

TWELVE STEPS TO IMPROVE YOUR CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

BY BILL HOGG

Employee engagement and exceptional customer service play a critical role as a competitive advantage in the business landscape. Great customer service built on a foundation of high employee engagement isn't a revolutionary concept. More companies are recognizing just how important a deliberate and intentional customer-focused culture is, but few companies do it well. Here are 12 simple steps to ensure your organization is maximizing this important competitive advantage.

1. **Lead By Example:** Leaders set the tone and direction. Make customer service a key priority. Make sure your own behaviours are ones you want modeled by your team.
2. **Involve Your Customers:** No one knows what your customers want better than your customers. If you ask them with genuine interest, they will tell you.
3. **Engage Your Team:** Your team understands your customers and how to deliver the service they want. Include them in gathering customer information, setting standards and designing processes.
4. **Set Expectations:** Publish your service standards so your team and customers are clear on expectations. You can never exceed expectations if you don't set them.
5. **Solicit Feedback:** Be a good listener. Make it easy for customers and your team to provide ongoing feedback about how to improve the service experience -- both good and bad. Follow up and ask open-ended questions.
6. **Be Customer-Focused:** Put your customer needs ahead of your own. Design your processes and policies with your customer in mind.
7. **Provide Tools:** Develop tools and processes that help your team understand the customer and equip them to deliver a consistent customer experience.
8. **Empower Your Team:** No one turns an unhappy customer into a fan faster or better than a team member empowered to instantly fix the situation. Provide training and guidelines -- then trust them to make the right decision.
9. **Measure What You Want Done:** Create a balanced performance scorecard that measures financial, productivity and customer experience. What gets measured gets done.
10. **Recognize Performance:** Establish a program to nurture and recognize outstanding performance. Make sure both customers and team members are encouraged to participate. Continuous improvement needs reinforcement. An ongoing recognition program keeps customer service in focus.

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11. **Say Thank You:** Thank your team for their hard work. Thank your customers for their business, their feedback and their complaints. Remember, without them you have no business.
12. **Have Fun:** Remember -- you chose to be in a customer service business. Choose your attitude and enjoy the opportunity to make a positive impact on someone's day. Your attitude will rub off on your team and your customers.

Bill's passion is improving business results by working with leadership teams to change employee behaviours. He does this by equipping leaders with the principles, processes and tools to cultivate and influence an engaged customer-focused culture that recognizes improved performance and productivity. For additional information please visit online at www.billhogg.ca or email bill@billhogg.ca

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