

REAL LIFE SOLUTIONS



AUGUST 2014

12 Customer Service Skills Every Employee Needs

There are certain customer service skills that every employee should master. Customers may be the people who purchase your product or use a service, your co-workers, a shift supervisor, the board of directors, or vendors or suppliers. Regardless of the type of customer, there are a few universal skills that every employee can use to help improve their interactions with customers.

Here are 12 specific skills to "WOW" your customers.

- 1. Patience.** Patience is important to customers who often reach out when they are confused and frustrated and also to the business at large. Stay patient when customers come to you and take time to figure out what they want.
- 2. Attentiveness.** The ability to listen to customers is crucial for providing great service. Pay attention to individual customer interactions and be mindful and attentive to feedback you receive.
- 3. Clear Communication.** Make sure you're getting to the problem at hand quickly. Be cautious about your communication habits. When it comes to important points that you need to relay to customers, keep it simple and leave nothing to doubt.
- 4. Knowledge of the Product.** Have knowledge of how your organization, product or service works. Without having this knowledge, you won't know how to help customers when they run into problems.
- 5. Positive Language.** Your ability to make minor changes in your conversational patterns can go a long way in creating happy customers. People create perceptions about you and your organization based on language you use.
- 6. Positive Attitude.** Sometimes you'll interact with people that you'll never be able to make happy. Try and maintain a cheery persona even if you are dealing with people who may be unhappy.
- 7. Time Management.** Try to help customers in an efficient manner. This should also be applied when realizing when you simply cannot help a customer. If you don't know the solution to a problem, find someone who does.
- 8. Ability to Read Customers.** While you won't always be able to see customers face-to-face or hear their voice, knowing your customers creates a personal experience for them. Look and listen for subtle clues about their mood, patience level and personality and you'll go far in keeping your customer interactions positive.
- 9. A Calming Presence.** Stay calm when things get a little hectic. Be the rock for a customer who thinks the world is falling down due to their current problem.
- 10. Ability to Handle Surprises.** Maybe the problem you encounter isn't specifically covered in the company's guidelines, or the customer isn't reacting how you thought they would. Try to think on your feet to be helpful. Ask for guidelines for these sorts of situations.
- 11. Tenacity.** A great work ethic and a willingness to do what needs to be done is a key skill when providing the kind of service that people talk about. Many memorable customer service stories were created by a single employee who refused to just do the status quo when it came to helping someone out.
- 12. Closing Ability.** End the conversation with the customer feeling that everything has been taken care of. Your willingness to do this shows them that you care about getting it right and you're willing to keep going until you get it right.

How would you rate your customer service skills? Here's a quick exercise: For each of these skills, rate yourself on a scale of 1-5 (1=I could improve in this area; 5=I feel like I do this very well). Any area you've rated yourself less than a 5 might be worth some focus. You can develop skills by practicing a skill during training, talking to your supervisor for additional coaching, or calling your EAP.

Adapted from Gregory Ciotti, Help Scout, Feb 20, 2013

For related articles and support, visit your Better Living web resource at www.efr.org/myeap. To access EAP services, call 800.327.4692 or TTY 877.542.6488.



EFR EMPLOYEE & FAMILY RESOURCES

1964 • Celebrating 50 Years • 2014

THIS NEWSLETTER IS PROVIDED BY YOUR EMPLOYER IN COOPERATION WITH YOUR EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (EAP) BECAUSE WE CARE ABOUT YOU AND YOUR FAMILY.