



Customer Service: your most important sales tool?

You can have the greatest sales people on the planet, but if you're leaking customers through poor customer service, your balance sheet will suffer.

And the cost of acquiring new customers usually far outweighs that of keeping existing customers. Surely it's much more preferable to keep more of those customers you have? For me, every company should realise that their ultimate sustainability depends on their ability to generate consistent excellent service that keeps customers coming back and singing their praises.

Yet 77% of customers say that if they experience poor service, they would avoid using that company again where there is another option available.



But, is it me...or are customer service standards still sadly lacking?

How good is your customer service? Are you aware some people could have stopped buying from you because they became unhappy with some aspect of your product or service – and don't feel as though anyone has taken responsibility for fixing the problem? And didn't tell you?

Don't rely on technology. There's so much technology around nowadays that many customer transactions could be done automatically. I say COULD because, even though we have the power to automate so much nowadays, I would think very carefully

about whether automation could help, or actually hinder, your customer service. For me the key aspect is accessibility. The customer should be able to speak to a real person, easily, if they want to.

What could you do ?

Remember many products and prices are the same these days, so the differentiators are going to be the buying experience and customer service throughout. How's yours?

My take on what you could do?

- **Firstly, your team.** Make sure you're practising the very best internal customer service with your own team – are you treating your team how you'd like them to treat your customers? There's plenty of research that, summing up in one sentence, confirms that if you take care of your employees, they will take care of the customers – and this in turn will take care of your profits. **Read more here**
- **Where do you want to be?** Take time out to think... What, in a perfect world do you want your customers to be saying about you, your team, your brand, your company? Come up with some potential statements you'd want them to come up with if you asked them.
- **What needs to happen?** Looking closely at the statements you came up with, think about what sort of changes you'd need to make to ensure these statements come true. If you can't get there in one go, prioritise.
- **Where are we now?** Assess. Where are your team now compared with where you've just established they need to be? Have they the skills to fill the gap? Have they the mindset? Are they capable of taking on board the changes you require?
- **How can you get there?** What do you need to do first? What do you need to do next?
- **Measure and manage.** Work out a way to measure your customer service. This could be simple, or sophisticated, but

do something. You'll need to be able to compare customer service scores this month v last month v last year etc

As usual, not enough space here to elaborate but one thing is clear...if you sell and you're not already pulling out the stops to guarantee high levels of customer service, I'd start now.

Protect those hard earned sales!

Until next time

Leigh

[PS: 7 things not to do in 2014...](#)

results@sales-consultancy.com

020 7903 5426

www.sales-consultancy.com

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