



The “Customer Report Card”

The success of your organization lies in the evaluation
from its most important asset – the customer!

Call Centres have become a key component to organizational success today. They provide a means to centralizing functions and information management leading to decreased expenses and a greater return on investment. But the greatest asset to organizational success still lies in the ability to create a loyal base of customers. Consider the concept of a “customer report card”. At each contact point within your organization, the customer is subconsciously providing you with a rating – if they consistently rate you A+ congratulations – you are well on your way to loyalty! But what if they aren’t? Time is the greatest resource we all seem to be lacking and the same is true of our customers. They are demanding exceptional levels of service and convenience, which includes the ability to get what they need, when and how they need it. Consider how two factors may be causing your customers to turn to your competition.

Employees

Next to your customers, your employees are your next most valuable assets. The Call Centre Representative today must be an ambassador for your organization, equipped with the following skills:

- Ability to assess and deal effectively with all types of clients (including the more difficult ones) within a fast-paced, high demand environment;
- Ability to keep on top of product and service knowledge;
- The talent to communicate effectively over the phone, via email or other written correspondence (which includes understanding the impact of tone, pitch, articulation, choice of words, non-verbals etc.);
- Ability to actively listen, come up with creative problem solving solutions and make on the spot decisions;
- Take initiative in identifying customer-related trends and needs;
- Build customer relationships, value sell (up-sell), use “wow” strategies; and,
- Maintain and transmit a positive attitude and approach to customers, co-workers and managers.

Wow – that isn’t even an all-encompassing list! These are the folks your customers rate your organization on – are you getting an A+ or an F? Research indicates the way an organization treats its employees can be a mirror image of how employees will treat the customer. Take a look inside first and answer the following questions.

Do you:

- commit to training your employees and developing the necessary skills and knowledge?
- hire individuals with the required “soft skills” to be successful (i.e., time management, attitude/optimism, problem solving/decision making and customer orientation)?
- empower your employees, or do they work under parameters that cause them to have to ask for permission first on customer related decisions?
- reward and recognize initiative and attempt and embrace the analogy of “FAIL” (from action I learn)?
- commit to daily coaching and mentoring?
- measure performance based on quantity of calls received or quality?

- encourage customer complaints as opportunities and train your employees to turn these into loyalty building possibilities?

How would your employees rate the organization?

Technology

Today key buzzwords include Customer Relationship Management (CRM) solutions, Integrated Voice Response (IVR) systems, Computer Telephone Integration (CTI) systems and the Automated Call Distributor (ACD), to name a few. While the ability to integrate information management is critical to an organization's ability to track usage, identify trends, provide targeted marketing or streamline customer contact options, consider how your use of technology could in fact be setting up barriers to service. Answer the following questions:

- How long do your customers wait in the queue to reach a live representative? Do your most valuable customers have to wait in line with everyone else, or do you have a priority rating built into your systems?
- If your Call Centre Representatives are available to take a call, do your systems still force the customer to make their way through a number of self-selected options first?
- How many automated options are you providing your customers? You may believe options provide flexibility to customers. The truth is, you may be setting up a barrier that makes your customers wish they had the option of "push 1 to speak directly to our competitors".
- Do your information management systems provide your Call Centre Representatives with a complete profile of the customer when the call is taken, or do representatives have to ask customers for this information each time? For example: when I phone a Call Centre and am asked to provide some type of identifying information (such as my home phone number, last name or card number), I don't expect to be asked the same very question by the representative taking the call. If this information is not used as an identifier – don't ask up front for it!
- How easy is it to reach a live person?
- How many times do your customers hear "your call is valuable to us, please remain on the line..."

Technology has great advantages – without it we couldn't be running successful Call Centres at all. The lesson is to consider how you use technology to benefit the customer, not just the organization. "Try it!" Become your own customer. Try to contact your Call Centre in every way possible. Be honest with your evaluation – how "user welcoming" are your systems? Would you give your organization an A+?

The rating your organization will receive on its' customer report card is up to you. Think like your customer, make the necessary changes and then continually ask for their feedback – a dissatisfied customer will tell up to 10 people about it, a satisfied customer is just as apt to leave and go to your competitor, but a loyal customer is yours for life!

Customer Service Works

Jayne Kowal (Jayne@customerserviceworks.com)

Ph: 403-257-7732

www.customerserviceworks.com

www.customerserviceworks.com

For educational and/or training purposes only. Not to be reproduced for financial gain or without prior written permission by Customer Service Works.