

Appendix 2

Sample Customer Service Strategy - Call Centre Helper

Here are the top 10 things that we can do to give our organisations a great reputation for service excellence. Over the next months we will then look at each one in detail to support the actions you are taking in your organisation to excel in this vital area.

Checklist

1. Recruit and train the right people

People with the right attitude are essential to building a successful customer service approach – “hire for attitude, train for skills” should be the maxim. Once in place, a planned training programme in both job skills and people skills must be maintained. This is not an area for cost cutting if the market gets tough. Consider formal customer service qualifications for all staff.

2. Happy Staff = Happy Customers

Staff retention is crucial to your organisation improving customer service excellence. Research shows clearly that staff stay when they are happy and respect the organisation for which they work. Efforts should therefore be directed at recognition and development programmes to determine potential, and a well-thought-out career plan structure.

3. Recognise the importance of customer loyalty

It is essential to keep the good customers you already have, and gain their loyalty. Loyal customers are active advocates of your organisation, and they also tend to be more profitable, more interested in helping you improve your products and services, and more forgiving of your occasional mistakes.

4. Lead from the top

Getting customer service right in an organisation, and continually improving it, is a long-term commitment that must be made by those at the top. They need to recognise its importance, believe in the strategy, be active in leading by example, and take actions that support those charged with carrying it out.

5. Listen to what your customers and staff are saying to you

It's probably not what you think. Regularly listen to and analyse customer phone calls. Have feedback focus groups and suggestion schemes. Consider speech analytics. Use your own systems to test what customers are facing.

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6. Welcome complaints

Complaints are free market research and should be welcomed. 1) Ensure that you are hearing about all of them. 2) Resolve brilliantly the ones you get. 3) Stop them being repeated. 4) Learn lessons and pass these on to others. This might even lead to a short-term increase in complaints, but this is artificial – you always had them but didn't know about it.

7. Look at your processes from a customer and staff point of view

Many organisations take an internal point of view on processes, trying to "improve" them without considering the customer or staff that actually have to use them. Is the step in the process really benefiting everyone, or does it just make life easier for one area at the expense of others?

8. Utilise tools with caution – contact centres, CRM, and other tools

If any of these things are being done/introduced primarily to reduce costs then it is doubtful whether real improvements in service levels will be gained, especially in the long term. If they are to be considered as an integral part of a strategy which is about improving customer service, one or more of them could be very useful. There are no quick fixes in improving customer service, but there can be some quick wins.

9. Measure your performance – including NetPromoter/Customer Effort

Make sure that you measure the right things, not the easiest things – will it get looked at? will it lead to actions being taken? is it really relevant? The true question is – are you doing it to give yourself a warm feeling inside, or to see where you have to make changes?

Benchmarking can be a key part of your measurement programme. Learning from other sectors can often be much more beneficial than same-sector comparisons.

10. Build a reputation, communicate, and tell the world

The full involvement and commitment of both staff and customers in a customer service excellence programme can depend greatly on your skills at communicating with them. This requires a coordinated strategy of communications utilising all available tools. A reputation for great service can be easily lost. Being great at customer service is something to tell the world about, as long as you really are great.

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Advantages

Good customer service

- Is seen by many as the most important differentiator between you and your competition
- Builds a strong reputation for your organisation in the market place
- Is why people will want to work for you, and stay
- Will lead to customer loyalty and customer advocacy

Dos and don'ts in customer service

Do:

- Have a long-term strategic plan
- Be committed at the top
- Involve and trust your people
- Be customer-centric
- Listen to your staff and customers
- Measure the right things

Don't:

- Ignore your existing customer base
- Stop training in the tough times
- Pretend you're good if you're not yet
- Only listen to the good news
- Invest in technology too early
- Quit when it gets tough

Sourced from <http://www.callcentrehelper.com/the-top-10-customer-service-strategies-27041.htm>