

Customer Service



When it comes to customer service, it is all about attitude. Good or bad, your attitude is what people will remember about you.

Unfortunately, our attitude can be negatively affected by many different circumstances, and no one can be cheerful and charming 100% of the time. Fortunately, there are a handful of very basic service practices you can adopt that will reflect good customer service.

Show respect by being polite when dealing with people. When they enter the office, acknowledge their arrival, and let them know if it will be a minute or two before you can help them.

- "Good morning. How may I help you?"
- "Hello, I will be with you in one minute."

- “Good afternoon. Let me finish one thing and then I can give you my full attention.”

When you answer your phone, identify yourself and ask how you can help.

- “Good morning, this is Andrea Arnold, how can I help you today?”
- “Hello, this is Andrea in Pupil Services, how can I direct your call?”

Reserve judgment by giving people the benefit of the doubt when they make a complaint or identify a problem.

- Listen; let them speak and tell you what is on their mind. Often this reduces frustration.
- Show empathy, when possible:

“I can see this is the wrong form that you received in the mail.”

“Yes, I remember you called about this issue last year, (comma) too.”

Use the formal terms of address such as Mr., Mrs., and Ms. If you don’t know a person’s name, ask. If you’re not sure about the pronunciation, ask. Never use terms like “honey,” “sweetie,” and “dear.”

Show appreciation.

- "Thank you for your patience."
- "It was so nice of you to bring this to me."
- "I appreciate your phone call yesterday. It gave me time to look for the documents."

Be encouraging and efficient. If you are able to meet the customer's need, let her know. If the issue needs to be handed over to someone else, say so and offer to begin the process.

- "I can copy the correct forms for you by the end of the day."
- "You need to speak with Mr. G. about that. Let me show you where his office is located."
- "Here is the phone number of the Health office. I am sure Mrs. H. can answer that question for you. "

Show integrity. Do what you tell the customer you are going to do. Explain the process and steps involved, and provide an honest estimation of the time frame involved. Reliability is an important part of customer service.

Be a valuable resource. Share your knowledge when it will meet the customer's need. When you provide a name, phone

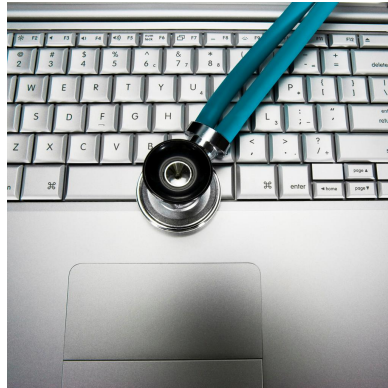
number, e-addresses, or time schedule you save him time and reflect customer care.

Mind the details. By paying attention to the little things, you send an important positive message. Putting forms in an envelope, stapling forms together, highlighting important sections of a form such details go a long way in portraying customer respect and concern.

Show genuine concern for each customer's feelings. Take concerns seriously by putting yourself in the customer's place. Simply pause and ask yourself, "How would I feel if this were happening to me?" That reflection will go a long way toward helping you understand and respond appropriately.

Listen, listen, and listen some more. That's the best way to handle complaints. Most of the time customers with a complaint simply want to voice their issue and know that it will be resolved. Acknowledge their concern and then get started on solving the issue.

Electronic Customer Service



Most likely, a significant portion of your contact with customers is through e-mail. It is especially important that you remain aware of how you represent yourself. Attitude and tone are perceived when customers read your messages.

Here are some additional suggestions for excellent electronic customer service.

Check e-mails regularly so you do not miss important messages.

Answer e-mails as soon as you can. If you are unable to provide answers or assistance without research or forwarding the message, let the customer know that the message has been received and you are responding to it. If possible, provide a time frame for a response.

Before you respond to a message, read the e-mail very carefully - once for the general information and a second or third time for specifics.

Read between the lines to determine possible underlying issues you might face.

If you have trouble responding, it probably indicates that a phone call or face-to-face meeting is required. E-mailing might not be the best way to respond.

If you decide to refer the e-mail or issue to another person more qualified to handle it, let the customer know and include all of the details – when you forwarded it, to whom and why you made that decision.

Write a brief, clear, organized response. Be sure you use a customer-friendly tone. Avoid slang, abbreviations, acronyms and pat phrases that can be misinterpreted.

Proofread the message aloud and imagine how it will come across to the customer. If a sentence sounds abrupt or unclear – change it. Don't chance causing confusion or implying a poor attitude.

Use spell-check and grammar-check and proofread carefully before you send. This will

show the customer that you care about details and specifics.

Provide your full contact information or that of the person to whom you have referred the issue.

Create files. Messages that deal with ongoing or complicated issues are best saved until a satisfactory solution is reached. Often, it is wise to save those messages for a year or so. Create electronic files, accurately named, so you have a records and references.

These are some of the most basic expectations that customers will have when they contact your company. By meeting these expectations and then going one step farther, you will make an even greater contribution.

