



# Differentiation Based on Quality Service "The Customer is Our Most Important Asset"

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In its' recent study, Human Resource Development Canada estimates that there are approximately 14, 000 Call Centres in Canada presently (including those with agents of six or more). Further to that, 42% of Canadian Call Centres are expecting expansion within the next 5 years. Reasons stated for this growth include:

- a greater focus on the customer;
- delivering strategic advantage by delivering superior customer service;
- wider acceptance of phone and electronic channels for conducting business; and,
- wider availability of technologies for cost effective and efficient Call Centres.

In today's competitive market, organizations are required to look for alternatives to doing business which enable increased levels of customer service with decreased costs. Call Centres have enabled us to centralize operations and information, respond to customer demand across multiple channels and time zones, support and promote self-service and automated options and create efficiencies for customers in terms of access and convenience, to name just a few. What remains the most important aspect of business success today is the ability to differentiate based on service; to become an organization that embraces the philosophy of "the customer is our most important asset."

In this article we will briefly explore the difference between core and quality service and focus on how investing in our human resources can enhance customer loyalty and therefore increase an organizations' profit margin. Tips for selecting a trainer as well as types of training will also be identified.

## CORE VS QUALITY SERVICE

Core service can be defined as the *procedural side of service*, consisting of established systems and procedures to deliver your product or service. It is your "reason for being" and includes three elements: cost, delivery and quality. Customers choose to do business with you because they believe these elements will meet their expectations, however, each of these are easily replicated by a competitor – they are not easy to differentiate and therefore will never score high points in earning a customer's loyalty.

Quality service is defined as the *personal side of service*, including people and processes. It incorporates how your customer is treated in the interactions they have while conducting business. It is this personal side of business that enables an organization to differentiate themselves – to consistently meet and exceed the customer's expectations and provide them with a reason to want to return.

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## **QUALITY SERVICE – BUILDING CUSTOMER AMBASSADORS**

Customers are knowledgeable and have high expectations for service quality. As companies continue to differentiate themselves based on service that is A+ and consistently delivered, the service bar will continue to rise. Those companies not evolving to meet this demand will see a decrease in market share as once satisfied customers are becoming loyal to someone else. This reinforces the importance of the human assets within our organizations. Customers use your Call Centre because they need something...

- a question answered
- support for a product already purchased or support in making a product decision
- the desire to be heard or understood
- to place an order or find out when their order will be delivered....

Research shows that customers intuitively make 11 impressions about your organization in the first 7 seconds of contact. Having front-line representative who recognize and value the importance of the customer and possess the right skills, attitudes and behaviours to provide consistently high quality experiences are essential to long-term organizational success!

Recent statistics estimate that if a company spends 2-5% of its annual payroll on employee training, it should realize a 10% increase in net profit. Furthermore, companies with superior customer service and a loyal customer base can charge up to 10% more than their competitors. So, if you train your employees to provide superior customer service, your net profit can increase by 20%.

### **TYPES OF TRAINING**

Consider the following 10 reasons for poor service:

1. Uncaring employees.
2. Poor employee training.
3. Negative attitudes of employees towards customers.
4. Differences in perception between what business think customers' want and what customers actually want.
5. Differences in perception between the product or service business they provide and what customers think they will receive.
6. Differences in perception between the way businesses think customers want to be treated and the way customers really want to be treated, or are actually treated.
7. No customer service philosophy within the company.
8. Poor handling and resolution of complaints.
9. Employees are not empowered to provide excellent service, take responsibility and make decisions that will exceed the customers' expectations.
10. Poor treatment of employees as customers.

Every Call Centre will have unique training needs because of the type of business and level of knowledge and skills of their employees. Training that can reduce or eliminate the reasons for poor service is the first place to start. Other types of training to consider include:

- Personalizing the service experience.
- Identifying and meeting customer needs and expectations in a way that maintains the integrity of the organization.

- Sales – how to value sell and cross-sell in the Call Centre.
- Understanding how to recognize and reduce processes that cause barriers to customers doing business.
- Becoming a self-directed team including skills on; consensus, dealing with team conflict, decision-making and problem solving, change compatibility, stress management, group work skills, a positive climate and shared leadership.
- Building customer loyalty – asking strategic questions and capitalizing on that information to strengthen the customers' relationship to the organization.

## **TIPS FOR SELECTING A TRAINER**

The following are some questions to ask when looking for a trainer (or training company):

- Does the trainer demonstrate a complete understanding of my problem, situation or need?
- Has the trainer spent time, asked questions and researched to gain a full understanding of my organization's culture, people and customers?
- Has the trainer fully and accurately explained the approach that will solve my problem?
- Do I think that the proposed approach will be successful?
- Is the style of the trainer going to be a fit for our organization? Will the trainer customize the training to meet the different learning styles of the participants? What types of facilitation methods are used?
- Would I consider this trainer to be a customer service ambassador? Is he or she passionate and knowledgeable about customer service?
- Is the trainer experienced enough for my situation?
- Is the trainer trying to fit my problem into a pre-defined training workshop, or will there be customization?
- What differentiates this trainer from another one?
- Will there be pre and post training support?
- Is the cost of the product or service fair and will I receive value for my money?
- What type of performance measurements are in place to ensure there is a change in behaviour, skill and/or attitude of participants?
- Is this trainer able to support on-going training requirements or do they have a limited training focus?

Customers are your most important asset! To maintain and grow your customer base it is critical that all aspects of your business embrace this philosophy. Investing in your human resources up front will enable your organization to reap the benefits of a loyal customer base!



For more information on our training programs and consulting services please contact us:

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