

**2015 ACORN Conference & Trade Show
Delta Prince Edward Hotel, Charlottetown, PE**

Workshop Title: Exceptional Customer Service

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Executive Summary

In direct marketing we have the advantage of connecting and building relationships with our customers – customer service is a key in this area. Do not strive for exceptional, over the top, customer service all the time. Do less, well. Delivering the same basic level of customer service consistently will serve you better. Meet your customer's needs easily the same way every time. Whatever you do promise, bend over backwards to make it happen. Set your expectations and remove doubt for your customers.

Detailed Notes

We have a distinct advantage over commodity marketing – the opportunity to connect directly with our customers and to establish authenticity, trust and relationship building. Customer service is an important part of building relationships.

Thinking of how you are offering customer service is very important. Every time you are in touch with your customers you either have a positive deposit going into your emotional bank account or a negative withdrawal.

Every time you have an opportunity to connect with a customer it is a moment of truth.

Remember you are on 24/7 when you own a business, especially when you live in a small community. How you represent yourself everywhere will affect your business.

Customer service is all perception; there are no facts about it. People perceive service in their own way.

The key is to fully meeting needs the easiest way the same way every time. People do not like change. Consistency in handling your moments of truth is important.

Research shows that you only get marginal more loyalty when you give exceptional customers service. As soon as you start exceeding expectations, when you don't it is seen as gaps in customer service. In truth, meeting basic needs, consistently, is the sweet spot for customer service.

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Fix problems quickly. Speed in which we resolve problems is key to customer satisfaction instead of item for item.

Unsatisfied Customers

2/3 of people will leave a business because they feel ignored, not getting good customer service. Most people will not complain and take their business elsewhere and tell people about it. Every time the average business provides service to 100 people they can lose the opportunity to work with 154 prospects.

Negative word of mouth spreads. Minimize the number of unsatisfied customers. Do the basics right.

If you have email, get back to them every day. If not possible include in info handed out that it may take 48 hours to get back to them – take care of presence of doubt.

People want to be served by someone who can handle the issue, take care of them.

Generate the feeling of paying attention and focusing on people, acknowledge customers who are waiting.

Get people's feedback: engage them if you are trying something new and you can turn a negative into a positive if the new product is not working out. Thank them for their opinion.

Address people by their names, pronounced correctly, spell that name correctly in correspondence.

Don't talk down to your customers. Local food shoppers are already savvy and knowledgeable. You may not know as much as your customers. If you are sending staff ensure they are well trained and can answer questions.

What you do promise, bend over backwards to provide it. If you say it and don't do, it will be negative.

Work on eliminating any doubt situations: "the absence of doubt" is what you want; keep your customers comfortable.

Set your expectations: for example, on your phone message say when they can expect to hear back from you – remove doubt.

You take the time to build an emotional bank account with your customers with your customer service. Take time to build loyalty with your regular customers.

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Managing customer service can be easier with regular customers than when chasing after new ones.

Having customers lets you do what you love. Be grateful for them.

Have a “whatever it takes” attitude since problems will happen. Use it as an opportunity to say thank you and improve. Make sure everyone feels better and that the problem is solved. Manage expectations. You won't be able to resolve every problem completely – sometimes customers just need to be heard, even if you can't do anything about it, give it a fair process. Let them feel heard and a time for resolution.

Remember to use empathy. You don't know what the other person is or has gone through.

Learn to have difficult conversations politely – sometimes customer service can come down to that.