



Sample Newsletter

Customer service in difficult conditions

Meeting and exceeding customers' expectations

If a business does not meet and exceed its customers' expectations it will lose them. Without customers, there will be no business.

Customer service is an integral part of any business and key to ultimate success – and during a recession, when trading is difficult, it is even more crucial.

There are core steps your business can take to manage its customer service strategy and ensure ongoing success.

Listen and understand your customers

To meet customers' needs, a business needs to know exactly what they want. This is achieved by taking the time to listen and being open to feedback.

As customer service encompasses all staff – from management to cleaners, web developers to sales assistants – it is vital staff engage with customers at every opportunity.

Ask for feedback on your website, ask if there is anything else you can help with during a phone call, or enquire after their day as they make an in-store purchase. By letting customers know you are eager for their views and responsive to them, they will be more likely to provide feedback and you will be more able to service their needs.

Under promise and over deliver

Be careful that a natural eagerness to please does not lead to customers being offered the moon on a stick. As much as a business may want to deliver within one day over a bank holiday weekend when there is a postal strike, it is unrealistic.

Never promise your customers something you are not 100% certain you can deliver.

It is far better to promise a longer delivery time or a higher quote – that way, when you deliver before the date or the estimate is lower, you have one very happy customer!

Your business operates as normal, but by managing your customers' expectations, you are perceived as delivering above and beyond the norm.

Go the extra step for your customer

Never fall into the trap of thinking “I’ve made the sale, my work here is done.” Sales are just one step in a customer relationship. The challenge then is to retain the customer’s trust and loyalty, which results in repeat business and priceless recommendations to friends and family.

Most customers buy based on emotions rather than logic. I’m sure you’ve heard the saying “people buy people”? Well, it’s true. People buy trust and solutions to problems; they want a hassle-free experience that delivers. Ensure your business stands out from the crowd by providing exceptional customer experiences.

Identify and anticipate needs – don’t wait for customers to inform you. Ask yourself, what three things are most important to your customers? Being valued is bound to be one, and surprise gestures such as a birthday email – with no sales message included – show you care.

Deal with complaints ASAP

Sometimes, even with the best will in the world, mistakes happen.

When complaints are made, it is best not to quibble – the customer may not always be right but they should always be made to feel they are right.

The customer is unhappy and that should be your only concern. React quickly and apologise – even if the fault does not lie with you. Customers want solutions and to hear you are dealing with their problem.

Investigate all complaints and keep the customer informed at every step of the way. A complaint does not mean you will lose the customer – but a slow response or no response means you will definitely do so.

Embrace complaints and view them as the opportunities for improvement that they are. And your customers will thank you for it in the long run also.

Develop and train your staff, they produce your results

The adage that a happy workforce is a productive workforce holds true. Staff who are trained and given opportunities to progress feel empowered, more competent and more comfortable interacting with customers.

Believing in what you sell is half the battle, so if your staff have bought into your business, communicating with your customers will be fruitful and rewarding for both parties.

How do your staff feel? Concerns, fears, uncertainty, job security

Customers buy from your business because they like your staff, not your products! Employees are your internal customers and it is vital they feel appreciated.

You can gauge staff views through questionnaires and meetings. One of the most effective means, though, is communication. Talk to your staff on a regular basis and be open and honest about company changes. Rumours of redundancy, for example, are far more damaging to staff morale than straightforward facts about any planned cut-backs.

Treat your staff how you treat your customers – after all, your staff and your customers are your business. Facilitate effective communication between the two and your business will thrive, even in difficult times.