



A SERVICE PRIMER:

21 Ways to Deliver Great Customer Service

By Craig Harrison

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You don't need a million dollar marketing budget or even a large staff to deliver great customer service. Whether yours is an organization of 1,000 employees or just one, you can deliver the kind of knock-your-socks-off service that will boost customer loyalty and grow your business.

Here are 21 easy ways you can deliver great customer service:

- 1. Smile.** Did you know that smiling takes fewer muscles than frowning? It is a universal sign of friendliness and transmits your desire to begin new relationships that can last a lifetime.
- 2. Learn and use the names of your customers.** Take pride in knowing and correctly pronouncing your customers' names. It's a sign of respect and shows that you know your customers and value them as individuals.
- 3. Use magic words and phrases.** In addition to hearing their names, customers love to hear words and phrases like *"Yes, we'd be glad to," "Consider it done," "We're sorry"* and *"Let us fix it for you."*
- 4. Say "Thank you!"** This is perhaps the second most important phrase after *"We're sorry."* Thank customers for their patronage and referrals, and for taking the time and having the courage to complain. This is doing you a favor—now you know what to fix and why other customers may have left.
- 5. Look professional.** Show respect for your customers by dressing the part. While attire varies by job and industry, looking professional will help you act more professional and be seen as such by others.
- 6. Ask questions.** The skilled professional—whether in sales or service, management or on the front lines—asks questions to better understand customer needs, desires and fears.
- 7. Listen actively.** Listen with your ears, eyes, mind and heart. Use body language to convey comprehension, agreement or consternation. Give great eye contact and avoid distractions, and let your customers know they've been heard.
- 8. Master phone etiquette.** Learn to answer your phone with confidence, poise, sincerity and a caring attitude. Ask customers for permission before putting them on hold, and thank them for their patience.
- 9. Keep in touch.** Building lasting relationships with customers means staying in touch throughout the year. Vary the mechanisms: phone calls, hand-written notes, e-mails, newsletters, etc.
- 10. Create a system** for tracking and remembering key customer details to help you serve them better. Don't tax your memory—write it down.
- 11. Cross-train your employees.** The better your employees understand other roles and functions in your organization, the stronger your organization becomes. Teamwork and efficiency will improve and the negative impact of unexpected sick leave and vacations will be minimized.
- 12. Be a "customer for a day."** A great way to think like your customers is to become a customer of your own products or services. When you live their experience, you can review your own policies, procedures and protocols and improve them for your customers' convenience and benefit.

13. Give something away. Often you can generate new customers through freebies, so identify something of value you can give to prospects.

14. Demonstrate a touch of class. Seize the etiquette edge through the classy way you value and treat your customers. When you treat customers like royalty, they will respond with loyalty. Find elegant ways to show your appreciation for your customers.

15. Empower your employees to “make it right.” Teach employees to use common sense in correcting mistakes and fixing problems customers bring to their attention, without involving you or their manager. Solving problems quickly makes customers happy, and it ultimately saves your company money.

16. Replace negative language with positive. Focus on the positive in resolving customer problems. Emphasize what you *can* do instead of telling customers what you can't or won't do, or what is unavailable to them.

17. Think about the lifetime value of each customer. A well-cared-for customer can be a customer for life, potentially buying thousands (or even millions) of dollars worth of products and services from you. It may start with something as simple as giving them a 10-cent part. Focus as much (if not more) on keeping existing customers as you do on attracting new ones.

18. Value *Kaizen*, the Japanese concept of continuous improvement. Always be attentive to improving all aspects of your business. This will help you stand out from your competitors and prosper over the long term.

19. Ask your customers what *else* and what *more* you can do for them. It's that simple: Ask customers how you can serve them better. Many times your customers will offer insights into ways you can improve, expand and grow with them. But you have to ask, listen and act upon this information.

20. Honor the diversity of your customers. Learn about their culture, religion and values. Show respect and appreciation for their needs, preferences and desires. Don't assume “one size fits all” because there is great variance by nationality, religion and even generations. Become a student of all these variables and more.

21. Give customers *lagniappe* — a little something extra. Apply the Cajun concept of *lagniappe* to give customers more than they expected...a treat, bonus or unexpected surprise.



These tips are excerpted from Craig's booklet

“Stellar Service!”

101 Top-Drawer Service Tips for Bottom Line Success”

which you can download or order hard copies through
ExpressionsOfExcellence.com/products.html.



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101 Top-Drawer Customer Service Techniques For Bottom Line Results:

Stellar Service! Delivering Great Service... Every Day in Every Way

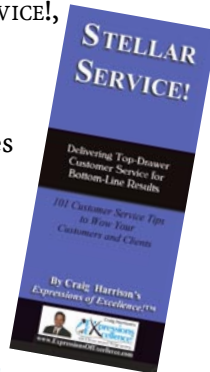


IN A TIGHT ECONOMY, CUSTOMER SERVICE is often the differentiator! Is your service stellar or stinky? Seize the service edge and keep customers for life! Let me show you how!\

There will always be competitors with lower prices. Yet you become unbeatable when you earn the trust, loyalty and devotion of your customers, clients and constituents...through STELLAR SERVICE!

STELLAR SERVICE! teaches you myriad strategies, methods and techniques for successfully serving your customers with style, swiftness and aplomb. You will complete this program with a checklist of action items to immediately and instantaneously implement. It's time you *Express Your Excellence!*

Excerpted from his book STELLAR SERVICE!, this presentation addresses customer service in person, over the telephone, through the Internet, and also addresses dealing with problem customers. Examples and role plays augment the instruction and stories used to teach improved customer service techniques.



Designed For YOU!

STELLAR SERVICE! cultivates a "bias to action" among service personnel. There is always a service response. Find out what it is and how to apply it — in every situation. Whether you are in hospitality, high-tech or health care, are in a call center, support or help desk environment, or in a retail environment, master STELLAR SERVICE and results will ensue!



Learning Objectives

- ▶ Learn magic words and phrases that please customers; Replace unproductive language with Lingo Franca — the language of service.
- ▶ Develop a phone demeanor reflecting compassion, concern, empathy, respect to build customer/brand loyalty.
- ▶ Sharpen your listening skills to hear the meta-message in each exchange: key concepts, ideas, fears and quell them.
- ▶ Develop a methodology for handling difficult customers to strengthen loyalty and retain customers for life.
- ▶ Learn valuable physical and psychological relaxation techniques for reducing stress and avoiding burnout.

How The Presentation Is Delivered

Role plays, scripts, stories, assessments and exercises make this training fun, easy, interactive and replicable.

About Your Presenter

CRAIG HARRISON is past president of the INTERNATIONAL CUSTOMER SERVICE ASSOCIATION's San Francisco-Silicon Valley chapter, and the NATIONAL SPEAKERS ASSOCIATION's Northern California chapter. His clients include UNITED AIRLINES, RAGAN MANAGEMENT SEMINARS, SBC PACIFIC BELL, PFIZER, THE SALVATION ARMY and HITACHI AMERICA. His service articles have appeared in SUPPORT WORLD, and his columns in *Transaction World* and *Customer Service Newsletter* appear regularly.

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