

10 TIPS ON: CUSTOMER SERVICE

Customers have higher expectations than ever. The internet has given them so much more choice than they previously had, so they expect you to go above and beyond to keep their custom.

This should be music to your ears, because far more important than attracting new customers is keeping the ones you already have and good customer service will help you achieve this.

Marketing departments spend so much time and money on recruiting new customers. Couldn't some of those resources be better spent on keeping the people who are already buying your products/services?

1. **Listen** – The most important thing that you can do is listen to your customers. Make every effort to ensure that your customers can voice their opinions and concerns with you. If customers have a problem and no one is listening to them, then that problem is getting worse. The information you get from your customers should always be feedback into the system so that improvements can be made to make customers more satisfied.
2. **Smile and the whole world smiles with you** – When you meet with a customer, a friendly greeting and a smile is the least you can offer. The same should apply when speaking on the phone. You'd be surprised how much more upbeat and positive you will sound if you're smiling.
3. **You need thick skin** – Everyone knows the adage that 'the customer's always right' and successful companies tend to be those that stick to it. The ability to accept negative feedback and address the issues of unthankful customers is vital. Keeping the customer happy is the mission so don't argue with them or suggest they are to blame for problems, simply smile and do everything you can to help them.
4. **A promise is a promise** – If you tell a customer that you are going to do something, then do it. Hollow promises make the company untrustworthy and damages the relationship with the customer. If you can't call the customer back in 10 minutes, don't tell them that you will. Instead, find a time when you can call back and make sure that you do it.
5. **If you don't know, find out!** – You are an expert resource to your

customers. So when they ask a question that you can't answer, making something up or taking your best guess will probably be good enough to resolve the issue. This is bad customer service – you're lying to your customers. Equally bad customer service is the simple 'I don't know', honest but not helpful. Good customer service is 'I don't know but I'll find out for you.' Arrange a time to contact the customer, then get back to them with the answer. They appreciate your honesty and the fact that you went the extra mile to find out.

6. **I like that, too** – Build rapport with your customers. Find some common ground and use it as a point of conversation. You'll find that by humanising your relationship, you'll find that problems are easier to overcome. You're pulling down the barriers that the customer sees between themselves and your company, and drawing them closer.
7. **Be positive** – Always make an effort to use positive language. This is especially true when delivering information that is probably not what the customer wants to hear. If a customer wants to know if your new product is available, instead of "No, not until next month, details will be on the website", try "It will be ready for you to order next month. I can call you back as soon as we have confirmation it's available". The difference is small but the message is great.
8. **Customer service starts at home** – You should treat your employees the way that you want your customers to be treated. Excellent customer service comes from excellent employees. The culture within the company will spill out to the customers so make sure that it is positive.
9. **Everything in one call** – Being transferred back and forth between people and departments will make your customer feel like their problem is being passed around like pass-the-parcel, when the music stops someone has to deal with it. The truth is that you are looking for the right person to deal with the problem. Is it possible to set up a one-call resolution system where calls don't need to be transferred?
10. **Bite the bullet** – Mistakes happen and when they do take responsibility for them and apologise. It's that simple. When orders don't arrive on time, don't blame it on the deliver company. You promised to deliver the product on time and you hired the deliver company. Take ownership of the problem, change your deliver company and make sure it doesn't happen again.