

Taking Customer Service To New Levels

By Paul L. Gerhardt, “*The Organizational Doctor*”™

The internet has changed the way we do business. Online retailers have increased product selection and availability. Consequently this helps bring prices down due to increased competition. Therefore, pricing can no-longer be the single most-important way to compete. Customer service is becoming the principal way that organizations distinguish themselves from their competition. Every person is a customer, including subordinate employees. No person is too important to deliver truly exceptional customer service. Customer service is not difficult. However, there is somewhat of a science behind it. These following rules of enhanced customer service demystify the science behind exceptional customer service experiences:

Customer Service Rule No. 1: Treat customers as you would like to be treated as a customer. Yes! Trite, but true! Customer service experts know that people are generally not stupid and expect to be treated well. Customers expect to be always told the truth and be treated with the values of the ***Golden Rule***. Make it your goal to be exceptional in EVERY personal encounter! GIVE EVERY CUSTOMER YOUR VERY-VERY BEST.

Customer Service Rule No. 2: Customers deserve to be helped quickly (now) and efficiently. The only reason that one should never drop what they are doing to help a customer is: That you are already giving full-attention to another customer. If this is the case, acknowledge the customer and let him or her know that you will be right there to help when you are finished helping your current customer or you will get someone else to assist him/her.

Customer Service Rule No. 3: Attitude is everything! ALWAYS SMILE (give good eye-to-eye contact), DRESS PROFESSIONALLY, BE ENTHUSIASTIC, and COURTEOUS when working with customers and other co-workers. This helps maintain a positive and friendly environment where people want to work in and do business with. Smile when you are on the phone—people can tell. A professional attitude is the key to success in every kind of organization. Remember that non-verbal communication is more powerful than words. Therefore, make sure that your body is showing that you have a genuine positive and helpful attitude.

Customer Service Rule No. 4: Listen to the customer. The most-effective aspect of communication is listening. Ask questions that help clarify what the customer needs. Show the customer you are listening by repeating what you believe you heard, but in different words. Pay close attention to your facial expressions. Show empathy and choose words that are professional sounding. If you do not know the answer to a question, **do NOT make something up**. Find someone who knows the answer or offer to do some research and get back with him or her as soon as possible.

Customer Service Rule No. 5: Customers are NOT always right. Although this may be the case it is imperative to help clarify that you and the customer are on the same page (see rule No. 4). Remember you are representing your company when dealing with customers and are therefore being paid to keep customers satisfied in their experiences with the company. Keep them coming back. Find creative ways to make “*lemonade out of lemons*” with win-win solutions. Do this for even the most-difficult of customer-centered situations. Know that each customer has the power to spend thousands of dollars in their lifetime with your company. Conversely, they can also powerfully-influence thousands of friends, friends-of-friends, and family not to do business with your company because of a negative experience that could have been avoided.

Bottom-line: Make every customer service experience EXCEPTIONAL, CREATIVE, FUN, and POSITIVE. Exceptional customer service is the life-blood of every organization and **it must come from every employee TO every other employee and customer–alike!** ■