

Importance of customer care



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A customer is the most important person in the company. Customers are corporate or individuals upon whom the companies depend, whereas the customers do not depend upon any particular company. They form part of the purpose for which companies are working for. Therefore if there is no customer there is no business.

“ A customer (also known as a client, buyer, or purchaser) is usually used to refer to a current or potential buyer or user of the products of an individual or organization, called the supplier, seller, or vendor.” This is typically through purchasing or renting goods or services.

This specific word is originated from the word “ custom” meaning “ habit”, a customer is people who have the habit of purchasing its products or services from a shop frequently rather than going elsewhere, whereby the shopkeeper had to maintain a relationship to keep his “ custom” meaning expected purchase in the future.

The slogan “ customer is king” and ‘ customer is always right” indicate the importance of customer to a business.

Definition of customer care

According to Jamier L. Scott (2002) “ Customer service or customer care is a series of activities designed to enhance the level of customer satisfaction, that is, the feeling that a product or service has met the customer expectation. Its importance varies by product, industry and customer; defective or broken merchandise can be exchanged, often only with a receipt and within a specified time frame. Retail stores will often have a desk or

counter devoted to dealing with returns, exchanges and complaints, or will perform related functions at the point of sale.”

Customer care is based on emotional factors. Customers do not only buy the products and services but the whole packages that include emotional factors as well. In order to improve service quality, an organization must understand the important issues which concern their customers “ excellent customer care is a commercial must for the next millennium” (Management Today, 1996).

The satisfactions of customer expectations are becoming a more central and critical success factor for many organizations.

One of the most important features of customer care is the “ feel good factor”.

Phases in the customer service.

Pre-transaction phases

Transaction phases

Post transaction phases

The pre-transaction is about the service level and its related activities. The will help towards molding the organization towards the customer orientation.

Important phases about pre-transaction phases are:

Customer service policy

Service organization

Structuring the service

Hence customer education is another important phases meaning to minimize customer complaint. Secondly it should make sure that all the queries of the customer are being satisfied

Transaction phases-Basically it consist of 5 different stages namely:

Order fulfillment reliability-Customers order should be met at agreed time and place. For this to be accomplishing the entire organization must be available.

Delivery consistency- orders must be delivered on time reflecting the efficiency of a particular organization.

Order convenience-this is when the customer place the order dealing particularly about paper work.

Order postponement-the customer might postpone the order and place it at different time period.

Product substitute-this typically occurs when a problem occurs where the order cannot be delivered therefore the dealer to honour his part of commitment must provide the customer with a similar product with similar quality or in some cases better quality.

Post transaction phases-this phase is significant in order to build a long term relationship with the customer. it consist of 4 stages namely:

Order status information-if the customer has given a time for the delivery of its products and service, it become important to inform the customer about the status of the schedule.

Customer complaints-the seller responsibility has not finish even after the delivery of the service, customer may have complaint about the usage of that product or service. And they need to be attended. in case of damage they particular organization need to opt for replacement of that product and services.

Product installation and commissioning-operational instruction are required to be given by company representative.

Customer education and training-customer need to be trained for getting the desired output from that product.

Basically the goal is to not only help the customer have a good experience, but to offer them an experience that exceeds their expectations. Several key points are listed as follows:

1. you should know what product or services you are offering to your customer. In order to accomplish that you should be expect in information. In case you don't know anything about the product you should try to fing out. You should also make sure that your customers are not left with confusion or unanswered questions.

2. positive body language is also a must when we interact with others.

Negative body language can show our lack of customer care. Smiling and eye contact are two most important part of positive body language. Looking

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customer in the eye shows that we are listening to them and their needs attentionally.

3. Always look for ways to serve and help your customer more than they expect. In doing likewise shows that you care and will leave them with the feel good factors.

The importance of customer care

Getting customers and the know how to keep them are parts of the business that create income and the rest of all the activities of the business usually create costs, that is a business aims and objectives is to make profits and create income and for this the business must care for their customers.

Customers are not only concerned about the services and product they are getting but they are also concerned with the treatment they are getting.

Today there is lot of competition and the customers is left with different alternatives that is different kinds of services and products which the customers might usually choose.

Daily costs and expenses of a business such as overhead and general expenses that one need to keep the business an ongoing one are usually shown in a balance sheet. On the other hand customer care is absolutely free but the key reason for the failure of most businesses that is the inability to provide good customer care. All businesses depend on the number of satisfied customers. Therefore unsatisfied customers can be the reason for failure of a particular business.

Due to competition people have not only more choices but are also more informed than ever. Technologies have been effective leading customers to

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explore, search and make decisions. Hereby customer care is one of the most valuable resources that one business can offer at least price

Global business are caring for their customers and serving them beyond their expectations which involve putting all system in place to maximize customer satisfaction. Thus we can say caring for our customer is a primary consideration for every business because your sales and profitability depend on keeping your customer satisfied.

Many businesses will start losing their customers as soon as they face competition in the market. Some businesses will try to look for new solutions and techniques to attract more customers. They will spend a lot of money on thinking about how to get new customers but will not value the old ones.

Customer care is about satisfying customers, every time they buy a product or services. Therefore "customer care is not a goal to achieve, it's an organizational habit-a journey towards providing excellent services."

Customer retention

It is usually said that "it costs five times to attract a new customer than retaining one". The operating cost of a company decreases when a customer is retained. It usually takes time for a customer to get well acquainted with a particular organization and once they purchase its product and service and they are fully satisfied, they tend to purchase more products and services with that particular organization. As they are satisfied with the service they will usually spread a positive word of mouth thus attracting other customers. The more the customer remained a buyer of to the organization the more the organization knows about him/her and vice versa. In this way the

organization is able to offer customized product and service which make the customer less likely to defect. This may result in providing its long term customers individualized product which make it less likely for their competitors to offer.

