

Stop Losing Millions Due to Bad Customer Service – 5 Ways to Retain Customers and Drive Growth

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One of the most unfortunate reasons customers may be leaving your business (“churn”) is that you’ve developed lapses in your customer service and customer experience that are alienating your customers and driving them away.

These customer service lapses often get worse during a period of rapid company growth. It’s fairly easy to deliver fantastic service when you only have a few clients. But when a company’s clientele starts to grow, the attention and attentiveness given to each customer tend to wane.

Workers no longer personally sign their thank-you cards. Instead of interacting directly with VIP or long-term customers, managers have become confined to their offices, burdened by an increasing amount of paperwork. Phone calls are answered more slowly and inconsistently, leading to longer-than-expected customer response times. When responses do arrive, they are often abrupt and impersonal. Additionally, recruiting standards have been lowered, and the notes in the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system have lost some of their original detail and complexity. Managers are frequently unavailable to resolve customer conflicts because they are simply too busy.

Is this lowering standards of the unavoidable? Definitely not

– as long as you refocus your attention and resolutely maintain your commitment to offering outstanding customer service. The guiding principle is this: If you would have done something for your very first client, you must find a way to continue doing it for your ten-thousandth, without hurrying, without taking shortcuts and without doing anything that would make a customer believe that your company doesn't appreciate them.

Generally speaking, a growing company is more like a commodity provider than it thinks. You need to prioritize offering outstanding customer service in every customer interaction if you want to keep your business out of that commodity dustbin, where you'll be seen as completely interchangeable with other suppliers.

Here are five crucial actions to help you get back on track.

1. Look for any violations of customer service standards

How fast do you answer your phones? Your standard should be three rings. Why? According to studies conducted by the Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company, by that fourth ring, guests will have become concerned that you won't answer at all or that you won't be attentive if you do.

How fast do you respond to emails? In today's society, a "within 24 hours" requirement is unacceptable; that's equivalent to 36 years of internet time. Instead, make a commitment to respond to every question on the same morning or afternoon. Do you receive queries on your website? You might be amazed to discover that these often go completely unanswered. These should receive the same attention as emails.

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2. Create a company lexicon

This lexicon (phrasebook) should be full of preferred customer service language that employees should use, as well as phrases they should avoid. Some phrases that are immediate turn-offs for your customers may include, “No problem,” “I beg to differ,” “I’m not going to argue with you,” “Did you plug it in?” and “Calm down.” Employees should always use courteous phrases like “You’re welcome” and “My pleasure.”

3. Develop your situational empathy skills

Improving and sustaining a high level of customer service requires training in situational empathy. Also known as “customer service-specific empathy,” this enables an employee to relate to consumers again and again via phone calls and emails.

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4. Customize your service training to fit your business’s specific market

For instance, if your clientele is high-net-worth individuals, some transformative concepts and practices are special to them. Similarly, patient experience training can be a lifesaver in the medical field.

Understanding the unique needs and expectations of these clients can greatly enhance service delivery and foster long-lasting relationships.

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5. Meet them at their current location

When your customer base is expanding quickly, you want to make every effort to offer convenient communication, allowing customers to select the channel and switch it whenever they want. They should be able to easily and conveniently text you in the morning, tweet at you at night, and call you when necessary.

If you communicate with clients through various platforms, consumers shouldn't have to repeat information they've already given on another channel. In fact, they detest doing so. Choosing the correct CRM (customer relationship management system) can help you avoid the dreaded "Could you repeat your credit card number for me?" charade. Some CRM solutions are made to be "conversational," meaning they will continue a conversation as your customer moves from X to Y.

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