

Wake Up - Your Customer's Speaking



Have you ever felt really peeved when a supermarket decides not to sell an item that you've tried from their store, liked it, and then incorporated it into your general shopping requirements?

Or perhaps an own-brand item from a pharmacy that is not only cheaper than anything else on the market but also does the job so much better, and then the pharmacy decide to withdraw that product?

Or maybe you've put yourself out to support a local farm shop and buy much of their produce which isn't particularly competitive but nice quality and their home cured ham is exceptional, well worth the 20 mile trip every now and again, and then that shop replaces their home cured ham with ordinary supermarket ham at the same price?

If the answer to any of the above questions is yes then you will be among many thousands of shoppers who feel they have been let down by a company that they have supported.

Many big companies especially seem to have lost touch with their customers and actually treat their customers with contempt and really couldn't care less about individual customers; the bottom line profit figure is the only thing that counts.

If a supermarket takes off its shelves an own-brand item that is popular with the local community because it isn't producing

as much profit as a well known brand, it will start to alienate its customer base; particularly in the supermarket business, there is a lot of competition around, and it only takes a few customers to become disenchanted with a supermarket they use and start trying out one or more other supermarkets, before the profits start to fall from the original supermarket. They will tell their friends about another supermarket and before long a small trickle of exiting customers becomes a stream.

A similar sort of thing has happened whereby big corporations have thought that they were being so clever by saving a lot of money by outsourcing certain services, for example call centres, to countries with cheaper wage bills; in the short term this policy does appear to be good, but what about the customers?

Pretty well anyone that you talk to will say that they get confused and frustrated when dealing with foreign call centres, not for any racist reasons but purely because most people at the foreign call centres may be able to speak their language pretty well but they still have a difficult-to-understand accent and they are not aware of the way of speaking, mannerisms, humour, etc., in a particular country.

It is pretty well universally agreed that people in call centres should be brought up and educated in the same country as the people they are supporting. Many banks in the UK are finally waking up to public reaction to call centres.

So these corporations using foreign call centres will eventually become losers, big time, when one or more of their competitors realise that satisfied customers are the corner stone of their business and that if their business is built on a shaky foundation of bottom-line profits, then a small tremor in public feeling and awareness could bring their whole corporation down.

5 Tips To Improve Customer Service

Good customer service is one of the most important parts of your business. It's essential to get repeat customers, the backbone of most businesses. And unsatisfied customers are always fast to spread their unhappiness. So here are a few tips about customer service:

1. Be polite and use appropriate style. This is a must. Your clients will respect you a lot more if you act and sound professional.

2. The customer is always right. That is an old saying, but always true. The problem or blame may be on the customer's side, but you should never tell this outright. If it's a problem on his side, just tell him the steps to fix it and be understanding. And, if the problem is on your side, do not be afraid to say sorry and explain the problem if the situation warrants it.

3. Be willing to go the extra mile. It's the little things that count. When you can do more than asked do not be afraid to, your customers will love you for it.

4. Make your customer feel comfortable asking questions. Answer all questions you receive promptly and politely. The fact that they may not be taking part in your latest promotion or buying your latest product doesn't make their question is less important. It may be less profitable for you, but your customer could not care less about these things. Who knows, they could be planning a big purchase, or would have if they had been treated well.

5. Always follow-up if you expect a problem. You do not need to follow your customers every step of the way. But if you notice a problem, or just answered a particularly complicated request, it's best to make sure everything is resolved before you move on. Make it easy to contact you if there is still something wrong.

Outsourcing Can Be Your Ticket To Success

Outsourcing: Identifying Reliable Sources

Outsourcing is when you hire someone from outside of your business to perform certain necessary tasks.

Different marketers have different reasons for outsourcing their business tasks. It all depends on what they want or need to accomplish, how much time they can personally devote to particular tasks, and how they value their time.

One mistake that many small business owners make is thinking they have to do everything themselves, either for reasons of creative control, or because they think outsourcing is not a justifiable expense.

The truth is, if you can outsource part of your business workload, you will be able to devote more of your time to tasks that hold more value and importance for your business.

In some cases, business people outsource some of their work because they do not have the equipment or resources, or they do not have the expertise to do it themselves. Or they may simply need help through a busy period.

Whatever the reason for outsourcing, if planned with purpose, it can contribute to the productivity and ultimate success of a business.

One advantage of outsourcing is the fact that it is much more efficient than hiring, training and supervising new employees. Simply hire a professional, tell them what needs to be done and let them go to it.

A side benefit is you won't need more office space to accommodate more people. Not only does outsourcing leverage your time, it can also help to leverage your resources.

Additionally, when you outsource some of your workload, you won't need to worry about additional paperwork involved with hiring an employee, such as tax forms and scheduling.

And you won't have employee costs like taxes, vacation time, workers compensation and so on.



Another advantage is that you won't need to purchase or lease new equipment or go through the ever-challenging process of learning new software or new skills.

The key benefit to outsourcing is the time it frees up for you to concentrate on more important business-building tasks.

You can focus on your marketing efforts; work on improving your customer service; devote some time to new product development; speed up your delivery system; develop new markets; land some bigger customers and larger orders; expand your services to take on any overflow your competitors can't handle.

Some small business marketers may look at outsourcing as a burden of expense rather than a benefit. "How can you justify the expense," they ask, "when sales and income are low?"

The thing is, if sales are low, that is exactly why you need to outsource some of your tasks – so you can devote more time and attention to your marketing and advertising in order to generate more sales, faster.

The key is to have a solid marketing plan. Know what you need to do to achieve your sales and income goals; identify the tasks that are critical for you to pay personal attention to, and determine which tasks can be delegated to an outside service.

Outsourcing is just one of many resources at your disposal. When used wisely, outsourcing can definitely contribute to your business and marketing success.

As a business owner, outsourcing is an important component that you may want to add to your business so that it may continue to grow and not become stagnant. To develop a good outsourcing process, you need to determine who you will use as a resource to fulfil your outsourcing needs.

As a business owner, it is important to trust and know who you are outsourcing your business projects to. If you do not manage the outsource process correctly, you could end up with a bad outsourcing experience. Case in point, you win a bid for a large project that has sections that you want to outsource. You choose to outsource to someone you find online.

However, you did not take the time to check their reference and you end up with someone who does not meet with your expectations. Unfortunately, before the project was completed, you realised that the person's words in writing about their expertise does not equal with the skill set shown on the project. Now you are stuck with a project that has gone bad and a situation where you may have to fire someone from the project.

To find good outsourcing personnel, you much start with the basics. Make a list of what you need this person to do and then make sure the to do list lines up with the overall project goals. Once you have the list, determine the experience that your outsourcing candidate must have in order for you to consider them for the project. Use a reputable service as a middle-man for your outsourcing personnel search.

When the list of outsourcing candidates have been narrowed down to your final list, interview them and check their references.

When searching for outsource personnel, keep in mind that you can use temporary agencies (you want to use one that has a well documented track record of success matching of businesses to candidate).

Some local vendors which are temporary agencies may have an online presence and would also be considered online resources for your outsourcing needs.

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Next month: How To Ask A Closing Question...And Then 'Shut-Up' :: Five Ways To Make Your Advertising Work Harder :: 5 Direct Marketing Tips

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