



Making Customers Feel Important

Customers do business with us because they have a need. On the surface, these are tangible needs – to buy a product or service, to get directions, to receive education or information, etc. In addition to meeting the tangible need, we need to understand how to meet their intangible need. This relates to how they want to be treated during the interaction. Here is a simple acronym providing five behaviours to incorporate into your interactions to assist in making your customers feel important.

The word value is defined as “worth; merit; importance; to regard highly; to prize”. To make a customer feel important we need to believe in the value they bring to our business. When we believe this, our attitude becomes optimistic and our ability to deal with difficult customers, treat every customer with respect, want to solve their problems and meet needs naturally evolves. Five behaviours to incorporate into your service interactions spell the word V.A.L.U.E .

Validate

Show that you care about their needs by confirming or demonstrating empathy on the human level as well as the business level. Ensure you aren't inadvertently discounting your customers by treating them like a task on your list, rushing through the interaction to get to the next customer, providing them with the standard answer, thinking you know what they need because you have heard it before, enforcing policies without demonstrating empathy to how they might be feeling.

Act

Do something. If a customer is complaining, write it down or take action. Show that you appreciate any and all feedback a customer is willing to provide, no matter how they provide it. If they are experiencing a problem, solve it. If you can't answer a question, find the answer.

Listen

Actively listen to the words, tone of voice and body language your customer is using. Focus fully on your interaction to listen for any unspoken messages. For example: if their body language starts open and begins to close, either what you are saying or the manner in which you are saying it, is not meeting the customer need. If they are pausing in response to questions you are asking, they may not understand. You make a customer feel valued when you demonstrate that you care enough to listen to what they say and how they feel.

Understand

Use perception checks to clarify the need from the customer's perspective, demonstrate empathy, ask questions, make suggestions – communicate. Consider putting yourself in their shoes, seek first to understand not to be understood. When we want to meet a customer's need we should be listening more than we are talking.

Empower

Empower is defined as to *give official authority to*. Give your customers a feeling of authority right from the start by acknowledging their presence and then giving your full attention. Empower yourself by identifying areas within your business that make it challenging to be able to meet needs, make decisions or problem solve on the spot with a customer. Customers do not

want to be passed around, and research shows us a customer with a problem who receives adequate and immediate recovery (the problem is solved to their satisfaction) have a greater chance of becoming loyal to your business than those who never had a problem at all. Finally, invest enough time with your customer to ensure they leave the interaction with enough information to be able to use the product or service they have just purchased. For example, give them instructions and some useful tips on how to use the new camera or software they have purchased, provide them with information on how to access the warranty, etc.

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