

Customer service: THE most important marketing tool for your business

Brochures, websites and other marketing documents are great - but it's the customer service you give that'll determine how your business is perceived.

Consistently excellent customer service is vital: and everyone in your business has a role to play.

At its best, excellent customer service will wow your customers and encourage them to tell their friends and colleagues how great your business is. It's about doing what you do well - but also about going the extra mile and over-delivering on their expectations.

Sound like hard work?

Well, consider this: 68% of customers are lost not because there's anything wrong with a particular product or service, but because the customer felt an attitude of indifference from the service provider. So if you don't look after your customers and make them feel valued, there's the very real risk that you could lose them.

So how can I wow my customers?

Here are some simple but effective ideas which your customers will appreciate:

- Keep in touch with your clients via a regular newsletter.
- Send thank you cards.
- Give gifts to your best customers.
- Follow up to see how they're getting on.
- Organise an in-house event.
- Hospitality: be it dinner, drinks, movies or a sporting event.

There are plenty more ideas: the only limit is your imagination! That said, it can be handy to get an outside perspective, so ask your customers, your friends and your staff for their ideas and opinions. FX Marketing will have some innovative ideas too.

Be open to these ideas, and then see which would work best for your business, and create systems and methods of implementing them so that they're implemented consistently.

Consistency is king

Customers have needs; and they have expectations. Over-delivering on these expectations is great; but under-delivering will have a negative impact on how they perceive your business. The only way to achieve this consistency is by having systems in place to deliver consistently excellent service. This means:

- Documenting how you do things.
- Providing check lists.
- Using scripts and templates for regular communications tasks.

Everything should then run like clockwork, no matter who's actually doing the work. This actually makes work easier and more pleasurable for your staff too – and new starters will quickly learn what's expected of them. Systemise the little things, so that resources are freed up for the more important tasks.

Crucially, your customer will always receive a consistent experience when doing business with you, which can mean more referrals, more recommendations, more customers - and more profit. **FX**

