



Four Ways to Show You Truly Care About Your Customers

Here are four simple techniques you can use to build strong relationships with your customers.

By Mac McIntire

Some very simple words and actions go a long way to improve relationships with your customers. You can demonstrate your concern and appreciation for your customers through four caring responses that send a message of thoughtful friendliness. Every one of your employees should be well versed in the *Four A's of Customer Service*. When used regularly these four qualities show how much you value your customers.

Acknowledge

One of the best ways to send a message to your customers of how important they are to you is to simply acknowledge them. **Notice people** when they enter your business. Be aware of those who are around you. Make eye contact and smile. As soon as you have an opportunity to speak, acknowledge the customer and greet them in a courteous and friendly manner.

Several years ago I read a survey that asked people to identify the one thing that would cause them to take their business elsewhere. The results were surprising. Only 20% of the respondents said they would take their business elsewhere if they were treated "rudely." But 86% of those surveyed said they would stop doing business with a company if they were treated "indifferently" — where an employee acted as if their patronage was not important. One of the greatest — and simplest — things you can do to build a relationship with your customers is to merely acknowledge their presence in your establishment.

Another way to acknowledge the customer is to **respond appropriately** to customer comments and inquiries. Acknowledge what people say. Never ignore a customer's comment. If they say it, they want you to hear it. Find a way to acknowledge every comment from a customer. Say something to show you are listening to your customers.

Some comments call for a quick response, such as when a person mentions a new home, a grandchild, or an upcoming vacation. You can quickly acknowledge the comment with a simple response such as:

- *Great!*
- *That's terrific.*
- *Congratulations.*
- *That's wonderful news.*
- *How exciting.*
- *You must be thrilled.*
- *You deserve a vacation.*

Obviously, all customer concerns or complaints should immediately be acknowledged. Respond with an appropriate apology. Be sure to include in your response the reason for the concern or complaint and tell the person what you will do to help. Here are some examples of what you could say:

- *I'm sorry you couldn't get into your room. Let me make you a new key.*
- *I apologize for the delay. How can I assist you?*
- *I'm sorry we're out of Clam Chowder. The Corn Chowder is equally good.*
- *I'm sorry you had to return your laptop. I can transfer your old hard drive to your new laptop if you'd like.*
- *I know you are in a lot of pain. I'll get you in to see the doctor as quickly as I can.*

Appreciate

You can **show appreciation** to the customer during almost any interaction. At a minimum you should include a statement of appreciation at the end of a transaction. For example you might say:

- *Thanks for calling. I enjoyed talking to you.*
- *Thanks for staying with us. Come see us again soon.*
- *Thanks for being so patient and understanding.*
- *I appreciate your willingness to work with me on this.*
- *It's been wonderful seeing you again.*
- *You're my favorite customer.*

One of the best ways to build customer loyalty is to so show how much you appreciate your customer's business. Thank them for their business and express appreciation for their continued patronage.

Affirm

Affirmations are positive statements you make that **compliment others**. People feel good when they are complimented. And customers who feel good about a business tend to patronize that business again and again.

Compliments are easy to make. Be sure you are sincere and really mean it. Don't invent compliments, but look for the good in others. Find things to praise, such as:

- *Wow! I love your car!*
- *Excellent choice, sir.*
- *You look cheerful this morning, Madam.*
- *What a nice looking family.*
- *Your kids are so well behaved.*
- *That was an amazing accomplishment.*

Assure

Whenever a customer has a need or concern regarding the delivery of your products or services, he or she wants assurance that you will take personal responsibility to resolve the problem. After acknowledging the customer's concern and expressing appreciation that the issue was brought to your attention, **make a confidence building statement** that assures the customer you will handle the situation, such as:

- *I'll take care of that for you personally, sir.*
- *I will make sure it is in your room when you arrive.*
- *My name is Maria. I will call you back in a few minutes with an answer.*
- *I'll do it myself to make sure it gets done properly.*
- *I'll check into it immediately and contact you as soon as I find out what is going on.*
- *Let me take it and get it fixed for you. It will be done when you get back.*

These four considerate responses go a long way toward the development of lasting relationships with you customers. Practice using them with your customers (and your family). Both they and you will be glad you did. §

Innovative Management Group offers two-, four- and eight-hour customer service training programs for managers, supervisors and front-line employees. We custom-design the training programs to instill the right service values and behaviors needed to create loyal customers for your business. Call us to see how we can help you focus your employees on the things that matter most to your customers.

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