



MEETING AND EXCEEDING CLIENT EXPECTATIONS

Surprising a customer by exceeding their expectation is a great way to make sure they'll be back in the future.

1. Empathise

Earning customer trust is vital. Keeping customer interests at heart is an essential mindset for success, and that can be achieved through empathy. Try to think of things from the customer's perspective and be more empathetic. For instance, for a customer service inquiry or complaint, put yourself in the customer's shoes and ask 'how would I like to be treated?' and then figure out the best way to do that.

2. Take ownership of the problem

Customers can be passed around our staff without their problem being resolved. This can be frustrating and time consuming for the customer. It can also damage a company's reputation. But we can stop the cycle of calls and buck-passing by taking ownership of the problem ourselves.

3. Follow up

Even after a problem is resolved we can exceed expectations by following up with the customer. A brief call to check that the service is progressing satisfactorily can show the client that we have taken their problem on board and we are seeking to avoid similar situations in the future. It can also serve as a useful feedback tool for our business – as a check on the effectiveness of our problem-solving.

4. Treat customers fairly

Fair treatment of customers may sound obvious. People often see customer service in a very linear way, as being just the conversation, but it's a lot more. For example, if a customer asks us not to call them again then we have a responsibility to disposition calls appropriately, and if we don't we run the risk of calling them when they don't want to be called. Ultimately, treating customers fairly is about putting them at the heart of everything, and ensuring that we and our support systems can work around their needs.

5. Find a balance

We often struggle to balance our business needs with the needs of our customers. Performance monitoring can place a certain set of pressures upon staff. For example, if a client's query takes a long time to resolve, we may be tempted to provide a simple but not completely effective solution to save time, when the best customer service outcome would be to take time to resolve the client's issue. We should feel able to stay with a client for a longer time than usual if required in order to solve the problem properly.



6. Try to become an expert in your field

Customers can now find answers to their questions online, and only call in when a question is too complicated. We should strive to be expert about the services we represent. Learning about competitors may also help. The more knowledge we have, the more professional we will sound when asked a question. The client will also save time rather than having to look things up.

7. Make recommendations

Customers expect to receive recommendations for products and services – from us rather than from other companies. It isn't a good idea to glow with enthusiasm for a direct competitor but during the course of conversation with a client opportunities arise for us to show our expertise. If you're dealing with a specific issue, for example, and a client seems lost as to what to do, why not tell them about any relevant experiences of your own?. Honesty builds trust, and the client will see that you are not just a company mouthpiece.

8. Ditch the script

Scripted calls and conversations can sound robotic. They also reduce the true engagement possible in a real conversation. Replace jargon with clear, concise language. Be human, not a robot, and say it like it is. Our clients expect us to say what we're going to do, when we're going to do it and to actually do it within that time. We should get a bit of a buzz from being able to call a customer and tell them that an issue has been resolved and that we've been able to achieve that ahead of schedule. That kind of buzz drives great service. A robot could never match it. Robots don't have emotions, after all.

9. Take time to reflect

Regular discussion with colleagues can help us discover their strengths and weaknesses. Exchanging skills and knowledge will make a whole team stronger. If you share an effective way of doing something with the whole team, then customers will receive a higher standard of service consistently – rather than having very different experiences each time they call.

10. Stop trying to exceed expectations?

Maybe trying to exceed customer expectations isn't as effective as simply meeting them. A study published in the Harvard Business Review entitled 'Stop Trying To Delight Your Customers' found that the biggest factor affecting customer loyalty was the amount of effort it took to have their issue resolved. In simple terms, less effort equals happier customers, and everything else is minor in comparison.



The importance to the client of meeting expected delivery times

With today's cut-throat marketing and service offerings from aggressive competitors, trying to compete on price can be a quick road to ruin for a company. Contrary to common perception, customers will not go almost anywhere just to save a buck.

We do not need to be beat up on price, sensible business practice indicates that we should stop trying to compete on price alone. What our business needs to stand out is better customer service and satisfied customers. But don't make it the simple "please and thank you" variety. We should aim higher. Strive for fabulous, standout, outrageously great service to set your company apart from the crowd.

Will superior service trump price? Absolutely, says a dramatic new survey of over 100,000 small business and retail customers. According to a four-year, most customers will put service ahead of price - if you give them the chance. Entrenched "wisdom" may be wrong

In another survey, tens of thousands of customers were asked how they like to shop, what they look for in customer service and what it takes for them to buy. For example, when researchers asked customers how far they'd be willing to drive for excellent service, 80 percent said they'd travel four or more kilometers, and nearly half said they would drive 10 Km or more for the right combination of price, quality and customer service.

The surveys indicated that customers are not the finicky, price-conscious bargain hunters they have been made out to be. Consumers will pay for good service with both their cash and their time.

Our job is to deliver superior service that attracts and keeps customers day in and day out. Satisfied customers say they are willing to go a little further for great service, but we'd better make it worth their effort.

Just how many service slip-ups does it take to send a customer packing? According to the survey, 17 percent will bolt after a single service faux pas. Another 40 percent will jump ship after two instances of poor service, and 28 percent more are out the door after three. So for 85 percent of our customers, it's three strikes and we're out.

Fair enough. But what do buyers really want from us? What keeps clients satisfied

1. Knowledgeable and available staff

While a customer is making the buying decision, they want knowledgeable assistance, available when they want it. Customers place a high value on accurate information and want to be served by employees who know the service inside and out.

2. Friendly people:

Customers not only want service/product-savvy people, they want them to be friendly and courteous. We should value each customer more than any individual sale.

3. Good value:

This is where price factors in. But customers surveyed see price as only one component of the bigger picture of "value" that includes the service, information and follow-up they also receive.

4. Convenience:

The service rule here is simple: make it easy! Customers want services that are well organised, attractively presented and easy to understand. That's how today's customers define convenience, and the easier we can make the relationship between our clients and us, the more business we will generate!



5. A fast finish:

This final item is where too many businesses fall flat, right at the finish line. While customers are in the process of deciding to buy or not, they are proceeding on our time. They want thoughtful help making the right decisions. But once the decision is made to proceed with our services, we need to deliver on time because now we are working on their time, and they want to complete the business and be functional again as quickly as possible.

In the end, it may be our service - not our price - that dictates whether or not we secure clients for the long term. If we give people what they want, the way they want it and follow through with a fast finish when it comes time to pay up, we are much more likely to turn them into satisfied clients.