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## CUSTOMER SERVICE STARTS AT THE TOP

by Charlotte Garner



Customers are the most important people in any business. Customers are not dependent on us, we are dependent on them! Dissatisfied customers never forget and dissatisfied customers talk.

So why is servicing customers given a lower priority by many business units?

### What customers want...

Customers care about their issues and problems first and foremost. They want a quality service or product. They want instant responses to their queries. They want a caring attitude, particularly if they have a problem. They want solutions to problems and they want someone to take responsibility for resolving their issues.

In short, customers want to know that you care about them.

### Customer service starts at the top...

The most successful companies focus on instilling a commitment to customer service in every member of the organisation, from the top of the corporate ladder down – not up.

If your senior managers are not spending any time with your key customers, what message does this send to the team? It might say to them that it is less of a priority.

If senior managers are spending time talking to customers, it sends a big message to the rest of the organisation....customers matter!

Organisation leaders must educate people to put the customer first – and the best way to educate is by example.

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*Customers are not an interruption to our work, they are the purpose of it!*

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## A team commitment...

If team members are not committed to customer service, then any well-planned program will fail. Set customer service goals and encourage everyone to meet them. Enable all team members to see firsthand what the customer needs by bringing them into direct contact with customers on a regular basis...regardless of their position.

## Resolve complaints quickly...

Encourage your team to think and act independently to solve customer problems. Every member of your team must have the authority, responsibility and training to deal with customer complaints. Remember that customers want their issues resolved quickly.

## Keep customers coming back...

Don't let complacency set in. It isn't unusual that after we have 'won' a new customer, the service that customer received when being 'courted' deteriorates. Superior customer services means treating each customer as a new customer every time. Repeat customers are vital.

## Have the right systems in place...

Every customer is bound to have a complaint or an issue at some time, but how your organisation resolves those issues can differentiate you from your competitors.

Your processes should not be centred on the procedures involved, but rather on 'swift action'.

Make sure that throughout your organisation the emphasis is on the resolution, rather than an elaborate process.

***Being customer focused is not an item on a to-do list you can just check off!***