

Unit 3 — Customer Service

Reading: Customer Service

In today's 'Better Business' column we take a look at why customer service is so important for your business and what problems you should try to avoid.

It is a well-known fact that it is cheaper for a business to retain an existing customer than it is to attract a new customer, so it makes sense that companies should do everything they can to make sure that their customers are satisfied with their experience of the company.

But what exactly is the 'experience':

It doesn't matter if we are talking about a local corner shop or a multi-national chain. A customer's experience of a company starts with the very first contact. They want to speak with a courteous member of staff who can offer them advice if needed, be patient if the customer is indecisive and generally presents a good first impression of the company. All customers appreciate being made to feel special and this appreciation often results in a sale. Of course the product is a part of the experience but it is not always the most important part.

So you made a sale, is that the end of your customer service?

No, it shouldn't be. All businesses should have a policy in place to deal with and pleasantly resolve any complaints a customer may have in a fast and effective way.

To demonstrate how important customer service is we asked shoppers to tell us of their bad experience with customer service and this is what they said:

' I bought an adapter for my phone but when I got home I realized that it didn't fit. I knew that it was my fault so when I went back to the shop I didn't expect them to give me a refund but they did. They were really friendly and the young man I spoke with was very helpful in recommending another shop which had it. I will definitely go back to him the next time I need something like that' - Mary

' We recently bought an expensive pram for our son. We had it for about three weeks before I read that this model was being recalled because it had a defect with the brakes. Of course, we took it back to the shop and wanted a refund. Well, firstly the girl was very rude, chatting on her phone instead of serving us. Then she said she couldn't give us a refund and we would have to send the pram to the manufacturers to get a refund from them. She treated us very badly and I will make sure that my friends know not to shop there in the future. - Laura

' I recently had a very positive experience with online shopping. I ordered a new laptop from an internet shop and then realized that I had also clicked on an extra

guarantee which I didn't want. I phoned the helpline number and spoke with a very pleasant young man who took care of my problem straightaway. We also spoke about the laptop I ordered and he reassured me that I made the right choice, and he told me about their loyalty program which I didn't know about. I signed up and now earn points every time I buy something.' - Frank

As you can see from these experiences, businesses which exceed expectations are much more likely to see that customer again and that means more sales and a bigger profit.

Discussion Questions

Describe an example of very good or very bad customer service which you have had.

How can companies provide better customer service?

Are loyalty programs a good way of retaining customers? Why / Why not?