

Customer Service: A Missing Skill?

You have to make more sales! This is the message that is drilled into every salesperson's mind on a daily basis. Usually they're expected to achieve this through cold calling and other age-old techniques in a hope that they will be able to make a sale. However, this single-minded focus on sales figures tends to leave the customer unhappy and unwilling to buy from the salesperson a second time. How is this possible since they successfully sold the first time?

The answer is not, as you may think, in the product or service. The reason for this customer dissatisfaction is that many salespeople are excellent at selling, promising unparalleled service but are unable to meet customer expectations. There is such a single-minded focus on making a minimum of 50+ calls per day, but how much time does that really leave for a salesperson to deliver? The need to make so many calls in a day leads to an ineffective use of a salesperson's time. Yes, they may make a sale but it is vital for salespeople to adapt their methods to focus on long term client relationships.

Put yourself in the position of a decision maker. With such a huge amount of choice when it comes to service providers, each selling the same service, what will make you stand out? Very simply it's the level of customer service that you provide. This may seem obvious but very few salespeople provide effective service to their customers. There are a number of simple techniques which will allow you to not only improve the service that you provide, but also increase the number of sales you will make with your clients.

Firstly, understand exactly what it is that your client does and where your services would best work in conjunction with that. Move the focus away from the quick sale and towards working with the client as a partner. By doing this you will be working as an extension of the client's business and with your unique and in-depth understanding of that business, you will be able to tailor your solutions and make more sales by providing services that your clients really need. By being able to tailor your solutions to the client it will increase the opportunities you will have to make a sale. This is because you will stop wasting you and your client's time trying to sell products and services which are inappropriate or unnecessary.

Make yourself the single point of contact. Whatever it is that you are selling, clients will quickly become dissatisfied if after a sale they are constantly speaking to other salespeople for information. By taking responsibility for the service and by being the single point of contact, not only are you helping to build the relationship and improving your sales opportunities, you are providing the client with a better service because they can always speak to the same person who understands their business and will be able to provide quick information on the services being provided.

Be honest about the services that you can provide. Taking on work that you are not in a position to complete will be detrimental to the relationship. By being upfront and honest about your capabilities to provide services to the client, your level of service will improve because it will create trust. If the client trusts you, they are more likely to buy from you as they will believe that you are working to their benefit as well, rather than just your own.

With this in mind, consider what Value Added Services you can provide to your clients. It can be anything from simple notifications about changes to legislation or technologies which impacts your services or industry to new services which may provide solutions to your client that they were unaware of. Simple things like this cost you nothing as a salesperson but opens up a large number of opportunities that simple cold calling will not accomplish.

By improving the level of customer service that is provided, you can move away from one-off sales and the constant need for new clients and focus on developing accounts and having clients continuously return to you for the products and services. This will make you a more successful salesperson who is able to adapt to the changing business environment.

Mandy Leonard is a co-founder of Enabled IT, which specializes on working in partnership with clients to provide a customer centric recruitment solution. With experience in both the recruitment and technical sector, she has specialized in sales and training management to optimize the abilities of sales forces and open up effective, mutually beneficial business opportunities within new and existing clients. She is also the author of "Micromanagement: Killing Employee Morale".

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