

Selling Solutions Not Services

In this issue we take a look at one specific issue that has been raised many times. You don't sell your services. Customers & clients buy solutions to problems with products & services.

Believe it or not, no one actually buys your service. No one buys coaching.

No one buys consulting. No one buys financial planning. So what do people buy? Well, there are, in fact, two things people buy.

The first thing people buy is a solution to a problem.

People buy a service only because they believe it will solve certain problems and give them certain results. They are not buying the "how" of a service. Your service is simply the "how" you do it. Your service is the tool or method you use to solve problems and deliver results.

Do you buy a hammer because you just want a hammer? Do you buy a car because you just want a car? Do you go to the dentist because you happen to feel like having a filling? **These examples show you that you are buying a solution to a problem; you are buying a result. You would not buy a hammer, a car or go to the dentist unless they all solved problems and delivered results.**

Focus on telling someone all about "how" your coaching and consulting service works and what it is. At the end of the conversation (if they are still listening), they will have a good understanding of your "how" but they'll be left wondering **what problems you will solve for them and what results you will deliver.**

If people do not know what **problems** you will solve for them and the results you will deliver, it is highly unlikely that they will buy your service. If however you focus on understanding their problems and the results they will get, **you will be focusing on what people are buying and your chances of success will be dramatically increased.**

The second thing people buy is YOU.

Once someone has decided they have a problem they want solved, they then make a decision as to who will solve it for them. If you have

focused the conversation on telling them all about your "how" and what your service is, they will feel that you are focused on yourself and your needs. When the focus is on you, **people get the sense that you have your own best interest at heart and don't really care about them.** They will start to think you are simply trying to sell them something, and all sorts of sales resistance will surface.

If you have been focusing the conversation on understanding their problems, they will feel that you have their best interests at heart. They will start to trust you and open up to you. They will naturally decide you are the person to solve their problems (assuming of course there are problems to be solved, etc).

So in summary, don't focus on selling your services. Instead, have conversations where you focus on understanding problems and then people will assume you know "how" to deliver results. The more you focus on understanding their problems, the more they will trust that you are the one they should be working with.



TEST YOURSELF Test Your Customer Service Knowledge!

Are you a customer service champion? Pick the correct answer to each of these ten questions, and understand why these answers are correct. Have some fun and see how you get on.

1. A complaining customer is?

- A. Always right
- B. Almost right
- C. Often lying
- D. Always the customer

2. Customers who complain?

- A. Had unhappy childhoods
- B. Are genetically predisposed to be sourpusses
- C. Have trouble in their primary relationships
- D. Are doing you a service in identifying what isn't working in your business or organization

3. The best reward for your customer service representatives is?

- A. Earplugs and punching bags
- B. Valium or other mind-numbing drugs
- C. Recognition and appreciation on your part
- D. Anger management seminars

4. CRM stands for?

- A. Customers Rarely Matter
- B. Can't Remember Much
- C. Communicating Random Meaning
- D. Customers Rudimentarily Managed
- E. Customer Relationship Management

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5. Customers who complain want?

- A. Something for nothing
- B. To be heard and have their experience validated
- C. To vent for the sport of it
- D. To be made majority shareholders in the company

6. Customer Service departments?

- A. Are the afterthought that cleans up messes other departments cause
- B. Build customer loyalty
- C. Are leaders in understanding customer behaviour patterns and market research

7. For a company to be considered service-oriented?

- A. It must mention customer service in its mission statement
- B. At least 19.5% of its employees must work in the customer service department
- C. Its managers must at one time have been CSRs
- D. Customer service must be addressed by all departments

8. A Call Centre is defined as?

- A. The midpoint in duration of a telephone call
- B. A revenue disaster area
- C. A place where middle-of-the-road calls coexist with liberal and arch-conservative calls
- D. A location where complaints and problems are converted into successful

saves for your customers and your company

9. Customer Care is?

- A. A managed care medical program for customers
- B. A cute alternative phrase that looks good in company brochures
- C. A new programme where customers care for themselves
- D. A philosophy wherein the customer is wrapped in service even before a problem arises

10. Customer Service Culture is?

- A. A new form of yoghurt where the lid removes itself for you
- B. Behaviour being analysed

in a Petrie dish for growths
 C. A mythical civilization in which everyone smiles and welcomes you when they meet
 D. An environment where customer service permeates the thinking of the entire company



ANSWERS

- 1. D. Customers are often wrong but they never stop being the customer. Right or wrong they are to be accorded respect and cared for. Focus on the insights their complaint offers.
- 2. D. Complaining customers alert you to systemic problems before they drive off more customers. Their complaints represent many more customers who may not spend the time to tell you about problems, instead just leaving you for your competitors.
- 3. C. Your staff deserves and thrive on recognition and appreciation. Take the time to celebrate them collectively and individually. Whether through cards, gifts, surprises, outings and acknowledgements at company functions, let them know how important, valued and appreciated they are to you and the company.
- 4. E. CRM refers to systems designed to track and cater to each customer's whims and preferences over a lifetime. CRM is about managing customer relationships over the long haul by attending to their individual needs.
- 5. B. Complaining customers have several

needs. Implicit in their actual complaint is also a need to be heard and their unhappiness acknowledged. Fixing the problem is important. So is letting them know you understand their displeasure and feel for them. One without the other is an incomplete remedy for customer complaints. Don't forget the emotional component in complaints.

6. B and C. When you solve a problem for a customer you actually build confidence and allegiance. You've proven you stand behind your products or service, giving customers a warm and fuzzy feeling of safety and protection. As well, you tap the pulse of the customers. Their complaints and feedback give valuable insight into how well your products are assembled, documented, sold and hold up. Listening to customers tells you a great deal about your company's products and services (and your competitors' too) from real life customers. That's invaluable!

7. D. A Customer Service orientation must transcend the service department. All departments must understand and model good customer service for the company to be considered strong in service. Many problems can be avoided outright by attending to customer service. Why

should the customer service department carry the weight of service for the entire company. Don't operate under the adage "never enough time to do it right but always enough time to do it over." Get it right at the source, in all departments.

8. D. Make your call centre is a shining example of your company's commitment to its customers. Your centre is a visible symbol of your company's commitment to customer success.

9. D. Customer Care is a philosophy wherein customers are cared for by a company - the entire time they're customers. Care isn't just to be administered as a salve for problems. Demonstrate care from the start and your customers will flock to your products and services.

10. D. Customer Service Culture is the infusion of service ideals into every department, from sales, shipping and receiving to legal, human resources and beyond

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More useful information, advice and tips coming up next month