple quality of being nice to people makes them more receptive to any interaction, and makes all other elements of service easier and more effective.

2. Be accessible, respond quickly: Whether it's getting a real person on the phone quickly and easily, or getting a prompt and complete reply to an email or other inquiry, responsiveness and access are among the most critical determinants of customer satisfaction. In fact, according to the people who measure this stuff, accessibility and responsiveness are two of the four most common traits of the very highest-rated customer service businesses.

3. Give the benefit of the doubt: Always err on the side of the customer. Many companies, particularly when they are in "gray area" situations, fall back on policies and misguided self-protection. If you're not sure who's "right," whenever possible let it be your customer.

4. Don't lose your cool: Don't ever argue or be defensive with people -- there will always be difficult, unreasonable and angry customers, but very few of them are out to get you or your company. We all know that emotion just triggers more emotion, and it's your job as a service professional to stay above it and manage the tone of the conversation. Don't treat customer service as a competition. Odds are if you are doing things right, you won't be dealing with as many confrontational people to begin with.

5. Be generous: Whether it's with your time, tangibles or just in spirit,

generosity is a quality that usually pays you back. If you can do something for someone, do it with pleasure. If you can do more, do that too. Go the extra mile.

6. Get to the point: Always get from A to B as quickly as possible. If you already know the likely outcome of a conversation, get to it sooner than later, without making the customer jump through hoops. Eliminate all steps, questions, processes and policies that aren't absolutely necessary. You, too, have presumably been a person needing service, so you know exactly what it means to want to scream, "can we get to the part where you help me now?" Don't make your customers feel that way.

7. Find the "happiest" solution: At the end of the day, all people really want is to be happy, and that's what customer service is generally about. So while you can't please everyone every time, always think in terms of what you can do to make the customer happier when she's finished dealing with you than when she started. There is usually a way.

8. Smile: Whether in person, on the phone or even when writing an email, if you're smiling chances are you'll say or write things in a way that's more likely to be well-received. I'm not suggesting walking around 24/7 with a creepy grin on your face -- that just scares people. But a real smile, one that suggests you're happy to help, always makes its way through to the customer. If you're not happy to help, you're in the wrong line of work.

9. Listen: Of course, that's an important quality in all areas of life and business, except that many companies hear their customers without listening to them. Hearing only requires an ear (and maybe a headset); listening requires a brain -- and ideally a heart. Understand what they really want and need, and you're more likely to serve them well.

10. Empathize: This is what it all boils down to -- always. Genuine empathy is where all great customer service starts and ends. If you and your employees don't have it, you can never -- and I mean never -- excel at taking care of people.

If you really need a reminder of what it's all about, keep a pair of someone else's shoes next to your desk and put yourself in them once in a while. Seriously.

If you think you and your business are already hitting on all cylinders, congrats and keep up the incredible work. But much more likely, you're in the "always room for improvement" category. You might be operating at peak performance in some of these areas but not in others, or maybe you're generally great but always want to set a higher bar for your business.

Either way, take an honest look at how you fare in each of these areas. And it should go without saying that your review should include actually learning what your customers think, as well as your equally important employees.

The ball has dropped to signal the end of the year. Take the opportunity to make sure you don't drop any balls in the next one. Have a happy, healthy and successful 2013.

By Michael Hess
CBS News Money Watch

People expect good service but few are willing to give it."

Robert Gately

CUSTOMER SERVICE: SEVEN WAYS TO LOSE BUSINESS

"Growing up in retail, I have known from the very beginning that the customer is far smarter than the retailer is. When retailers fail, it's because they believe they know what the customer really wants."

- Robert Tillman, Chairman & CEO of Lowe's Companies

Everyone has experienced bad customer service. The rude store clerk, the curt receptionist, the apathetic customer service representative. You could probably offer advice to these people on how to shape up their attitudes.

The situation takes on new meaning when it's *your* clients or customers that are being snubbed. And remember, every time a customer or client doesn't come back -- and tells others about a bad experience -- it could mean thousands of dollars that won't end up in your bank account.

Here are seven no-no's that encompass the most common reasons for lost business:

1. Rudeness.

Your customer, in a very real sense, is the highest-ranking person you deal with.

2. Broken pledges. If you make a promise, follow through on it. Build a level of trust with your customers by living up to your word.

3. Arguments. The customer is always right...even if you know they're wrong. It's generally better to take the high road and come out smelling like a rose.

4. Indifference. If necessary, fake it. If you're having a bad day or couldn't give a hoot about your customers' problems, pretend like you do. By the end of the day, you may find you actually do care.

5. Impatience. If customers ask for help, go out of your way to make sure they're taken care of. Their requests should never be seen as an interruption. They are the very reason you're working at all.

6. Misinformation. One way to turn good customers into ex-customers is by giving the impression that you know the answer when you don't. If you don't know, tell them you'll find out.

7. Gloom and Doom.

Nothing turns people off faster than a grumpy, negative attitude. On the other hand, friendliness encourages customers to come back for more and send their friends to you too. Telephone etiquette is especially important. The person answering the phone is usually the customer's

first contact with your company. How callers are treated can determine how much business - if any - they will do with you. Here are some telephone Do's and Don'ts: For complete article, [click here](#)

Nathan Wechsler & Company

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Upcoming Events:

The Marketing Research Association CEO Summit -

Feb 25-27 in Miami. Click [here](#) for more information.

The American Marketing Association -

"Analytics with Purpose: The Human Edge of Big Data" on March 4-5 in San Diego. Click [here](#) for complete information.

CASRO Online Research Conference - Mar 7-8 in San Francisco.

Click [here](#) for more information.

Worldwide Business Research - "Next Generation Customer Experience" conference - March 11-13 in San Diego. Click [here](#) for more information.

IIR - "Total Customer Experience Leader's Summit" - April 8-10 in Boston. Click [here](#)

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