



Customer Service - A Passion?

Passion! Is that all it takes to provide phenomenal customer service? It may not be everything, but it is certainly a great start. A positive attitude and a passion for delivering great service is easily half the battle of achieving your organization's customer service goals. So how do you attain these attributes? It may sound simplistic, but it starts with hiring the right people. You know, they are the ones that usually have smiles on their faces, the ones with positive attitudes, and a passion for delivering phenomenal service to your customers.

Recently, I was sitting in a local coffee bar compiling my thoughts after hours of research about what makes for exceptional customer service. I ordered my coffee and salad and proceeded to settle in to my chair. As I scoured through my notes and documentation for over two hours, I jotted down the main points that I wanted to cover in this article. It quickly dawned on me that they were the same points I would have highlighted before conducting any research based upon my twenty year history of providing and managing customer service efforts in a variety of organizations.

After several hours, the store manager approached me. He sat down in the comfy chair next to mine, introduced himself and proceeded to ask me what I had been working on for so long. At first I hesitated. Did I really want to begin a long conversation about what I was working on and take time away from my project? But that thought quickly faded and I told the manager, James, what I had been working on so steadily to complete. As I proceeded to tell him about my article and training program on customer service, his face completely lit up! "Wow", he said, "I have been wanting to provide my employees with this customer service training for over a year! How did you get in to doing this?" I told James that I had spent almost two decades providing great customer service and my boss had instructed me to put together a customer service training program for our company use and market.

James then provided his thoughts on customer service while I took notes. He relayed his belief that customer service is no longer a priority in today's world and how unfortunate that was. He also recounted an article he had recently read, attributing a Fortune 1000 retailers' poor Thanksgiving Holiday sales to poor customer service. As James was talking, his passion for customer service was evident. Immediately, we began feeding off of each other's interest in the subject.

We talked about how exceptional customer service must flow from the top level managers on down. If the top level managers create an environment that supports great customer service, then it is much easier for everyone else to follow suit. We also talked about how it is the manager's responsibility to "walk the talk." Too often, managers require their employees to do as they say, but not necessarily as they do. Managers should lead by example. As James pointed out, as the manager of his outlet, he is not afraid to wash windows, sweep floors, or strike up a conversation with customers (as he had done with me). He does not expect his employees to do something that he would not do himself.

My conversation with James further confirmed what I already knew. Superior customer service boils down to a singular focus. Passion! It is estimated that 73% of consumers



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attribute their best customer service experience to a company's employees. Therefore, it is imperative that all employees provide your customers with the quality service they deserve.

We have put together some basic guidelines for customer service; however, continuous training on customer service is imperative to maintain the highest quality service. Below is a sample of BCG's Guidelines for phenomenal customer service.

- ❑ SMILE! It seems pretty basic, but smiles are contagious and customers want to be greeted with a friendly attitude.
- ❑ Courtesy – common courtesy by saying “Thank you” and “Please” goes a long way with customers.
- ❑ Address repeat customers by name whenever possible. This shows your customers that you remember them and appreciate their business.
- ❑ Listen carefully to what the customer wants -- then deliver. If at all possible, under-promise and over-deliver!
- ❑ Refrain from negative responses (such as “No” or “It is not my responsibility”). If there is no way around the “No” statement, offer alternatives.
- ❑ Empower and train employees to solve issues that a customer brings to their attention.
- ❑ Monitor and evaluate customer service in your organization and recognize areas for improvement.
- ❑ Hire friendly employees. They can be taught the mechanics of the job. It is much more difficult to teach someone to be friendly.
- ❑ Create a “customer friendly” environment, starting from the top!

Since it costs six times more to find a new customer than it does to keep an existing customer, maximizing customer satisfaction will add to your bottom line. These guidelines outline the basics of providing phenomenal customer service. At BCG, we can provide you and your employees with the tools needed to ensure that customer service is a top priority, and even a passion, within your organization. I think James would be pleased.