

Customer service argumentative flashcard



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Before I get into further analysis of my own personal experience, I am going to explain about different characteristics that are involved in customer service. Most businesses will tell you that quality customer service is the keystone to success. An essential component of outstanding customer service is the possession of a great staff. Larger companies may be weighed down by employee handbooks that specify the customer service guidelines. Independent, smaller businesses have the advantage of selecting employees that possess excellent customer service know how and capabilities.

The customer service department should also be extremely familiar with the inventory, services, and policies entailed in the store. Knowledgeable employees satisfy customers. For customer service face-to-face, employees should concentrate on their own appearance. A sloppy look, chomping on gum or an employee lacking hygiene can negatively reflect on the company. Having a dress code or grooming evaluations can motivate employees to excel in face to face situations. Every small aspect involved can affect the business as a whole.

Once the right staff has been hired, there has to be an example set for them to follow. Rewards are a good incentive to inspire employees to go the extra mile. Establishing employee of the month recognition programs, giving gifts, or verbally acknowledging accomplishments are good ways to drive the staff toward the set out goals of a business. Some companies train their staff by asking them to put themselves in the customer's position. When people consider their own preferences, they may be more apt to see where the customer is coming from.

It is important to have the dual goal in mind of keeping the customer happy and at the same time working toward benefiting the business. One way to keep this practice is the LEAR method of handling customers. LEAR is an acronym for Listen, Empathize, Ask Questions, and Resolve the Problem. All employees should try and practice this method of handling customer problems, with the end goal being to send the customer away in a good mood. Treating people the way they want to be treated is generally a good approach to a problem.

With a well trained and qualified staff, the customer service department has a better chance at success. In my experience, handling customers is much easier when a step by step exact approach given to the employee, but also giving them the freedom to integrate their own methods that can correspond with the employee's personality and the personality of the individual customer. In general, the employee should first listen to what the customer has to say without interrupting them. At all times, the employee should stay very calm, it takes two to make an argument.

They should give an indication that they understand and sympathize with what the customer is saying. The problem then should be logically analyzed. There should be a differentiation between the assumptions, facts, generalizations, and emotions. Try and find out exactly what happened by digging for the facts and not placing blame anywhere. Then, try and read the person better to figure out what the true problem they are having really is. Are they actually angry at what is happening right now, or are they just in a bad mood and looking to release their problems somewhere?

One of the easiest questions to ask is: What can we do to make this right so you are a happy customer when you walk out the door, when you hang up this phone, etc.? Take full responsibility for finding a satisfying solution, and make sure to see the customer through to ensure they are getting what is owed to them. The response made should call for immediate action to be taken if it is possible, this will make the customer feel important and raise their level of satisfaction. Many times the problem can be simply solved by letting the customer talk to someone in authority.

This also raises the level of satisfaction with a feeling of importance. It is good to never view the problem as insolvable; customers will spread the word of dissatisfaction to other people which will further hurt the business. A good idea is to ensure the customer that methods will be taken to prevent this problem from happening in the future. Employees can make a difference if the customer feels that they are making a difference on the business.

Many companies learn that effective service recovery heightens customer loyalty.

It costs approximately five times as much money to acquire an existing customer then it does to keep an old one. Without using these methods, I have found that there are many approaches that make the customer angrier than they were in the first place. One of the best is telling the customer how important they are and how much this call means to the company, and then letting the customer sit on hold forever. It is even better when it is just a recording that interrupts the annoying elevator music on the phone repeating over and over that this call is important to us, remain holding.

If this call is so important, why am I on hold for an hour? A business can always keep transferring the customer to different departments, and each department can redirect them. This will make the customer become angry at all of the departments and not just one employee. At least with one employee, the customer may not feel the whole company is unqualified and not helpful. Making the customer explain their problem over and over makes them angrier and angrier. One of the best ways to make a customer irate is to put them on hold for awhile, and then disconnect them.

Now they have to call back to get put on hold again? A good example of this problem with miscommunications can be seen in a letter I wrote to Wal-Mart. (See Appendix 1) Not to sound racist, but it is also a good idea to not make the entire customer service department lack in English speaking skills. Customers do not enjoy having to repeat and explain themselves a hundred times and still feel as if they are not being understood correctly. The customer needs to be able to relate to the employee just like the employee needs to relate to the customer.

A similar language and culture can greatly improve this relationship. One of the worst things to do is making the customer feel as if they are wrong. But is the customer always right? The popular customer service motto, “The customer is always right” has the right message, but is not fully accurate. I feel that customers should be treated as if they are right at most times, but certain circumstances should not be tolerated. The customer has the “right” to be in control, but not the full power of always being “right.” Sometimes the customer is wrong, and even when this is proven, they can not accept it.

Even when the customer is wrong, it is still a good idea to do whatever possible to make them feel better about the situation. Saying no to a customer is basically saying we no longer want your business, because in most circumstances that is the result. Having concise return policies and warranties are ways to protect the business. Most people are reasonable and want what they are entitled to. There are a small percentage of customers that can just not be helped and are never satisfied. There are just certain whiny nonstop-complaining customers who have nothing better to do that ruin other people's days.

