

5 STEPS TO CUSTOMER SERVICE GLORY

BY BILL HOGG

The following content is inspired by my keynote LEADER OF THE PACK: What You Need to Win the Race.

We all know that providing exceptional customer service is the stated goal of every business leader, regardless of how large or small the company.

It's common knowledge that customers are more loyal to companies who treat them as more than just a number.

Sadly, the personal touch customers want -- and deserve -- is often lost in the daily grind of doing business... especially in larger companies. Too often the leaders do not model the very behaviours they expect from their teams.

Here are five simple ways to keep your customers coming back, even after facing their problems or complaints.

Be Genuine: Personalize the Conversation

When a customer calls with a complaint or a concern, make the time to treat them like an individual. And ensure your employees do, too. While calling a customer ma'am or sir is respectful, it doesn't offer a personal touch. Replying, "Yes sir, I understand," is polite. And polite is good! But adding the customer's name, as in "Yes Mr. Jones, I understand," is so much better!

Using a customer's name whenever possible helps her see you are truly engaged in serving her, regardless of the problems she's brought to your attention. And it helps her realize she's more important to your company than her cheque book.

Be Accountable: Don't Pass the Buck

One of the most aggravating things a customer faces where customer care is concerned is being passed around like an old hat that no one wants. Impeccable service ensures that every company employee, regardless of rank, handles customers to the fullest extent of their abilities.

Never refer a customer to someone else simply because you don't know how to handle his problem. Instead, take the time to help him fix the problem, if possible. Or at the least, if you must refer a customer, find someone who can resolve their issue and provide a warm hand-off.

Ensuring your customer achieves a desirable outcome will ensure you create a customer for life.

Be Empathetic: Listen, Acknowledge, Validate & Apologize

Listen to your customers. Sometimes people really do just need to vent, and rarely should a complaint be taken personally. Learn to acknowledge the customer's issue, and train employees to do the same. It helps your customer to know that someone understands their concerns. Let them know you understand the way they are feeling and apologize even if you don't feel you need to.

A sincere apology works wonders in creating happy, loyal customers, and confirms your willingness to take responsibility for the customer's problem.

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Be Innovative: Provide Solutions

Once you understand the customer's problem, offer a solution. Refrain from telling the customer what you *can't* do. Instead, focus on what you *can* do to remedy her situation, and offer some options. Working to solve your customer's problem -- even if not to the extent she may have hoped -- will help her feel as if you care about her and her business.

A solution focused attitude will keep customers coming back even after they've faced a problem with your company.

Be Trustworthy: Never Make Impossible Promises

Often, in an effort to appease a customer, an employee or company leader will make promises that are not only impractical, but which he or she is simply not able to honour. Instead, offer a realistic, workable solution that will allow you to rebuild your customer relationship and provide some satisfaction. It's not necessary to "give away the store." Just meet the situation realistically and your customer will appreciate the effort.

While these tips will help you provide quality care to your customers, there will be times when nothing anyone else does will be enough to keep a customer. Knowing you've offered impeccable service, however, will help you sleep better at night realizing there was nothing more you could have done to meet the customer's needs.

Performance Excelerator | Leadership Expert | Professional Speaker

*Bill is recognized as the **Performance Excelerator**TM because of his uncanny ability to create profound change and deliver extraordinary results with the most demanding organizations. He works with senior leaders to inspire and develop high-performance teams that deliver exceptional customer service, higher productivity and improve profits.*

Bill is passionate about results and works only with clients who share that passion -- ready to take steps to achieve immediate, significant and continuous improvement. Whether working with boards or operations teams and employees, his no-excuse approach breaks down the silos and gains consensus and clarity throughout the organization.

Bill Hogg provides dynamic keynote presentations, transformative workshops, and world class executive consulting.

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