



Is not it ironic that it takes years to build a great customer relationship but only moments to tear one apart! There are so many ways to lose your existing customers, if you are not careful in your dealings every day. I came up with these ten ways to lose your customers, but these are by no means the exclusive list. What is interesting is that each of the ten service points I have covered below can be turned around into a great way to actually reinforce, and retain your customer relationships to make them even stronger. The common thread I found to achieve great customer service requires staffing great people, training them, and retraining them. It also helps to have a company culture that values service over everything else. I suggest you review these examples with your entire customer service team!

10 ways to lose customers

“To any enterprise, there are no jobs more important than those serving its customers.”

- by Michael Bergdahl

1. “BROKEN PROMISES” - Customers get upset when a company makes promises that are not fulfilled. This has been referred to as “over-promising and under-delivering.” Adopt the philosophy that you will always live up to the commitments you make to your customers. Teach your customer service team, “A promise we make is a promise we intend to keep . . . each and every time.” When someone on your customer service team makes a commitment to one of your customers, your company must stand behind that commitment, even when it costs you money. Admit your mistake, apologize to the customer, and do what ever you can to make

them happy. Remember this: a customer who is unhappy with your service will tell everyone they know exactly how poorly you treated them. Failing to live up to your commitments to one customer may end up costing you business from several of your other existing customers! When you treat your customers poorly you need to realize that you are driving business to your competitors! Teach your customer service team to “under-promise and over-deliver!”

2. “SHUFFLING THE PROBLEM” – We have all experienced the frustration of contacting a company by phone, regarding a

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complaint, and then being transferred from one unhelpful person to another. "Customer shuffling" is a nasty customer service practice the employees in some companies use to avoid taking responsibility for dealing with a customer's problem. When this has happened to you, do you get the same feeling that I do, that this company doesn't really care about me, my problem, or my future business? To solve the "customer service shuffle" your company has to create clearly written procedures that each customer service representative must follow in order to address common complaints. When you train your people, and empower them by giving them the decision making authority they need to solve customer related problems, you avoid their need to shuffle dissatisfied customers around. Empower the employee who receives a customer complaint to follow up on it, from beginning to end. Customers are happiest when the customer service representative (CSR) who makes the

initial contact also has the decision making authority to resolve the complaint quickly and easily. Ask yourself this question: How important are satisfied customers to my business? The correct answer is not only "yes they are very important", but you should realize that satisfied customers are the key to your past, present and future success! Don't ever forget that a satisfied customer is likely to return to do business with you again and again while, unfortunately, your customers who leave dissatisfied are likely to be gone forever!

3. "POOR SERVICE ATTITUDE" – We have all dealt with customer service people who project the attitude that, "it's not my problem." This really makes customers angry! When I sense this is happening to me I take action. I quickly assume the customer service representative lacks empathy for my problem, so I immediately ask to speak to a customer service supervisor (CSS)! I think that's what most of do when this

happens. For this reason, I believe you should have a written procedure in place describing what your customer service team should do when a customer is extremely unhappy or irate, and to have a procedure in place. Establish a practice of monitoring interactions between your CSR's and your customers. Have your customer service supervisors monitor actual customer phone calls and do it often. Finally establish standards for customer service and deal with employees who are rude or project an uncaring attitude to customers. Remember: your company only gets one chance to make a first impression on your customers so make sure that first impression is a good one!

4. "MAKING CUSTOMERS ANGRY" – I have gotten mad plenty of times when I have had to deal with customer service people concerning product or service related problems. Sometimes my problem is solved to my satisfaction and sometimes it is not. When I am still



unhappy or angry with quality of service I received you can bet I won't do business with that company again, and I suspect you would not either! But some companies have a way of calming down and satisfying even their most unhappy customers. Do your service employees know how to do this? What do your employees do with irate customers? Do you have a procedure in place? Show me a company where the customer service people know how to satisfy those unhappy customers and

hands on experience dealing with a variety of actual service related problems that have caused your customers to become irate in the past. With a written customer service procedure in place, a strong orientation of new employees, and ongoing staff training using role playing, your team will be ready to address any customer related concern.

5. "LACK OF FOLLOW-UP" – You cannot always solve every customer

commitment is made, is like telling them that their business is not very important to you. It also sends the message that the people in your company lack integrity. If you are going to be delayed in responding make a point of letting the customer know. Provide updates as soon as you have them. Teach your team how important it is to live up to their commitments to your customers and to one another. Remember: Customers don't want to hear excuses from a company they are



I'll guarantee you that company trains its people well. Here is an idea I would recommend to you to turn dissatisfied customers into satisfied customers. It is called TRAINING! During the initial orientation of newly hired customer service employees you should make sure each member of your team is thoroughly trained on when to refer customers to a supervisor. During the orientation, using role playing, each of the members of your team should gain

related problem in a matter of moments. Let us face it, there are times when you do need to research the problem and get back to the customer at a later time. There is nothing wrong with explaining to the customer that you need time to investigate their problem. But when this happens be sure to make a commitment to the customer of a specific timeframe within which you will get back to them with a response. Failure to get back to a customer, once a

trying to do business with! Treat your customers the way that you would want to be treated! Teach your team to follow this simple standard, "Make commitments, and then follow through on them every time!"