They scream, curse, and treat the employees like dirt. No matter what is done for them, it is not good enough. After a certain point, these customers just need to be written off. Of course, it should take awhile to reach this point. Only when completely necessary should a customer not get the royal treatment they deserve. When the customer is written off, they should not receive the much deserved screaming, verbally (or even physically) abusive response. As good as it would feel to smack the customer across the face and tell them where they can shove the product they have a complaint with, the reputation of the business is still at stake.

Nicely, they should be told that there is nothing that can be done and if they wish to discontinue their business, then we are sorry but that is their only option. There is an entire other group of people that needs to be acknowledged: the group of people that do not make any complaints when they are dissatisfied. Up until this project, I had never written a letter of complaint to any company no matter how unhappy I was. However, I was not

completely silent. I would spread the word of my dissatisfaction to others and influence their decisions, the same way people have influenced me.

I was part of that group of people that companies really need to look out for and have the most difficulty finding. According to findings, the average “wronged” customer will tell eight to sixteen people about a negative experience. To deal with the silent deceiving customers who seem satisfied, the best a company can do is encourage comments and complaints. Pushing people to write down comments helps you hear what all different types of people think, not just the aggressive people who go after what they want and deserve.

Showing the quiet customers that you care what they think and will take necessary steps in improving the aspects that are displeasing to them, is an excellent method to get the customers that may have “fallen through the cracks.” Another way to ensure customer satisfaction is to go above and beyond expectations. Giving the customer something they do not expect is an excellent way to keep their satisfaction levels high and increase the company’s market awareness. Incentives such as free items, discounts, and coupons are a few obvious ways to accomplish this.

Addition services include gift wrapping, delivery, and free samples. A simple example for a retail store is creating a friendly atmosphere by having employees greet customers walking into the store. Smiles and sincerity are essential parts of quality customer service. I would like to further explain the recent decline in customer service here in America. There has been deregulation in a variety of industries, but consumer rights have been at the

bottom of the list. Some of this deregulation has even exempted companies from State Consumer Protection Laws. The tight economy has also impacted the way customers are handled.

During a down economy, many cuts are made in companies. One of the first departments to experience the cut is customer service. Customer care is often overlooked when making these budget cuts. Although, management needs to realize that this disregard is going to impact other parts of the company's sales and reputation. The advancements in technology have been a huge disappointment and aggravation for consumers. Technology is on a steady incline. That's positive, right? Automated voices that can direct calls and answer customers' questions helps cut employees and save money for a company.

It probably even exceeds the cost of the new technology, malfunctions, and paying people to install and maintain it. I have had some conversations with these "computers" and have actually had my questions answered. However, I have also experienced the computer have no clue what I was talking about. It kept asking me over and over to restate my question. Now, this wouldn't be a problem if I was given the option to speak to someone. It would be pretty simple if the computer was trained to say, "Since I can't help you, I will redirect you to someone human." Imagine the nerve of a customer actually wishing to speak to a human!

How about my eighty-five year old grandma who cannot grasp the concept that she is not talking to a real person, she tells me the lady on the phone is rude and does not understand her. So what should be done about this?

Should old people just not be allowed to use the phone? At the age of seventy, should you lose phone privileges? Technology may be advanced, but when it comes to customer service, the proper precautions must be enforced to continually ensure customer satisfaction. Using an automated service to direct calls as opposed to actually solving the problem would be a more intelligent solution.

Now, I have explained the general concepts, by highlighting both the positives and negative aspects, involved in modern day customer service. The next part of my analysis involves the responses I have received from the individual letters I wrote. I had planned to write different forms of letters. My initial thought was that the tone, extent of problem, and the amount of time I had actually put in writing the letter would have an effect. As a result of research into customer service departments, I soon realized that each company trains their customer service representatives to treat problems a certain way.

The type of industry would also have a large effect in the business's approach and seriousness of the company's concern. When a letter is received, there is a generic way to approach a solution. Writing a letter or sending an email is the least time-consuming and least stressful method for a customer to do. However, letters may not even be read or the root of the problem may be unclear and misunderstood. It is the best approach to deal with the problem face-to-face; it is the way to get the maximum satisfaction possible. But, it is also the most time-consuming and aggravating.

Using the phone may be more effective than a letter, but as I previously mentioned, the phone could also be a huge frustration with the recent technological advancements and customer service representative problems. I chose the letter and email method due to the fact that complaining to over seventy-five companies within my three month time frame was not feasible by another method. Three months was not enough to allot for me visiting each company or spending hundreds of hours on the phone. (See Appendix 2) The general tone I used in my letters was very serious and also very upset.

I tried to come across as someone who would only complain if it was a big deal and also leave the companies with the threat that my future business was in question. As much as possible, I tried to come across as intellectual and educated about the individual business in question. For example, my letter to Target Corporation (See Appendix 3) is very similar to the previous Wal-Mart letter you viewed. However, Target has a customer service policy which I brought up to get my message across. If my letter was actually read closely, they would have seen the seriousness of my complaint.