



Excellent Customer Service

Excellent Customer service is about:

1. Meeting and exceeding customer expectations

Excellent customer Service can only be measured against the expectations of the customers – so it relates to your customers' idea of good service, and not your own. For example: even if you improve performance by ensuring that enquiries are responded to within 5 days, if the customer expects a reply within 24 hours, then it would not be regarded as good service.

2. Pre-empting complaints and problems

Although part of providing excellent customer service is about reacting to complaints and problems efficiently, consistently and fairly, it is more about getting things right the first time – anticipating and rectifying problems before they occur.

3. Continuous, proactive improvements

Excellent customer service comes from identifying areas for improvement within every aspect of the organisation and the people within it. It is not simply about making changes in response to customers' complaints and ad-hoc suggestions. It requires a strategic approach and an organisational culture of striving for excellence and on-going progress.

Points to remember about excellent customer service:

- **It requires an organisational 'Customer Service Focus':** By introducing and maintaining processes, policies and working practices that are overtly focussed towards the needs and interests of the customer - and not purely in the interests of, or for the convenience of the organisation and its employees.
- **Everybody in the organisation has customers:** Anyone to whom you provide a service, a product or information is your customer. Even those who not have a direct role with *external* customers are involved in the process that results in customers receiving a product or service from the organisation as a whole. This means that they have *internal* customers to serve within the organisation, who in turn will service the external customers.
- **Good customer service benefits everyone:** It is vital to the continuing success and survival of the organisation, and it has a number of benefits for the individuals within the organisation, including improved reputation, job satisfaction and job security.
- **Good customer service requires accurate information** - of the service offered and the needs and requirements of your customers – These are central to improving the skills, knowledge and attitudes of the people within the organisation, as well as the processes and procedures that inform how they act and when.
- **Good customer service does not just happen** - It is a process, which begins well before any direct customer contact is actually made, and is achieved as a result of proactive planning, evaluation and management.

- **Improvements require lots of small changes:** rather than a few big ones – Introducing a customer service focus does not mean doing everything radically differently. It means looking at everything you and your team does, and making a number of small changes for improvement.

Introducing a Customer Service Focus

STAGE ONE: Introduce the concept and get commitment

Ensure that everyone involved in the delivery of Customer Service understands why it is important that they commit to improving the customer service they offer.

STAGE TWO: Identify the Service Niche and characteristics

Identify the nature of the services provided by the organisation – Including the exact services provided, and for whom.

STAGE THREE: Seek customer feedback

Complete a customer services audit, in order to canvas the current satisfaction levels of customers, to identify what it is they want (as opposed to what you assume they want) how they see the organisation, and what their specific expectations are.

STAGE FOUR: Find out about service levels elsewhere

Complete a benchmarking exercise that compares the services provided by your organisation, with similar providers in the same field.

STAGE FIVE: Look at the role of customer service in the organisation as a whole

Identify any major organisational issues that affect the ability of staff at all levels to provide excellent customer service.

STAGE SIX: Define the organisation's customer relationships

Identify the various customer service chains within the organisation, and ensure that all those involved are aware of the roles they play in relation to the whole process.

STAGE SEVEN: Improve the Service received from providers

Identify what the organisation and the teams within it need from providers, and ways in which the services received can be improved.

STAGE EIGHT: Write Customer Service Standards

Write specific standards for the two key areas of customer services: processes and people. These will form the basis of the service levels that your customers can expect to receive.

STAGE NINE: Implement Customer Service Standards

Bring the customer service standards to life by designing and implementing a customer services action plan. This will help to maintain the commitment of all involved and will ensure that staff are adequately trained/empowered to make the customer service focus a reality.

STAGE TEN: Monitor and evaluate Customer Service Standards

This will be achieved partly through the ongoing feedback sought from customers, but it should also involve the input of service delivery staff.

Would you or others in your team benefit from training in customer service?

We hope that you'll find these tips useful. However, most people derive huge additional benefit from the interaction, practical exercises and valuable feedback that face-to-face training gives. H2 offers bespoke training in customer service from just £62 + VAT per person per day.

Here's what some satisfied customers said after attending our training in customer service:

- *" It introduced new ways and ideas of customer service and how it also involves the workforce as customers!"*
- *" The course helped to reinforce how fundamental standards are to company success"*
- *" The overall framework provided was excellent"*
- *" It made me think about my delivery and my team's delivery of customer service. Reinforced but mostly highlighted what needs to be done "*
- *" The course helped me to question whether we lacked adequate customer service and made us examine all areas – Thanks!"*

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