

Ten Rules to Great Customer Service

Think about the last time you had a negative experience when purchasing a service or a product. Did a business fail to return your call when you left a message? Or maybe a sales associate or your local super store didn't know the difference between a USB and a thumb drive? Perhaps you were left on hold for an inordinate amount of time when you called a company's toll free catalog line.

Negative buying experiences are almost always linked to poor customer service. It's rare to find great customer support even though most businesses claim they put their customers first.

Good customer service is essential for all businesses and providing it isn't that difficult if company employees uphold these ten basic rules:

1. **Commit to quality service.** Everyone needs to be devoted to creating a positive experience for the customer. Always aim to go above and beyond client expectations.
2. **Know your products.** Conveying knowledge about products and services will help win a client's trust and confidence. Know the products, services, returns and rebooking policies inside out. Anticipate the types of questions clients will ask.
3. **Know your clients.** Learn everything you can about your clients so you can tailor your service approach to their needs and habits. Talk with people making sure you're listening to their complaints to get to the root of client dissatisfaction.
4. **Treat everyone with courtesy and respect.** Remember that every contact with a client, whether it is e-mail, phone, written correspondence, or a face-to-face meeting leaves an impression. Use phrases such as "sorry to keep you waiting," "we appreciate your business," "you're welcome," and "it's been a pleasure".
5. **Never argue with a client.** We know that clients are not always right. However, instead of focusing on what went wrong in a particular situation, concentrate and focus on how to correct the situation. Research shows that 7 out of 10 customers will do business with you again if you resolve the complaint in their favor.
6. **Do not leave clients hanging.** Callbacks should be handled with a sense of urgency. Clients want immediate resolution. If you give it to them, you will probably obtain their repeat business.
7. **Always provide what you promise.** Failure to do this will result in loss of credibility and clients. If you can't make good on your promise, apologize and offer some other resolution, appropriate alternative, or compensation.

8. **Assume clients are telling the truth.** Even though it may appear that clients aren't always telling the truth, give them the benefit of the doubt. Did you know that most clients will go out of their way not to complain? In fact, they often will avoid it and go somewhere else instead. If someone does complain, appreciate the time they have taken and treat it as an opportunity to improve your business.

9. **Focus on making clients into satisfied customers, not making money.** Remember that keeping the client's business is more important than closing or making the sale. Did you know it takes six times longer to attract a new customer than it does to keep an existing one?

10. **Make it easy for them to spend!** Eliminate unnecessary steps, assist them in a process, explain to them what they need to do or where they need to go, demonstrate how products work, and do whatever you can to facilitate a satisfied client!

And don't forget the "golden rule": Treat your clients/patients as you would choose to be treated.