



Great Customer Service Doesn't Happen by Accident



Here are 5 Steps You Should Take Right Now

In today's marketplace, delivering an exceptional customer experience is more important than ever. Customers' expectations have only increased across all facets of their lives. To succeed, great customer service is imperative.

For financial organizations, educational institutions, and other Accounts Receivable Management firms, this can be more complicated than it sounds. That's because compliance in these heavily regulated industries can often get in the way of the customer experience, specifically as it relates to laws, regulations and security.

For example, data security can make it difficult to adopt new customer-friendly technologies. Privacy concerns can restrict options for communicating with customers. State and Federal regulatory environments are both strict and ever-changing, leaving many organizations in a position where they are choosing between delivering an optimal experience or remaining compliant.

There are measures organizations can take to dramatically improve the customer experience without compromising compliance and security.

We've outlined the 5 steps you can take today to elevate your customer service efforts and drive your business to new levels of success.



1 Use technology to drive ease & accessibility

Today's customers demand speed, responsiveness, and accessibility. To deliver great customer service, utilizing technology and streamlined communication is a must.

People-to-people connections over the phone are the backbone of the customer service experience. For customers who prefer a dedicated representative, offer direct lines or an automated attendant. For those who want quick access, a team approach may be the more appropriate solution. Of course, many prefer a blended option that provides the best of both worlds – dedicated representatives backed by an ever-available team.

Phones alone are no longer an adequate method for delivering a total customer service experience. Many customers prefer 24/7 self-service options that allow them to manage the experience on their own terms. In the financial services industry, dedicated secure web portals have become the vehicle of choice for customers to oversee their accounts, make changes and conduct transactions, upload and share documents, and download real-time reports and other helpful resources.

At the end of the day, the key is to work with your customers the way they want to work. Technology is a great opportunity to deliver greater choice and more responsiveness in the service experience you offer.



2 Back it up with people, trained & empowered to solve problems

Your employees truly are the difference between good and great customer service. It starts with the right hires who are able to hold themselves personally accountable to solve problems.

Employees are the face of your organization, and it is their responsibility to bring your mission, vision and values to life with every customer interaction. Once you have the right team in place, the next step is to formalize your training efforts. Put together an onboarding program that covers all three components of great customer service:

Product & Service Knowledge

Address your company's products and services so representatives have the knowledge they need to answer questions quickly and confidently.

Tools & Technology

Ensure representatives are comfortable with the tools and technologies they are using to resolve issues and satisfy customer requests.

Customer Awareness

Teach them about the customers and accounts they will be servicing, so they understand and can fully accommodate what can often be a wide variety of requirements.

Achieving 100% customer satisfaction is a lofty goal, but it should be the vision that motivates your team.

3 Measure your results & hold yourself accountable to improve

Identifying and monitoring the metrics that matter most will help you ensure top notch service, and course correct when gaps appear.

A variety of measurement techniques are available:

Call Monitoring

Quality service calls with customers can help you assess performance at a qualitative level.

Customer Feedback

Conduct annual Net Promoter Surveys (NPS) and solicit customer report cards. Over time, these can give you a high-level view of important shifts and trends in both performance and expectations.

Compliance Audits

Organizational controls and systemic compliance audits ensure the service experience conforms with customer expectations and your company's internal standards.

All members of the organization should strive for exceptional quality and reliability. Leadership should instill this level of commitment throughout the entire organization.

4 Make your customers a part of the process, & strive for transparency

The core of great customer service is to understand the unique nature of each customer.

New customer relationships should begin with a thorough onboarding process to ensure that the requirements and expectations for a successful business relationship are clearly defined, communicated, and documented.

Throughout the process, you should strive to develop open and transparent lines of communication between the customer and your team. Clarify roles and responsibilities. Outline policies, procedures, and cost expectations. Define upfront problem resolution and escalation processes.

You should strive for this same level of cooperation and transparency throughout the entire customer lifecycle.

Maintain proactive reporting, with monthly dashboards and annual report cards (KPIs). It's important to take the time to check in and confirm expectations are being met, across all levels of the relationship.



5 Find ways to add value beyond a simple business transaction

Delivering on your agreements is at the very heart of customer satisfaction and going above and beyond is the surest path to customer loyalty. There are many ways to bring added value:

Online Resource Center

As an expert partner, you can make available a wide range of resources to help your customers enhance their efforts. Available assets can include: State & Federal Regulations, webinars & educational resources, events & conferences, and professional associations.

Complimentary Training

Offer live or on-demand training for customers and their staff. Bring together industry experts to share best practices and professional development.

Sharing Industry Updates

Keep customers up-to-date on the latest rule changes and industry trends, including Federal and state regulatory updates. Offer flash announcements and newsletter email blasts to broadcast important developments, keep customers informed about your company, conferences, regulation changes, professional best practices, and other useful information.



Conclusion

Customer service is not just a department – it's a mindset.
A philosophy that starts at the top and permeates the
entire organization.

Always be aware of what's happening in each and every one of your customer relationships. Work hard to start off on the right foot, and then work even harder to drive ongoing value and satisfaction. Make compliance a top priority and ensure all your efforts continue to address the rules and regulations designed to protect the customer's privacy and security.

Good customers must be earned – with good products, great service, ethical behavior, and open and transparent communication. Your reward will be more than their business. It will be their loyalty and advocacy, providing the valuable peer-to-peer referrals that can help drive your long-lasting business success.

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