Audit Your Approach To Customer Service

The focus of every business today, from corner shops to IT multinationals, is on providing customer service. The driving theory says that keeping customers happy is the key to customer retention; and customer retention is the key to profitability.

And these days if a business doesn’t please its customers it won’t be long before they go somewhere else – there are plenty of places to go.

To remain competitive every business needs to examine just how it’s handling the fundamentals of customer service and look for opportunities to improve what they do. A team brainstorming session centered on a few key topics is a good way to bring new ideas to light and assess how you are performing.

What needs of your customer do you satisfy?

Every business has to offer a reason to buy from it rather than the competition – they have a unique core differentiator, or UCD. Think about how you would complete this sentence; “My customers prefer to buy from me because my business offers...” What do you know about your customer’s needs?

UCDs work to the extent that they really do satisfy customer needs. So knowing what’s important to your customer is vital to developing, and changing if necessary, your UCD. Is it fast no frills service, salespeople with specialist knowledge, the 5% discount you offer to loyal customers?

How can you personalize your offering to customers?

Even better is if you can tailor your offerings to particular customer groups. For instance, if you sell computer software or offer a package of software as an incentive to buy computers, you could develop different software packs to appeal to different buyer types like young singles and families.

How could you improve your relationship with the customer?

Real customer service goes beyond just offering products for sale. You need to establish a relationship with every customer that gives them a reason to return the next time they want to buy something. Sales are too often won on the basis of price; relationships are won through effort and dedication. Are your premises set up to sell something or are they intended to make customers feel something – perhaps make them feel comfortable or happy? Is your training all about pushing through a sale or is it based on providing genuine customer service? What do you do to make customers want to come back and see you again? Do you substitute electronic devices (telephone answering trees, for example) for people and end up losing touch with customers?

A customer service audit is only the beginning of what should become an ongoing process within your business. The knowledge you gain from conducting it needs to be addressed by immediate action that will make you a leader in pleasing your customers. Thereafter you should monitor your customers to stay aware of their likes and dislikes, and learn what you can do to please them even more.