

COMMUNICATIONS ARTICLE



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21 Ways to GREAT Customer Service

By Nancy Friedman, the Telephone Doctor

OK! OK! Yes, there are certainly more than 21 ways to GREAT customer service, but rather than overwhelm you, we wanted to start out with a palatable number. And 21 sounded like a good number to me. Any one of these tips will produce better relations in your customer service. Here we go.

1. Smile! Right. Don't kid yourself. Just as it can be seen in person, it can be heard on the phone. So as NIKE says Just Do It!
2. Say something nice at least once a day to someone. I was at the St. Louis airport a while back and the skycap came up to me and said, "Are you going first class; or does it just look that way?" That was over 10 years ago and it still seems like yesterday. People remember nice things; just as they remember the not so nice things.
3. Don't ever argue with a customer. You'll lose every single time. Don't even get into the ring with them.
4. If you're sending something to a customer via any method, consider adding a short personal note. Items received without any note or mention of transaction are perceived as cold and rude. A simple "Thank you" on company note paper will do the trick. It says you stopped to do something special.
5. Use "WE" statements when possible rather than YOU. We is consultative and feels friendlier. And it's far less confrontational.
6. See someone walking into your store/branch/location/office? Say "HELLO" loud and clear. Ignoring people, even fellow employees, isn't good customer service.
7. Keep the fences in your organization low. We all know there needs to be rules, guidelines and policies. However, when there are so many of them, they can make doing business difficult. It's not worth it.
8. Be a double checker. Often, we can miss something or not know all the details. Most people appreciate hearing, "The last time I checked, we were out of stock on that; however, let me DOUBLE CHECK for you." That particular statement is so comforting. Everyone loves a double checker.
9. We cannot do 2 things well at once. If you're working with a customer, on the phone or in person, then focus on that person. Trying to type, or file, or do some paperwork while you're communicating with a customer is dangerous; and rude.
10. If your attitude stinks. Change it. No one – absolutely no one – wants to be connected with someone with a bad or negative attitude.
11. Respond rapidly. When you receive information from a client, it's a good thing to let them know you did receive it. That's good communications.
12. Extend a firm handshake when being introduced to a customer. And FIRM is the key word. That loose, fish like handshake is not a sign of confidence. FIRM is key.
13. Thank you notes are still thought of as GREAT. Take the time to jot several off a day to new or better yet; older clients.
14. Use your name when you answer the phone. Everyone likes to know who they're talking with.
15. Use your listening skills more often. We all like to talk, mainly to show off how much we know. But listening to what the customer knows is much better. Let others have the stage.
16. It shouldn't take 2 people to give good customer service. Learn how to handle the situation yourself rather than trying to get rid of it by shipping it off to a co-worker or supervisor.
17. Show some empathy or sympathy when a customer complains. Doing or saying nothing when they feel they have a problem will put you in the doghouse fast.
18. Learn to say, "I am sincerely sorry for what happened" or something that will allow the customer to feel that you are apologizing. That quick, "Sorry 'bout that" statement sounds as though you're throwing the statement away.
19. Be prepared. If you're in customer service, or any front line position, expect things to happen. Be prepared is not just for the Boy Scouts. It's for anyone who works with customers. Prepare for the unexpected.
20. When in doubt, leave it out. Writing a letter to a client? Or calling them. If you're in doubt of using a certain word, leave it out or use something else.
21. This is reserved for you to put in your own customer service tip. And if you have one you'd like to share with us, send it on to PRESS@telephonedoctor.com. It could end up in one of our new books. You will, of course, receive full credit.

Service Mentality



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