

# How to Deliver Top Notch Customer Service

by Carol Dunitz, Ph.D.

Successful people and successful businesses find ways to meaningfully differentiate themselves from the competition. One of the best ways to differentiate yourself is through the perception of exceptional service. Great service attracts customers. It translates into repeat business and customer referrals. Astute business people recognize that selling customer service is an opportunity to move ahead of the competition.

How do customers decide where to eat, where to shop, or where to go to exercise? Are they more likely to listen to what a company advertises about its customer service or what their friends have to say? More often than not, they listen to their friends. Savvy customers shop for service as much as price and spread the word when they get good service. A happy customer may compliment those who provide good service but is also entitled to express displeasure when appropriate.

**Make A Great Impression.** Customers and clients appreciate genuine care and concern. Seeing salespeople or administrative staff hustle to help or immediately look for answers to pressing concerns makes a strong statement to a customer. Recognizing that an employee is empowered to deal with a problem speaks volumes about the company and its progressive policies.

**Establish Customer/Client-Friendly Strategies.** Make it easy for people to do business with you by being welcoming and attentive, *always*. Here are some tips that will serve you well:

- Have friendly receptionists or greeters on the front line.
- Avoid computerized voice run around on phone.
- Be well-staffed.
- Train personnel.
- Empower salespeople to think and act creatively.
- Provide fast response.
- No high pressure.
- Don't nickel and dime customers.
- Offer what customers need.
- Ensure availability of advertised specials.
- Deliver on promises.
- Meet deadlines.
- Ensure polite & sensitive collection practices.
- Have measurable service standards.

**Actively Respond to Problems.** When issues arise, someone needs to be on the front line to listen attentively and deal with the problem. Don't make excuses. Apologize and act quickly. Go the extra mile to offset negative feeling. Make sure a resolution is reached that satisfies the

customer or client. How a problem is dealt with not only goes a long way to retaining a customer, it can actually strengthen their relationship with the business. Great word of mouth will, no doubt, bring in more business when that person tells friends and associates about your company's outstanding service.

**Improve Service *Constantly*.** A company with outstanding service develops policies that meet customer needs *first*. Its commitment to unrivaled service strategies and quality customer service place it head and shoulders above the competition. You can develop stellar customer service by finding out what your customers want and giving it to them. Be proactive. Stay in touch with them. And if they call you, be sure to return their calls promptly.

Customers need to know how salespeople can help them and appreciate working with those who are empowered to deliver customer satisfaction. Delivering top notch customer satisfaction is more than a manual with policies and procedures. It is more than a good attitude and a desire to help -- although that does go a long way. It is having a dynamic system in place for constantly reevaluating and implementing positive change.

*Carol Dunitz, Ph.D. is president of The Last Word LLC, a communication and creative services company. She is a professional speaker and author of 'Louder Than Thunder,' a parable about listening and interpersonal communication. Dunitz is the playwright, lyricist and composer of 'Bernhardt on Broadway,' a musical about Sarah Bernhardt. She can be reached at 312.523.4774, [cdunitz@lastword.com](mailto:cdunitz@lastword.com) or [www.DrCarolDunitz.com](http://www.DrCarolDunitz.com).*