

Does your business need a little TLC?

For many businesses customer service is a tired cliché . As external observers, or unfortunate clients, we can clearly see where these businesses are getting it wrong. Yet, it takes courage and a willing ego, to examine our own business with a customer's critical eye.

Here's five ways to improve your customer service:

1. Give comprehensive quotes promptly

When someone asks for a quote they're saying, "Please give me a reason to do business with you." Don't squander this good will. Sending a comprehensive quote quickly it demonstrates you value your customers' time, are organised and professional.

A quote should at the very least:

- ✓ outline the product or service benefits for that customer
- ✓ list exactly what items are included and those that are excluded for the price
- ✓ clarify what, if anything, you might need from the client and exactly when you need it
- ✓ confirm any discussed deadlines or give a realistic timeframe for delivery

2. Involve staff

Staff are your frontline. They hear what customers say; and can often intuit what they don't. Get your staff active, involved and empowered.

With your staff:

- ✓ workshop what customer service means to your business
- ✓ set customer service standards and objectives
- ✓ amend any or all policies and processes
- ✓ celebrate customer service successes



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3. Lock your ego in the bottom drawer

When Murphy's Law kicks in, as it often does when we are most stressed, the result is sometimes an unintentional attack on our customer.

No matter what happened:

- ✓ take a couple of deep breaths
- ✓ stand in your customer's shoes and see the situation through their eyes
- ✓ consider how you contributed to the situation – Do you need to be more discerning when choosing suppliers? Did you fail to set expectations? Were your instructions unclear? Have you given staff adequate training and mentoring?
- ✓ change your processes to minimise a recurrence
- ✓ set a timeframe to monitor the process changes
- ✓ evaluate the success of these changes and if necessary make more changes

4. Ask clients for feedback

Send a customer feedback form with every invoice. If you're a retailer, have a couple of questions to ask customers as they're paying.

Ask your customers to *help you provide them better products and services* by telling you:

- ✓ why they choose your products or services
- ✓ how your products or services make them feel. Their words can be powerful motivators in any sales copy. Ask if you can use their words as a testimonial.
- ✓ what they like and dislike about doing business with you
- ✓ what you can improve and how
- ✓ what marketing works for them eg. Advertising (in what publication? Radio? TV?); internet; letterbox fliers

Look at the feedback objectively and make considered changes.



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5. Ask lost customers for feedback

Ouch. Rejection hurts. Yet there are many reasons why someone will choose another product or service over yours.

- ✓ Find out what they are: Say something like, *“It’s perfectly fine that you have chosen XYZ. I’m sure you’ll be very happy with their service. I’d really value your help in growing my business. Can you tell me what made you choose XYZ?”*
- ✓ Dispel the objections raised by potential customers in your advertising.
- ✓ Consider if you need to:
 - improve your products or services?
 - introduce new products or services?
 - offer more value for the price?
- ✓ Thoroughly examine any considerations and make appropriate changes.

Customer service isn’t dead. It’s just a little concussed; nothing a little **Thinking Like a Customer** won’t fix.



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