

## CUSTOMER SERVICE

### Strategies For Keeping Customers For Life

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What do our clients and customers really want? Customer Service experts tell us that they want products and services that denote value and quality, and they want to be treated in a manner that fosters peace-of-mind. Our customers' rate the service we provide base on *their own perceptions and expectations*. According to noted management guru, Tom Peters: "Customers perceive service in their own unique, idiosyncratic, emotional, irrational, end-of-the-day, and totally human terms. Perception is all there is!"

According to Kristen Anderson and Ron Zemke in their award-winning book *Delivering Knock Your Socks Off Service*, meeting expectations is critical. If you meet customers' expectations, they are satisfied. If you exceed their expectations, they love you. If you set expectations you can't keep, they'll rarely forgive and they'll never forget.

Here are five key business practices which will help to ensure that we consistently please our customers and clients:

- **Be Reliable.** It is vitally important to keep the promises we make to our customers. Even the information we provide through our literature constitutes promises. If we discover we can't keep a promise we've already made, we need to let our customers know right away.
- **Be Responsive.** Customers want to feel confident that we will deliver when promised. When we tell them something will be done by a certain time, they expect and trust that we will deliver on-time.
- **Have Knowledge and Know-How.** Customers expect us to be competent. When we don't know how to deliver what we promised, it destroys their confidence in us and in our businesses.
- **Be Empathetic.** Customers want us to be aware of their own unique needs and to treat them as individuals. When we treat them with empathy, they are most likely to treat us the same.
- **Have a Good Attitude.** Not only is our attitude reflected in our tone of voice but also in nonverbal ways—our facial expression, our actions, even the way we stand or sit. Our good (or bad) attitude greatly influences our customers' perception of the service we provide. It is often the deciding factor in whether or not they want to do business with us.

In our organizations, everyone is responsible for delivering good service. Within your organization, be sure that everyone who works for you knows that when working with *your* customers, **THEY** are the Company – **THEY** represent the organization. Tell them also that when it comes to providing good customer service, everyone wins. There are many personal rewards. Good customer service makes each day easier, more interesting, less boring, and a whole lot more rewarding. In essence, it is the foundation for keeping our businesses alive.



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