

## Customer Care

Customer care can be summarised as an all encompassing plan to treat the customer as an individual with individual needs, perceptions and expectations. It is the ability of an organisation to manage its customers' expectations and deliver that little bit more. The responsibility lies at the feet of the senior management team to develop policies and procedures that ensure, in every way, the business, is customer-oriented, focused and ultimately driven to satisfy and exceed the expectations of its customers.

A customer oriented organisation will have a clearly defined strategy that supports and assists its staff to provide excellent customer service. The strategy will ensure that it is easy for all customers to do business with its organisation and ultimately make "doing business" a pleasure for all involved.

## The Fundamentals of Winning and Keeping a Customer

So where does customer care fit in? To the majority of customers, the measure of a company's business capability can be broken down into three distinct areas.

- Produce a product or provide a service that people want
- Make it easy for your customers to do business with you
- Make it a pleasure to do business with you

## The Importance of Customer Care

Providing an outstanding customer service can provide a competitive edge over businesses. If handled with negligence, customer service can damage the business's operations. Service statistics have been researched and recent figures state:

- One in five dissatisfied customers will tell twenty others of their problems.
- Satisfied customers, or customers who have had their complaints resolved, will tell between three and five people about their positive experience!
- It takes twelve positive service incidents to amend a negative one.
- It costs five to six times more to attract new customers than to keep old ones.
- Businesses which provide superior customer service can charge more, realise greater profits, increase their market share and have customers willingly pay more for their products simply because of the good service.

- Sixty-eight percent of customers stop doing business with a certain organisation because they are upset with the treatment they have received.
- Ultimately, people like doing business with people they like.

### What do Customers Want?

- Customers want to feel significant (important).
- Perceive that they are getting the best service available.
- Know that their requirements are understood.
- Have confidence in the employee who is providing the customer care/service.

### Ten Customer Care Commandments

As a professional, the need to provide excellent customer care should permeate every aspect of your working life. Paying attention to these ten customer care commandments is an excellent starting point.

1. First impressions count, regardless of the situation, ensure that your appearance, approach and attitude say – ‘Professional’.
2. Treat the customer as an individual.
3. It is vital that you know everything there is to know about your product, new developments, improvements and availability.
4. Exceed expectations, always ‘under promise and over deliver’.
5. Empathy, see things from the customer’s perspective and demonstrate understanding.
6. Flexibility – remember doing business with you should be easy and pleasurable.
7. Problem ownerships – take responsibility and see problems through to resolution. If the problem needs to be passed to another person or department, ensure that you monitor progress and keep the customer informed.
8. The Red Carpet Model – understand the importance of a complaint and ensure that your response is the appropriate one and will allay further difficulties.
9. Communication – ensure that all your customers, internal and external, know what is going on.

10. Compensation – however hard you work, things will go wrong, be prepared to compensate your customers for these situations.

