



# ***FRONTLINE***

## **Customer Service Program**



*COMMITMENT TO  
PROVIDING QUALITY  
CUSTOMER SERVICE IN  
RICHMOND/WAYNE COUNTY.*



# CUSTOMER SERVICE

## 7 THINGS EVERY CUSTOMER SERVICE PERSON NEEDS TO KNOW

**EXCELLENT CUSTOMER SERVICE IS THE ABILITY OF AN ORGANIZATION TO CONSTANTLY AND CONSISTENTLY EXCEED THE CUSTOMER'S EXPECTATIONS.**

In these tough economic times it's more important than ever to differentiate your company from all the others. Distinguishing your business from the rest can be achieved through the personal commitment and determination of those that take care of customers every day. While customer care is everyone's business and should be a part of everyone's job description, the frontline employees facing people have the primary responsibility to "be the company" in the eyes of the customer.

Since it is especially critical in these challenging times to take exceptional care of your customers, here are 7 things every customer service person needs to know in order to do that kind of an outstanding job. If you touch the customer in any way, these tips speak directly to you.

**1. You chose this job, or it chose you.** Either way, it's in your best interest and the interest of the customer for

you to show up and be fully present to the job. Set an intention each day to be the best you can be at your craft. Make it a point to do a little learning about how to get better at it every day. Find joy in doing your job well and recognize and acknowledge yourself for all the "wins" during your day.

**2. Be proud of what you do.** You play an important role in the company's success. The experiences you provide for the customer could make or break their relationship with the company. Even if a customer is upset about some aspect of the company, a great experience with a frontline employee can make up for a whole lot. You have the opportunity to keep customers happy, coming back, and referring friends.

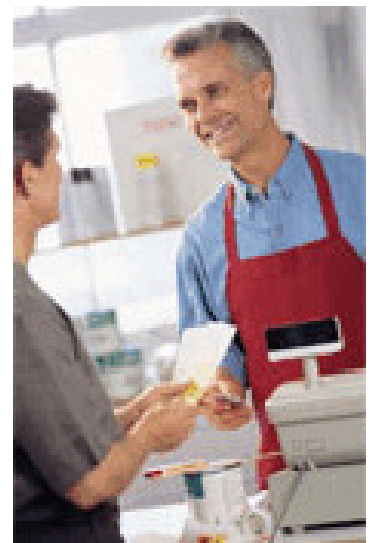
**3. You have emotional genius.** Being good at customer service requires a great deal of emotional intelligence. In fact, in your job EQ is as important, if not more important, than IQ.

Being in a people oriented position gives you the unique opportunity to practice and even perfect those EQ skills.

That's going to help you in every relationship you have in your life. As you get better at your job, you get better at your life!

**4. The customer is not always right.** You might have a little card that came from corporate office that tells you they are, but the truth is that they

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# CUSTOMER SERVICE

## 7 THINGS EVERY CUSTOMER SERVICE PERSON NEEDS TO KNOW

*TO MY CUSTOMER:  
I MAY NOT  
HAVE THE ANSWER,  
BUT I'LL FIND IT.  
I MAY NOT  
HAVE THE TIME,  
BUT I'LL MAKE IT.*

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are not always right. Sometimes they are wrong, sometimes they are mean, sometimes they lie, sometimes they drive you crazy. But being right or wrong is not the point. Your job is to be so skillful that even if they are wrong, angry, nasty or just having a bad day, you have the ability to turn a bad situation into a better one. A highly skilled frontline employee is able to transform and diffuse difficult situations into good ones.

**5. You work in the performing arts.** Service is not like a manufactured good. It can't be made ahead of time and put on the shelf. It happens in the moment, as needed, and it's all about performance. That makes you the performer. Just like an actor, there will be days when you just don't feel up to it and you will have to "act" as if you were. Here's where your good training comes in, helping you to prepare for a great perform-

ance every time. Consider yourself an improv artist.

**6. You have a stressful job, but the amount of stress you take home every day is up to you.** How you view your job is just as important as how you do your job. If you allow yourself to dramatize, get defensive, and take everything personally, you're in for a tough time. You have the power to change how you view any situation — including your job. Find a frame of mind that makes it less stressful and more enjoyable.

**7. You have the opportunity to make the world a better place every day.** Whether you deal with 10 or 200 customers a day, you have the power to create positive experiences for all of them. When you make your best effort to add sincere care and appreciation to every interaction, you are infusing it with positive energy. When the customer leaves feeling good about



their interaction with you, they will likely go out and spread that positive emotion. Emotions are contagious — negative ones as well as positive ones.

Make the commitment to be the best you can be and appreciate the power and opportunity that rest in your hands as a frontline employee.

# CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS

## FINDING THE POSITIVE IN CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS

**CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS ARE THE SCHOOLBOOKS FROM WHICH WE LEARN. YOUR MOST UNHAPPY CUSTOMERS ARE YOUR GREATEST SOURCE OF LEARNING.**

Without customers, your business will not succeed. Knowing that, most business owners and their staff will work to make customers happy with their service and product.