6. "ALIENATING CUSTOMERS" - There is an old adage in customer service circles, "the customer is always right!" Those of us who work in customer related jobs know this isn't literally true, but when it comes to our custom-

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ers we act as if it were! One hundred percent of the time, in our dealings with customers, we need to project a positive attitude, along with respect for our customer's point of view. It serves no purpose to argue with our customers, and those who do come to find out the outcome is never really positive for their business. You may win the argument now and then but you will more often than not lose a customer. What is one customer worth? If you treat them right you may be able to count on future business, and good word-of-mouth advertising. Argue



with, and debate with your customers, and ultimately prove your customers were not right, and you are likely to lose that customer for life. That is the customer service version of "winning a battle but losing the war!" When you work in a job where you are in contact with customers, you cannot afford to have a "bad" day. Don't ever forget, if it were not for your customers you'd be out of business. If you treat your customers poorly they will vote with their feet by doing business with your competitors. Adopt the attitude that

your customers are always right, and you are on your way to establishing customer relationships that may last a lifetime!

7. "REACHING AN IMPASSE" – From time to time, no matter how hard we try we are not going to be able to satisfy every customer. Even the most experienced customer service representatives (CSR's) run into customer related problems over which they just have no authority. There is a way to avoid leaving the customer with a bad feeling about your company and it

involves having a simple procedure in place. The answer when this happens is for the customer service team to get a supervisor involved in a discussion with the customer immediately. Time is of the essence, and it is critical for your service team to know exactly what to do. I recommend that you train your CSR's to take the following steps:

- I. Initially, your CSR should work directly with the customer to resolve the problem.
- II. If an impasse is reached, ask the

customer to speak with a supervisor.

- III. The CSR Supervisor listens to the customer's concern. Sometimes the process of simply listening to the customer, and letting them vent their concerns, seems to extinguish the size of the original problem.
- IV. The CSR Supervisor attempts to resolve the problem and satisfy the customer.
- V. At this point, if an impasse still exists explain as clearly as you can your company's policy and why an exception cannot be made. The key is to "seek understanding from the customer, not agreement!" Often, once the customer understands your explanation of "why", they are more likely to accept the decision, though they may still disagree with you.
- VI. Apologize for any inconvenience the customer has experienced and thank the customer for their business. Unfortunately, in some cases, the CSR Supervisor and the customer will end their conversation at an impasse simply "agreeing to disagree."

Teach this procedure to everyone and post a copy of it on every bulletin board. Review it with new employees and periodically discuss it at team meetings with your entire staff. If your company wants to be known for having great service the key is to provide ongoing customer service training to everyone who is contact with your customers.

8. "APATHY TOWARD CUSTOMERS" - Do you know who pays the bills at your business? I am talking about the rent, lights, gas, electric and even your pay

and benefits. The answer is of course your customers pay all of your bills by choosing to spend their hard earned money on your products and services. But customers can change their buying habits, and they do it all the time. Do not ever forget they can choose to walk away from your business in favor of spending their money on your competitor's products and services. Think about that for just a moment. In fact you should think about that every day! What are you doing to make your customers want to continue doing business with you? Are any of the people servicing your customers taking

should make it a practice to study the competition. Study their pricing structure for products and services against your own. Customers do not mind purchasing from a business for a fair price. Study your competitor's pricing structure and make adjustments accordingly. Do not underestimate the intelligence of the shoppers for products like yours in the marketplace. People are smart and the market will dictate what you can expect to charge for your products and services. It is important to remember that the customer expects you to make a fair profit, but no more!

customer wants to return to you, than they will from the way you handled their original purchase. Do you provide service with a smile? Are you just as glad to see the customer making a return as someone who is making a purchase? The reality is that you should handle both transactions in the same positive manner. Some companies have restrictive return/service policies which create bad feelings for their customers. If you treat your customers well when they have a problem they will reward you by returning again and again to make future purchases. If you mistrust your



your customers for granted? There are plenty of alternative sources for almost every product imaginable. Is there a compelling reason why your customers should continue doing business with you? Think about it, talk with your service team about it, and do something about it, NOW!

9. "NON-COMPETITIVE PRACTICES" - Customers have more options for purchasing products and services than they have ever had before. Everyone has internet access, and they use it to compare products and services. You

10. "MISHANDLED PRODUCT ISSUES" - When a customer makes a purchase it is quite easy to smile and thank them for their purchase. How does your service team react when that same customer tries to return that purchase for a refund or a replacement? Often customer service people are well trained to sell products and collect money. Less time is typically spent on teaching the importance of service after the sale. Your customers will learn more about your company from the way you deal with a product the

customers, and make them feel like naughty children when they try to return a product, they will leave you, and spend their money elsewhere! Show your loyalty to your customers by taking care of them when they have a problem, and they will reciprocate by being loyal to your business. A good rule to follow is this: take care of your customers, the same way you would want to be treated under similar circumstances if the same thing happened to you! 😊