

52 WAYS OF PROVIDING BETTER CUSTOMER SUPPORT



01. Create a plan

Plan how you are going to provide better customer service and take help from both staff and customers.

02. Improve People skills

Service is a skill and people skills count, so the fastest way to excellence is to improve your team's people skills.

03. Keep your promises

Reliability is one of the keys to any good relationship, and good customer service is no exception.

04. Answer the phone

Make sure that someone is picking up the phone when someone calls for support. People who call want to talk to a live person, not an automated service.

05. Make Service a Priority

One of the biggest reasons employees sometimes fail to deliver excellent service is they feel they don't have the time to do it with competing priorities. If you want your staff to make service a priority, show them you consider it a priority.

06. Create a feedback loop

Create a way for your staff to feedback what is important to the customers they speak to, remember they have their finger on the customers pulse, make sure you get to know what they know.

07. Get a tool that supports the workflow

Don't try and fit your processes and workflows around a tool, make sure the tool fits your way of working and it is capable of changing with your business.

08. Listen to your customers

Let your customer talk and show him that you are listening by making the appropriate responses, such as suggesting how to solve the problem. There is nothing more annoying for a customer than discovering that that person hasn't been paying attention and needs to have it explained again.



09. Talk to your customers

The only way you can consistently give your customers what they want is if you know what they want. Find ways to engage your customers in direct and open conversations regularly and your customers will tell you all you need to know to make them happy.

10. Go the extra mile

Whatever the extra step may be, if you want to provide good customer service, take it. They may not say so to you, but people notice when people make an extra effort and will tell other people.

11. Create a career path

People get bored with front line customer service, to compensate for this, don't hire without a career path for them. In order to retain ambitious and smart members of staff make sure the career path is explicit and clear to them.

12. Create realistic SLA's

Make sure you create realistic and achievable service level agreements; if they are out of sync then it will create unhappy and upset customers.

13. Leadership is important

Providing exceptional customer service is the goal of every business leader, regardless of how large or small the company. Leaders must replicate the very behaviours they expect from their teams to ensure success.

14. Build for flexibility

Be flexible to change and with the customers, try new things and go the extra mile for customers. It means being a problem solver rather than an order taker. Customers will notice the difference.

15. Let the team be creative

The service team's productivity is likely to go up if they can try out their own improvement ideas, as long as it has something to do with the project at hand, let them enjoy themselves.

16. Have the right attitude

Treating everyone as your customer not only better serves others, it improves your own reputation which will result in later rewards.

17. Active listening

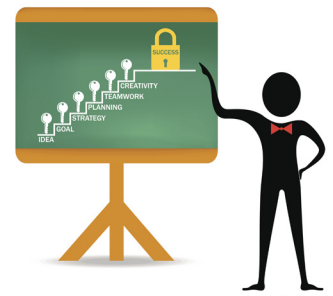
Many service workers are poor listeners and start crafting responses while the customer is still talking, causing much information to be missed. Train the staff in active listening, and use simple things like - as customers speak, lean forward, nod appropriately and actively listen to every word before giving the response.

18. Service with a smile

It's true; customers can detect your demeanour without even seeing you. When you physically smile when taking a call, your customer can "see" it in your voice.

19. Take ownership

When customers complain to you, it is your responsibility to find a solution. If you can't solve the situation yourself, bring the customer together with someone who can.



20. Build rapport, use the customer's name

Use the customer's name several times in your conversation, there is no better way of creating a bond between customer and service agent.

21. Be specific to customers

Rather than telling the customer you will provide an answer "later this week," put yourself on the line with a deadline. "I'll have an answer to you no later than two o'clock on Thursday." However you need to make sure you met the deadline!

22. Be prompt to customers

Each call on the service desk represents someone whose work may be stalled while waiting for an answer. Treat every call with the same sense of urgency you would show if that person was standing in front of your desk.

23. Use rewards

Use a range of rewards all at the same time to inspire the team to deliver customer service excellence.

24. Continuous training

Train your staff in all aspects of customer service, talk to them about good customer service and what it is regularly. Most importantly, give every member of staff enough information and authority to make those small customer-pleasing decisions.

25. Create a knowledge sharing culture

In order to create a knowledge sharing culture you need to encourage people to work together more effectively, to collaborate and to share - ultimately to make organisational knowledge more productive.

26. Help to self-help

Provide your customers with self-service is essential, not only are providing more cost effective service but you are enabling the customer to find the help when they need it on a 24/7 basis.

27. Provide empathetic responses

The ability to put yourself in another person's shoes and see their point of view—not agree with them, not make them right and your company wrong—but hear what they are saying. After all, basic needs of all of us are to be heard and treated with dignity and respect. This is an essential stepping stone in providing excellent service.

28. Enable multiple channel access

Enable customers to contact you through their preferred channel, by allowing customers to choose the contact channel not only do you give them option you can also create service expectations based on staff skill sets and route the request based on requirements.