However, even the best business will have unhappy customers. They may be unhappy about something out of your control, or be unreasonable, but if they are unhappy it can impact on you and your business.

### **Complaints can be a positive**

Instead of avoiding com-

plaints or being scared of them, consider the advantages of hearing your customers' complaints.

If you make it easy for customers to come to you, you will know about their complaints and be able to do something about it. Look at a customer's complaint as a feedback system which allows you to learn and improve.

For instance, if a customer complains that your contact details are too hard to find on your website, you can be

sure that others also find it difficult to find that information. Now that you know about it, you can move the contact details to the front page or make the link to them more obvious.

It is much easier to deal with complaints than to deal with a bad reputation because you have numerous dissatisfied customers.

### **Dealing with complaints**

No matter what the complaint is or how the

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## HANDLE CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS WITH **L.E.A.R.N.**

When a customer complains, you may think he or she is calling upon you to instantly resolve their troubles — a common misconception among customer service employees and representatives. First and foremost, disgruntled customers want to be *heard*.

The next time you are dealing with a complaining customer, consider handling

the situation by applying **L.E.A.R.N.**, a customer service acronym with just 5 easy steps to follow.

The 5 steps to **L.E.A.R.N.** are as follows:

- **L**isten

Listen carefully to your customer. Don't interrupt or tell the customer to calm down. This will only ignite their anger.

- **E**mpathize

Feel the pain or frustration of the customer and let him or her know that you understand how they feel.

- **A**pologize

Apologize to the customer, even if you feel you have no part in the problem. Never blame the customer.

- **R**eact

Decide what you will do to resolve the problem, and make the customer aware of your solution.

- **N**ow!

Do not delay. Take immediate action. The longer you wait, the harder it is to produce outstanding customer service.

# CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS

## FINDING THE POSITIVE IN CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS

**HANDLING A COMPLAINT SPEEDILY AND TO THE CUSTOMER'S SATISFACTION ACTUALLY STRENGTHENS A RELATIONSHIP.**

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customer reacts, stay as calm and professional as you possibly can. Taking the complaint personally and arguing with the customer will only make the situation worse.

The key is to listen to the customer. Ask questions to make sure you fully understand the problem and sympathize with their situation, even if you don't think it is your fault. Just being heard will make the most unhappy customers feel better about the situation.

Show concern for their inconvenience and thank them for telling you about their concerns. If it's a mistake on your part, then make sure you apologize for that, too. Most people will respect

you for the apology.

Find a solution with the customer. It's no good offering a solution that doesn't work for the customer. Make sure you both understand and agree to the solution.

Also, determine an agreed time frame for the solution, unless an immediate response is needed, and make sure it is carried out by that time.

Follow up with the complaint a few days later. Whether it is a phone call, email or letter, apologizing for the error demonstrates that you are serious about trying to fix the issue.

### **The results**

Sometimes the customers who complain can become the most loyal and positive

customers for your business. Seeing that you will look after them in bad situations lets them know they can more easily trust you to look after them in the normal course of business.

By dealing with customers calmly and with respect, you will reduce negative feedback about your business and gain an opportunity to improve your business as well.



## SECRET SHOPPING

*Send us your personalized customer service performance evaluation form to have your business "shopped" with a phone call or visit to your facility.*

*Results are provided free of charge.*

*For more information on the Frontline and Secret Shopper programs, contact the Tourism Sales Dept. directly at (765) 935-2882.*

# CUSTOMER SERVICE TIPS

## COMPLAINT TIPS & TECHNIQUES

**FORGET ABOUT  
THE SALES YOU HOPE  
TO MAKE AND  
CONCENTRATE ON  
THE SERVICE YOU  
WANT TO RENDER.**

When customers complain, we are provided with a tremendous opportunity to reinforce and strengthen the relationship between ourselves and them. It makes good (economic) sense to take the extra time and effort to make these interactions as meaningful and service oriented as possible. Attention to customer service will go a long way in helping you to satisfy your customers and make them feel as if they are truly valued.

- Always tell your customer what you CAN do for them. Don't begin your conversation by telling them what you CAN'T do.
- Allow irate customers to vent. Do not interrupt them or start to speak until they have finished having their say.
- Diffuse anger by saying, "I'm sorry" or "I apologize".

- Use your customer's name at different points in the call.
- Make certain that your solution to the customer's problem is acceptable to them. Get their approval and agreement.
- Always conclude each interaction with a "Thank you" or a verbal message of appreciation for their business.
- Make certain that your tone of voice is in sync with your words. Remember, your tone of voice can completely contradict your message.
- Listen attentively. There is nothing worse than asking an irate or troubled customer to repeat what they have just said.
- Go the extra step by following up on your solution. Reconnect with the customer to make certain that everything has been handled in a satisfactory manner, and they are pleased with the outcome.
- Remember to ask if there if anything else you can do for your customer. Asking this question often results in increased business and a more committed customer.



**"Someone calling themselves a customer says they want something called service."**