

## EFFECTIVE CUSTOMER COMMUNICATION

great customer service is about communicating effectively with customers

- 1 Start with the basics: a friendly approach. It costs nothing to smile and appear welcoming. Don't ever be afraid to show your customers that you appreciate their custom. Greet them, seek to find what you can do for them and bid them farewell.
- 2 Ensure your 'phones (mobile and landline) have recorded voicemails which are cheery and succinct. This reassures the caller they have the correct number at the same time as offering a personal touch, even on the answer machine.
- 3 We adopt the most common emotion surrounding us, so create a positive environment in which you, your staff and your customers interact in, showing the customer that you care and want to deliver great service. Improve your working conditions, maybe by painting staff areas, changing the layout of the office, adding vibrant pictures, plants and starting a drinks rota so everyone makes each other tea and coffee. Perhaps use some of your budget to buy everyone doughnuts once a week.
- 4 Align your staff to your visions of service excellence. You cannot expect anyone to do as you do and see what you see, if they are not in the same frame of mind and clearly understand what you are setting out to achieve. A weekly staff meeting is essential to bring everyone together to enthuse them – tell them about the great things you've seen and involve them in improving the way you interact and communicate with customers. Share examples and ideas and brainstorm ways in which you can apply them.
- 5 Always listen to your customers, your colleagues and your feedback. It matters not what you think works or how you think is the best way to handle something; the one thing that really matters is the customer's opinion.
- 6 Run a competition with an attractive prize such as 50% off or a case of champagne for the customer that offers the best suggestion for how you can improve your service. Display posters and get local press to help publicise the competition. It'll also double up really nicely as a great bit of publicity that says: "we are committed to providing excellent customer service".
- 7 Re-educate your staff that complaints are not "complaints", they are essential feedback from customers. Changing mindset about how complaints are received is the first key to handling them effectively. They are often emotionally charged, however, that is simply human behaviour: as children we often shout and scream until we get what we want... unfortunately some of that overflows into adulthood.

Look at them as highlighted flaws, essential to correct in order to achieve excellence.

- 8 Keep your promises even if it means losing out. Breaking promises is not only poor service but it's poor business, too. If you've made a promise and fulfilling it will mean losing money, re-arranging your agenda or simply just annoying you – keep it. Your customers will thank you for fulfilling your promise and that goes a long way to building great relationships and communicating you mean business.
- 9 Treat and show every customer, whoever they are, whatever their interaction, whatever the sale amount and however they contact you with respect, dignity, sincerity, honesty and generosity. How would you treat a very good friendly neighbour?...
- 10 Take a moment to put yourself in the customer's shoes or try to relate to their situation. Use memories of your own experiences as a customer to sympathise.

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