CUSTOMER SERVICE TRAINING MANUAL

Training Manual for New Employees

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(August 2018)

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CHAPTER ONE

CUSTOMER SERVICE BASICS

1.1 Introduction To Customer Service

Customer service is the provision of service to a customer before, during and after a purchase, and a service well delivered by an organisation leads to long lasting relations and good testimonials by customers and vice-versa. For a service gone wrong, I couldn’t agree more with Kate Zabriskie and I quote “The customer perception is your reality”, because of this many organizations regard customer service as the most competitive battlefield because one misdeed in the service delivery process can lead to a lot of consequences.

1.2 Who is a customer service representative?

A customer service representative is someone who assists in service delivery. A customer service worker’s duty does not end at only providing services to customers however a customer service person is the mouth piece of the organization and he or she should know more about the organization, such as the mission and the vision of the organization, should have much knowledge on the service he or she is providing. A customer service worker should be willing and able to assist customers when the need arises and should be capable of solving the problems of customers. You should be able to respond to customer’s needs promptly and handle complaints professionally, that is, a customer service worker is not supposed to act angrily because the customer reacted the same.

1.3 What skillsets should a customer service representative have?

To be an effective and successful customer service worker one should have certain skills to be able to meet the demands of customers and these skills are:

- Communication skills

As a customer service worker, one must engage in sensitive listening and speaking skills to accurately assess and respond to a customer’s questions and needs. The worker needs to be comfortable with communication media including telephone calls, email, and live chat; and be able to communicate clearly and accurately, with proper use of written and spoken styles.

- Customer service skills

A customer service worker needs to handle questions and problems with a friendly and professional demeanor. Customers may come from different backgrounds, be frustrated and confused, be angry and difficult therefore the Customer service worker needs to be patient, understanding, sympathetic, polite, and create a positive relationship to help resolve the problem at hand, and represent the company well to help ensure good ongoing business standing.

- Technical skills

To help resolve customer issues, the customer service representative should be able to analyze problems, research answers, and help customers implement solutions. These problem solving skills may be considerably different for positions such as computer support specialists, bank tellers, and financial advisors. He or she should be able to use modern communication tools such the computer and its related programmes that helps in meeting the demands of customers.
1.4 What service is being provided by the organization?

It is very important for the customer service worker to know what services the organization is providing and who their competitors are, this will help them know how to treat customer because “good service is definitely good business” Siebel Ad., and a loyal customer is all it takes for an organization to gain competitive advantage over other organizations.

1.5 Who is a customer?

A customer is a person to whom business is rendered to with the help of the customer service worker. Customers, buyers and clients want to pay a fair price for quality service or products, and feel satisfied they have paid for a service/product and received what they have paid for in return. They also want someone to take care of them. They need someone to understand their needs and help answer them. They need someone to hold their hands and walk them through a process. Customer service starts with the ability to listen to the customer and find out through polite questioning what he/she needs or wants.

1.6 How to relate with a customer

When a company develops and maintains relations with customers it is term as customer relation, maintaining a good customer relation is beneficial to the organization not just in terms of profit maximization but for customer loyalty and the reputation of the organization. It is often said that it cost less to maintain or retain customers than it is to get new customer, therefore a customer service rep. should know how to relate with customers of the company to keep them coming back for more services offered and all it takes to retain customers is a little pampering to make them feel special and treating them with respect just to let them know you care about them, after all “every great business is built on friendship” JC Penney.
CHAPTER TWO
COMMUNICATION MODES

2.1 Verbal and Non-verbal communication

As a customer service worker, the basic quality an organisation looks out for is how effective you can communicate with customer both verbal (with words) and non-verbal (with actions). Verbal communication helps customers understand our thoughts while non-verbal communication helps them understand our actions, how do you express yourself without sending wrong signals to customers, how does your voice sound: commanding, harsh, or friendly. These are areas that need to be taken into consideration when interacting with customers.

2.2 Verbal Communication Techniques

Not everyone has the voice of a BBC news reporter, but everyone can employ tactics to help hold the attention of a listener. Speak with short words, our customers may be highly educated, but when it comes to their particular product or needs, you are the expert and should gently help them understand potentially confusing concepts, but do not bore them with long lectures on product preferences.

Some customers may be hard of hearing, but this can be difficult to know, especially over the telephone. If they tilt their head or frequently ask you to repeat yourself, they may not be hearing you well, and you can try speaking a little louder. If they back away, or move their head back, you may be speaking too loudly. The customer may also prefer to converse in quieter tones if he or she is nervous or is concerned about privacy when other people are nearby. Try as much as possible to speak at speech rates that favors every customer therefore is it advisable for customer service workers to carefully assess their customer at the moment to know what speech rate to use e.g. If the customer happens to be a child the service provider should be able to speak in clear terms that would be understandable to the child and vice-versa if it is an adult.

