How to Improve Customer Service

Research shows that if we receive good customer service, we will tell two or three people. However, if we get poor service, we will tell ten to twelve others!

Since word of mouth recommendations and referrals are often key drivers of new business, all companies should strive to achieve consistently high service levels.

With that in mind, here are 18 practical tips on how to improve customer service in your company:

- **Understand customer needs**
  
The more you know about your customers, the more you are likely to understand customer needs and expectations.
  
  Hence, do a little research about your main customers. Then give some thought as to how your product or service could better suit their needs. This will help you find the right ways to meet customer aspirations and achieve outstanding customer service.

  See [understanding customer needs](#).

- **Seek and analyse customer feedback**
  
  Don’t make assumptions; look for ways to find out what your customers think about the organisation. Be radical – invite them in to help you identify what you could be doing better.

  See [meeting customer needs](#).

- **Delight your customers with WOW! Moments**
  
  Nothing is more powerful than going out of your way to give a customer something that they were not expecting or anticipating from you. Importantly, this will help to raise your credibility within the local and on-line communities, through positive feedback and referrals.

  See [delighting your customers](#).

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• **Invest in customer service training**

Choose a training provider who will really get to know your business and who can support your business strategy and service standards. In addition, develop your own short internal customer service training sessions to raise the importance and get your employees involved.

See [customer service training ideas](#) for guidance on this.

• **Set and communicate clear standards**

Set standards in terms of quality, accuracy, behaviour, appearance and good customer service. Crucially, let staff know what you expect from them. Then ensure that the service is consistently good, in every location, from everyone, every day.

• **Capture and share examples of great service in your organisation**

This helps build best practice whilst giving recognition to the individual who delivered the exceptional service. In addition, it encourages more staff to ‘go the extra mile’.

• **Build your processes around the customer, not the organisation**

Follow your customer’s journey, from finding you to using your service and products, to billing and after sales support. In particular, look for ways of streamlining the processes at each stage of their journey.

See [creating customer focused processes](#).

• **Go ‘back to the floor’**

Shadow people in the organisation. For example, see how your systems and processes affect the customer, and identify what obstacles get in the way of good customer service.

• **Track and analyse errors and complaints**

Get to the root cause to find out what is going wrong and why. Involve people in improving processes to prevent recurrences. Also consider undertaking remedial training and coaching.

See [tips on handling customer complaints](#).

• **Send staff out as ‘mystery shoppers’ to your competitors**

Let your staff see for themselves what others are doing. Importantly, get them to share their experience and see what best practice you can adopt and what ideas you can steal.

For more information see [introduction to mystery shopping](#).
• **Have regular internal customer service sessions with cross sections of staff**

Your staff are at the “sharp end”, and they’ll have lots of ideas on how things could be improved. Encourage them to think of solutions to provide the ‘wow factor’. In addition, use the creativity of the group to brainstorm and think outside the box for less obvious suggestions.

See our tips on [developing your creativity](#) and [facilitating groups](#).

• **Consider setting up customer service awards**

Use a simple award scheme where individuals, colleagues and customers can nominate team members who demonstrate exceptional customer service.

• **Treat staff as you treat your customers**

‘Behaviour breeds behaviour’ and happy staff lead to happy customers. Unfortunately, we have probably all experienced staff that look and sound completely fed up, and they are the worst ambassadors.

Hence, to help change their mindset, give them the opportunity to experience life as one of your customers. As a result, they will feel highly valued, share great insights and help you improve your customer service.

See [empowering your staff](#) and [engaging with customers](#) for help.

• **Pay attention to those who do not serve customers directly**

The chances are that if they’re not serving a customer, they’re serving someone who is, and these people are their ‘internal’ customers. Consequently, you should provide opportunities for your support staff to interact with customers, so they provide improved services.

• **Build a team culture**

Emphasise that everyone is a link in the chain and that everything they do should be focused on delighting the customer.

See our tips on [building high performance teams](#).

• **Set measurable objectives around improved customer service**

Be sure to cascade them across the organisation. In addition, ensure every team member has a role to take in improving customer service as part of your business strategy.
• **Review individual performance regularly**

Undertake regular performance reviews, not just during the annual appraisal. For example, give feedback about what is going well, as well as offering coaching for areas needing development.

See [performance appraisal methods](#).

• **Recruit the right people**

Implement effective selection techniques, and invest in staff training. Above all, remember that to the customer, whomever they are dealing with IS your company. Hence, are you measuring the right behaviours and attitudes that achieve high levels of customer service within your selection process?

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• **How we can help...**

At KSL Training, we adopt a holistic approach to customer service, helping you to achieve your business strategy and customer service standards.

Our one-day [customer service training course](#) will teach you how to improve customer service at every level of your organisation. Alternatively, [contact us](#) to discuss a tailored customer service training programme.