

Exceptional Customer Service

Exceptional customer service should be a core competency for your organization. A culture that focuses on the customer is difficult for competitors to easily replicate and can be the specific attribute that positions your organization with a strategic advantage in the marketplace. Customer service is a balance of defined processes and interpersonal skills that create expectations and a common mindset among employees.

Expectations

The driving component of exceptional customer service is to set and meet legitimate expectations for both clients and the organization. By setting clear expectations you are establishing a standard for customers to measure their satisfaction, and be an internal target to be exceeded. Without establishing a standard of service for clients, you will be chasing moving targets and potentially fall short. At the same time, every employee is part of a team effort, and even though they may have an indirect role to play in support of the customer, they must be prepared to go outside their responsibilities when there is a call for urgency.

Moments of truth

All employees should be on the alert for circumstances where clients need quick and decisive intervention that exceeds normal expectations. Let's refer to these opportunities as a "moment of truth" that can galvanize a relationship. This could be as simple as a quick answer to an urgent question, access to a specialist, or a more focused effort that requires going outside normal channels to resolve a possible crisis. By anticipating that customers will face unusual circumstances, each individual within the organization should be empowered to sound the alarm and call for a solution.



Diffusing tension

Diffusing tension is a learned skill that has a significant impact within an organization's culture, especially while interacting with customers. Acknowledging a customer's emotion before addressing the facts is the first step toward resolving a point of contention. Next, communicate that you understand the key issues, establish the actions necessary for resolution, and set expectations and timelines.

Multiple points of contact

Establishing multiple points of contact provides a client the confidence that commitments and assurances are coming from the organization as a whole. Access and connection between key relationships, that can intervene, when necessary, will also position an organization to recover from mistakes or oversights.

Maintain a professional relationship

With any long-term internal or client relationship, be alert that familiarity can undermine a client's perception of your respect and professionalism. Individually and culturally, we must have an attitude that we are always competing for our client's business, by delivering a balanced personal and formal delivery of service.

Advance the relationship

All employees should be alert to evidence of changes that might impact the future relationship with a client. There is a constant need to review your company's performance, reassess their future plans, and introduce new product or service developments. This could be as natural as reconnecting over lunch, a conference call, or a tour of each other's facilities.

Positioning exceptional customer service as a core competency is a cultural responsibility that impacts the perspective and skill-set of every employee and department within the organization.