



# How to Create a Customer Service Culture Guide

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## **Customer Service Culture**

Excellent customer service is critical to running a great business. Many companies lose sight of the fact that if they do not have customers, they don't really have a business – certainly not one that is sustainable and that will succeed anyway.

Company culture defines how your employees choose to interact with the company's customers. Culture in companies is often describes as "the way we do things around here". You need to alter the culture at your business, so that your customers are of the utmost importance. This includes recognition of when individuals have provided excellent customer service. In most instances when people say that a company has great customer service, it is because the customer service approach has been interwoven with the company culture.

Every person in your team needs to understand why customer service is important to the ongoing success of your business. You need to ensure that customer service is a clear and important part of staff and team targets. You need to drive customer service in a variety of different ways at your company, to the point that it is ingrained to the approach that people take even with one another. Customer service must become integral to everything that your team does. It must be part of their beliefs and values, so that they can use this to guide any decisions that they make.

## **How to develop a customer service culture in your business**

Below are seven recommendations of steps that you need to take in order to create a customer service culture at your company:

### **1. Set goals that are clearly related to customer service**

One simple way to begin moving more towards a customer service culture in your business is to set goals that are clearly related to and driven by customer service.

Setting goals that are customer-service oriented, sends a clear message to your team that you consider customers to be important, and central to what your business wants to achieve. The kind of goals that you select need to focus on encouraging your team to improve the customer experience and to always be working to create value for your customers.

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Your team needs to understand that without customers there is no business. Only by maintaining your current customer base and growing it larger will your company continue to grow and develop and function effectively.

## **2. Collect customer data**

Essential to having a customer service culture is knowing and understanding all about your customers, and passing that information on to your team, so that they can understand customer wants and needs.

Without customer information, you are working in the dark and just guessing what your customers want. If you don't already have customer information, you need to start gathering it. This could be either by taking more details from customers when they buy a product or service from you, or by carrying out customer surveys to learn what your customers want or what would persuade potential customers to buy your product or service.

With better customer information, you can train your staff to better understand your customers and subsequently to be able to provide a better product or service to them. Knowing more about your customers will help your team to be able to also come up with new ideas that create greater value for your customers.

## **3. Educate your team about why customer service is critical**

So many companies fail every year. It is likely that a good deal of these companies took their eye off the customer and certainly that they lost sight of what their customers wanted or needed, causing them to go under.

As above, it really is as simple as this: without customers you do not have a business. This message needs to be clearly understood by your team.

This information can also be communicated to your team through figures. If, for example, you are able to show the impact upon revenues of maintaining current customers against the cost of acquiring new customers, you will have effectively illustrated to your team why it is so important to keep hold of your current customers. It isn't as easy as just finding new customers

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to replace the disgruntled ones with. Attracting new customers costs the business money. Showing your staff the importance of keeping your customers happy should go a long way to creating a good customer service culture in your company.

You might also want to explain the damage that an unhappy customer can do to your company. Unsatisfied customers do have a tendency to go around telling other customers or potential customers just how bad the service that they received was. This can be extremely damaging for your company. Finding examples of where this has happened, ideally with your own company so that your staff can clearly relate to it, or if not, with other similar companies will help to show your team why a customer service culture is the only approach that your company can afford to take if it is to succeed.

#### **4. Coach your staff to offer a solution to customers**

Customers don't want to hear "we can't" or "I can't". They always want to hear about what is possible rather than what isn't. This is a fundamental component of an effective customer service culture.

If something is not possible, the goal should still always be to find an outcome that is acceptable to your customer. It is better to say to the customer, "I will see what we *can* do" rather than, "we can't do that," and then try to find a way to please the customer, which may not be exactly what they originally wanted but may still give them the value that they were looking for anyway.

You need to spend time coaching your staff so that they start taking this approach on an ongoing basis. This will involve spending time with individuals coaching them in how they might approach certain situations differently, or how they might rephrase what they are saying or use a different tone in order to provide better customer service.

To get the message across effectively about what you expect and how you want your team to handle customers for the best outcome for your business, you could try using role play during a special team meeting or training session. You could play the part of an unhappy customer, and have member of your team take it in turns to talk with the difficult "customer" to try to find an effective solution to their problem. You could then discuss the different approaches that individuals took to the different customer issues that they faced, and which was more effective and why. This can be an extremely effective method of coaching your staff in the types of behaviour that you would like them to adopt towards your customers.

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## **5. Have inductions and ongoing training in improving customer service**

You need to get new members of your team off to the right start by ensuring that you focus on your customer service approach from day one. You can even get this across to new members of staff before their first day, at their interviews. Focusing on questions that probe their interest and commitment to customer service will help you to better assess if they are going to be suitable to work in your organisation or not, and if they will work effectively towards your customer service goals.

Once you've got them on board, the induction needs to be heavily customer-service oriented, explaining why your customers are important and detailing the kinds of behaviours that you expect your staff to take towards the customers. This should be backed up with facts and figures about why you believe this approach to be important for your business, and how this will help your company to out-survive and out-do your competitors.

This start needs to be continued on a daily basis with your team by reinforcing the consistent message that your customers are the most important aspect of their work. This needs to come across in team meetings and gatherings, and also through frequent training, and sharing of important customer-related data with your team, so that they can understand the essential nature of adding value to your customers on an ongoing basis.

## **6. Create an “internal” customer service approach**

A good approach to have in order to create and maintain a customer service culture in your business is to encourage your team to treat every other person as their customer, including each other. This includes treating each other with respect at all times, helping one another to find solutions to issues that are faced and having a “can do” rather than a “can’t do” attitude towards problems that arise.

If you create an atmosphere where staff have this kind of attitude towards one another, it will be all the more natural for them to continue this type of approach when they are dealing with your customers, making a great customer experience more likely. This is because they will have practised a lot while dealing with each other, and the customer service approach will just be more natural for them, than if they only take this approach when they are dealing with customers that are external to the business.

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## **7. Reward those with the right approach**

When individuals in your team display the right kinds of behaviour that work towards creating an excellent customer service culture, show them that this is right by rewarding their behaviour.

You could include this as some kind of financial reward, linking the meeting and exceeding of specific customer service targets with some kind of monetary incentive. Alternatively, it could be as simple as just highlighting the great work that an individual has done in a team meeting, showing to the rest of the team the kind of work and attitude that you appreciate. This is usually extremely motivating for the individual whose work is being applauded, and it sends a clear message to the rest of the team regarding what you would like to see in their work.

### **Summary**

If you want to create a customer service culture in your business, you need to ensure that customer service becomes ingrained into “the way we do things around here”. This involves setting goals and targets that are directly related to customer service. It also requires you to instil a customer service outlook in your staff even as early on as the stage when they are being interviewed. This needs to continue through the staff induction process and through regular and ongoing training with your team, so that they understand customer wants and needs. This will involve collecting customer data and sharing it with your team. It means coaching your team to the point where they see each other as customers and to where they are able to always provide some kind of solution, a “can do” rather than an “I can’t” approach to their workload.

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