2.3 Non-verbal Communication techniques

Most of the time, our communication is not so much in what we say, but in how we say it (the action backed by the words) no wonder people say this “actions speaks louder than words”. For effective nonverbal communication, a customer service worker should be able to convey what he or she wants to say so that a customer might not read a different meaning to the action e.g. you are self-confident, capable, and in control of the situation, You wouldn’t want the customer to think of you as aggressive, superior, or domineering. These are few tips a customer service worker can employ when communicating with a customer non-verbally: Present a calm relaxed face, especially if your customer seems agitated, confused, or angry. Smile warmly and try to put some friendliness in your eyes. Maintain intermittent eye contact, although it is important to understand that the meaning of this varies by culture: some people may hold longer eye contact to demonstrate openness and sincerity, while other cultures don’t hold eye contact at all, and may see an attempt to do so as a threatening gesture. Adjust your approach based on your observations of your customer and your understanding of the situation.
2.4 Telephonic skills

Since we typically have no visual cues when speaking on the phone, it is essential we use a good tone and careful word selection to connect with your customers. You should use a calm, friendly voice to convey warmth and concern seeking as always to form a partnership with customers to find a resolution to their problems. The tone of our voice should project your dedication to the customer, with enthusiasm and competency. You should speak clearly using a normal volume, with short words and sentences so as not to overwhelm the potentially frustrated and anxious customer. A good tip is to set your volume, speech rate, and vocabulary level to match those of your customer. Some customers may be quite knowledgeable on a given issue, so they would very much appreciate if the add-on speech would be very brief and insightful.
CHAPTER THREE
DEALING WITH CUSTOMERS

3.1 Dealing with difficult customers

Customers vary in temperament and their level of tolerance with customer service problems, the customer might remain calm and reasonable no matter how upset they might actually be. In other situations, no matter how trivial the problem is, your customer will be difficult, demanding, angry, rude, and even potentially violent. Hanging up or calling security isn’t the way to go about it, there are certain fundamental yet important steps you can take to deal with difficult customers. One of the first steps when dealing with a challenging customer is to protect yourself with the proper mindset and attitude. Just because your customer is agitated or angry does not mean you need to absorb it or respond in kind, because few minutes of a strong negative emotion such as anger can demolish your body’s immune system for many hours afterward. You cannot always control how a customer reacts to a given problem, but you can control how you respond. Rather than escalate an unpleasant situation, you can try some tactics to defuse it. You can do this by remaining focused, alert, understanding, caring, unemotional, and most of all patient.

3.2 Customer Misbehavior

In service delivery processes customers will definitely be angry, frustrated and can misbehave in worse case scenarios but is up to you the customer service worker to handle these situations in a professional manner. Treat them with respect and polite, helpful service. There is an ancient adage that a gentle word turns away wrath, and that’s as true today. A rude, angry, or belligerent customer might be calmed with a simple, “I’m sorry this has upset you … let’s see how we can fix it.”

3.3 Customer Service Diversity

Whether you find yourself as customer service person, you will most certainly be working with a broad range of customers. You will encounter different languages, cultural backgrounds, age groups, genders, and communication styles. Almost everyone you interact with will have a different preference for interpersonal modes and customs. As a skilled customer service worker, it will be your duty to connect with them in the way that best serves their needs, and your company’s interests, in the most efficient and effective way possible.

3.4 Do’s and Don’ts of customer service

Before we discuss best tips on what to do when dealing with difficult customers, let’s first consider some important things not to do, do not get angry yourself, even if the customer starts to attack you personally as uncaring or incompetent. Your employer hired you because you have demonstrated both an aptitude for customer service and the skills to perform your job well. The customer is responding with a perspective muddled by emotion, and you must keep that in mind. You should also avoid telling your customer to calm down, this make them even angrier. That may make you appear adversarial to agitated customers, rather than as a helper trying to understand how they feel. Likewise, don’t defend yourself. This can also create an adversarial relation. And do not give these answers when dealing with customer whether he or she is angry or not: No, that’s not my job, I am busy right now, that is not my fault, these answers frustrate customers. Rather, try to assure your customers you have heard their complaints, and you sincerely want to help. Try not to interrupt your customers, especially while they’re venting some of their anger. Once they have raged for a bit, they may be easier to ration with if you simply acknowledge their anger, and let them share some of it with you. Show empathy for customers’ problems. Let the customers know their problem is your problem too. Remember to use the magic words, “I’m sorry.” Encourage an extremely agitated customer to vent a little before initiating steps to resolve the problem. You can use such phrases as “tell
me about what happened.” Don’t take a customer’s anger or insults personally. Instead, show you are on the customer’s side. You might say something like, “I can understand why you’re upset.” Remain objective and calm. Take responsibility and keep a focus on achieving results. Assure the customer, “I’m sure we can fix this.” Involve the customer. This returns a sense of empowerment to a customer who may be feeling powerless. Ask, “How would you like to see this resolved?” Provide clear options and steps to a resolution. Exceed customers’ expectations. Finally, assure the customer that you will advise management of the problem to prevent a similar situation from happening in the future.