

Ten Things Other Customer Service Departments Do Wrong

As businesspeople, we pay attention to the service other companies provide to their customers. Sometimes, we can pick up a trick here or there to make our own businesses run more smoothly. Other times, we shake our heads at what some companies call their "customer service" policies. Here are the top ten mistakes we've seen others make:

1. Poorly trained staff. Customer service is where the rubber meets the road in business these days, and formal training is critical to the success of any business. Don't think your team will just know the right thing to do – be sure you train them well.

2. Arguing with customers. The customer is not always right, but a good service rep will try to find a way to make it so. Winning an argument and losing a customer is no victory. Sometimes, disagreements are the perfect opportunity to set your company apart.

3. Inaccessibility. If you want to see repeat business, you need to be accessible to your customers. If it is difficult to contact the customer service department or speak to a manager, customers may not return. Be sure key people capable of making decisions are always available to solve problems.

4. Standing by the policy. Policies exist to meet the objectives of the business. First and foremost among those objectives is to build a loyal customer base. Standing by a policy when an exception would be better for everyone shows that you care about people as well as paperwork. Bend a little.

5. Broken promises. Don't make promises you can't keep. Better to underpromise and overdeliver than the other way around. Your word is your bond. Take it very seriously.

6. Lousy records. Make sure you're spelling everyone's name right and that you have a good record of what your repeat customers buy the most. Good record keeping lets you deal with each customer as an individual whose business you value.

7. The runaround. Give your customer service people the power to say yes and the ability to make exceptions to policies when conditions warrant it. The only way to solve a problem without losing the customer is to solve it quickly.

8. Over-reliance on technology. Don't ever tell a customer to 'go to our website' to get an answer to a question. Technology is great, but people are better. Take the time to answer the questions and keep a personal relationship personal.

9. Inattention. Customer service reps who do not listen closely to customers invite problems. Train your people in active listening skills, and make them answer the question or solve the problem from the customer's perspective, not just the company's.

10. Ignoring the basics. "Please," "thank you," "we're sorry about the inconvenience," and so on are simple phrases that cost nothing, take little effort, and win big points. Do it every time, even if it feels like overkill.



The AB&I Customer Service Team



Dori Keenan
Oakland
Customer Service Mgr
800-GOT-IRON
dori.keenan@abifoundry.com



Lisa Douzos
Oakland
Customer Service
800-GOT-IRON
lisa.douzos@abifoundry.com



Jannine Longoria
LA Service Center
Customer Service
800-356-IRON
jannine.longoria@abifoundry.com



Geoff Izuno
LA Service Center
Customer Service
800-356-IRON
geoff.izuno@abifoundry.com