29. Know your customer demographics

When you know your customer base, you can adjust your business as necessary to meet their needs. You will be able to better predict what content will resonate most with your audience, achieving best results from your inbound marketing strategy. Knowing your customers means happy customers!

30. Metrics Metrics Metrics

Make sure you measure the right thing, don't just measure because you can, select metrics that will increase customer satisfaction and quality and start small and expand if necessary.

31. Encourage first call resolution

A vital driver for customer satisfaction is first call resolution, however, make sure you look at the figures the right way, if your team has a 75% FCR then that means 25% of your customers are contacting you more than once to resolve their issues! This not only frustrates your staff, but your customers as well. Repeat calls are costly not only to operations and the bottom line, but they negatively impact customer satisfaction.

32. How can we improve

Create a continuous improvement plan; take a look from the outside and in to find ways of improving the service you provide. Without innovation the service provides with degrade over time.

33. Be personal in what you do - people do business with people

Communication and understanding between agent and customer is essential for any business relationship to work, a lack of alignment and understanding can only lead to a relationship breakdown. Being open and honest about what each party wants from the relationship can be where this alignment is created and a win-win situation is forged.

34. Never tell your customers no because that's "the policy"

If you really want to help the customer then find a way, don't use company policy as an excuse. If a workaround is not possible then offer an alternative or escalate the matter for the customer. If the customer perceives that you are trying to help, they'll be less disappointed even if they don't get exactly what they want.

35. Capitalize on happy customers

If you have customers that rave about you, use it! Understand why they like the service and create case studies and statement to convert others.

36. Always under-promise and over-deliver

It's when companies' under-promise and over-deliver that customers experience memorable moments that will affect their habits for a lifetime, by setting the correct expectations you will ensure customer satisfaction.



37. Don't interrupt!

Always make sure the customer has an opportunity to give you all the information and details before engaging in the situation, it's a simple, easy thing to do for someone that pays huge dividends. As humans, we all want to be acknowledged, heard and accepted.

38. Give your customers a warm welcome

Answer your phone with a smile and energy in your voice, and the customer will immediately feel welcome and any frustration will decrease.

39. "Wow" customers with follow-up

After engaging with the customer send an email confirmation of an action plan agreed together with a suggested resolutions and any timescales. Not only does it "wow" the customer it also decreases repeat call as they have the information at hand.

40. Say "thanks" for everything

Let the customer know that you appreciate them, thank them for contacting you and they are pointing out that something is not working then thank them for letting you know. This will go a long way for customer satisfaction.

41. Love the unhappy customer

An unhappy customer is an excellent opportunity to improve your service, in effect they are giving you a second chance to rectify the problem and change their perception of the service.

42. Warm up your e-mails

Be personal in your communications, open with their name and close with "Thank you for your help," or "Good hearing from you," etc and finish with your name.

43. Give the customer your full attention

When you speak to a customer give them your full attention, if you do other things when speaking to them you lose information, appear unfocussed and ultimately the customer feel like you are not taking them seriously.

44. Ask, don't tell

Never tell a customer what to do, ask them instead. Phrases like "May I ask you..." or "Could you...?" will take you so much further than "You'll have to ..." or "You can't ..."

45. Explain what you're doing

Don't leave the customer alone without knowing what is going on, if you need to put them on hold or ask advise from a colleague then explain what you are doing and use phrases like "May I put you on hold while I check on that order?"

46. Focus on the "can," not the "can't."

The most important thing to remember when dealing with customers is to focus on what you can do for them not what you cannot do. Use phrases like "Here's what I can do ..." or "Here's how we can handle this"

47. Outline the performance standard

Let your employees know what the organization expect of them. Tell them your standards, and explain to them precisely how to handle particular situations. Finally, remind them to always smile, acknowledge the customer, and be empathetic with customer complaints.

48. Have a Defined Customer Service Policy

There's nothing more annoying for a client than being passed from person to person, or not knowing who to turn to. Making sure they know exactly what to do at each stage of their enquiry should be of utmost importance. So make sure your customer service policy is present on your site — and anywhere else it may be useful.

49. Attention to Detail

Attention to detail makes up a culture of customer service excellence, the key details , that executed well provide customers with moments of truth that they take away wanting to continue doing business with you and tell others about you and your services.

50. Keep at the top of your customer's minds

Make sure you regularly communicate with your customers and remind them you are there ready to help and any new potential services you have introduced.

51. Celebrate success with your customers

Engage with your customers outside the support environment; create customer success programmes and user conferences to escalate the customers' experience.

52. Build a dependable system

By creating reliable customer systems and a stable infrastructure you are not only enabling your customers to do their best, you are also decreasing the calls to your service teams.



Corporate Headquarters

3675 Mt. Diablo Blvd., Suite 200 Lafayette, CA 94549
Tel: (925) 871-3900
Fax: (925) 871-3991
www.techexcel.com

TechExcel EMEA

Crown House, 72 Hammersmith Road London W14 8TH, UK
Tel: +44 (0)20 7470 5650
Fax: +44 (0)20 7470 5651
Email: emeainfo@techexcel.com