Reasons for switching customers are:

higher prices compared to its competitors and deceptive pricing

inconvenience-waiting time for the product to be delivered

Core service failure-mistake occurring in the delivery of the service

Service encounter failure that is unresponsive behaviour.

Thus we can say that a customer that is retained is a customer that is fully satisfied. A highly satisfied customer stays longer, buy more, and talk favourably about the company, and its services and product, pays less attention to other competitors, is less price sensitive, offer product and service idea, costs less to serve than new customers because their transactions are routinised. Thus company will try to exceed company expectations regularly. Dissatisfied customers will usually stop buying their product and service and will provide a negative word of mouth to other customers.

Here are some solutions and tactics that are used by some businesses (but are not really effective)

Advertising and promotions

Advertising is the most significant part of a business. All businesses will try to advertise their products/services. All types of advertising are available nowadays that do influence the consumer's mind to persuade them to try buying their products/services. Promotions and slash prices can be offered together with discount coupons to bring in new customers. But unless some of those customers coming back, won't be profitable for long. In other words a business's success directly depends on customer care, not on advertising and promotions.

Sales techniques

Businesses will also invest to train their sales person in all the techniques and assign them to find new customers for their product and services. If a person is a good salesperson, he can sell anything to anyone once. But it will be the approach to customer care that determines whether he will ever be able to sell anything else to that same person. The essence of good customer service is to establish a relation with customers, a relationship that, every customer feels that he would like to maintain.

Listening technique

People are usually trained on how they should improve their listening. Customers usually complain that there is no one to listen to them. Some employees pretend that to listen when are actually not and some sympathize with one customer while others remained unheard. Employees are supposed to put themselves in the other person's shoes to understand their situation which are at time very difficult for some people to apply.

Technology

Some business will invest large sum of money on new technologies such as computerized equipments, user friendly software, applications and forms to gather information and save time and costs. Technology does have an impact, it makes work faster and smoother but this technology alone is not going to make a big difference. Even smartest computer cannot understand your customer needs. Therefore satisfaction of customers cannot depend on machines. Technology is not a substitute for customer care as no one likes to talk to, to be heard by or to be cared by machines.

Customer satisfaction

The main goal of marketing is clearly understand the consumer and to influence its buying behaviour. One of the main consumer perspectives is that they make their decision of buying from the “ information processing perspective” (Hoolbrook and Hirschman 1982)

According to that particular model, customer’s decision comprise of a need satisfying their behaviour and a wide range of motivating and influencing factors. The process includes the steps as shown below:

Realisation of the difference between desired situation and the current situation that serve as a trigger for the entire consumption process

Search for data relevant for the purchasing decision from both internal and external source

Assessment of the available choices that can fulfil the realized need by evaluating its benefits they may deliver and reduction of the number of options to the one preferred

Acquiring the chosen option of product or service

Utilization of the procured option

Assessing of what degree the consumption of the alternative produces satisfaction

Disposal of the unconsumed product and remnants

A customer is satisfied or not usually depends on the business performance in relation to the buyer expectations. Satisfaction is a person satisfaction and disappointment . If the perception matches expectations , the customers is satisfied; if it exceeds expectations , the customer is highly satisfied or delighted.

The value of customer satisfaction

All companies try to satisfy their customers and which is at large very essential for a business as satisfy customers usually return and buy more and may tell others about their experience hereby attracting more other customers. Thus business should hang to their customers. Customers usually pay money expecting their products or services to be right.

Hence, being wrong about customer's expectations can simply mean losing a customer's business when another company hitting the target. It also mean wasting resources on thing that are unimportant for the consumer as well as

the inability to survive in a highly competitive market (Douglas and Cornor, 2003; Zeithaml et al 2003).

Berry and Parasuraman(1991) found that there are two types of expectations:

Desired service level-Is the type of service consumers hope to receive. It is a combination of what customers believe “ can be” and “ should be”.

Adequate service level-Reflects what the customer finds acceptable. It is in part, a function of the customer’s assessment of what the service will be that is the customer predicted level.

The zone of tolerance is the difference between desired and adequate service level. It is the extent to which customers recognize and are willing to accept heterogeneity.

The first thing that a customer is bound to expect generally is that he should feel important and equally respected. The staffs of the particular organization should possess good manners while communicating with the customer and marketing their products and services, their message should be clear, precise and specific for the customer to understand them. However the staffs should show to each and every customer that they are interested in them and what kind of product and services would interest the customers depending obviously on their specifications. The staffs should be able to demonstrate the benefits that they would gain from purchasing from a particular organization instead of choosing other organization. Here empathy plays a big role for their staffs; putting themselves in the shoes of their

customers shows their capacity of being objective. The customers expect to discuss things from their point of view.

Hence we can say that customer expect to be satisfied with its products and services offered. To begin with a customer needs to have information about the products and services offered. The customers need to know about the quality of services and products offered in order to compare them with other company. Here the staffs play a very big role to persuade the customer about their products and services; the product must be such as to suit the needs of the customers. The staff should therefore acknowledge the customers and listen to them. Hence they should explain their products and services available that suit their requirements exactly and explain their features and benefits of each scheme or plans that might interest them. They must ensure that the customers (corporate or individuals) to experience its best services and products. The staffs must equally be helpful and different alternative to their customers. Lastly positive attitude is required by them.