

Customer and Customer Service

Backgrounds

- Everyone in the customer, supplier relationship should be aware of one thing: You only have a secure job because there are customers out there who are willing to spend money on the services and/or products offered
- Yes, this is also increasingly true for the administrative apparatus in public authorities and overhead areas. Yesterday they were all relatively well in the saddle, tomorrow in the age of AI and robotics you will very quickly replace all those who can be replaced by the machine. In the end, even in these areas, only those remain for which the customer is willing to pay or, in other words, where the human being has a greater added value for the customer than the machine

The basis

- when a purchased thing works, it's fun and creates customer satisfaction
- commercial purchases, if they work, are usually value-adding
- If there are incorrect orders, malfunctions or general problems, this is unpleasant for the first time, but not yet a leg break. It only becomes a problem if the customer receives no or insufficient support, the support takes too long or, in the worst case, the customer is left completely alone with the problem

It is less important what an item, a service cost when it was purchased, it is much more important how a customer felt when the purchase was delivered too late, defective or faulty or the service did not lead to the desired goal and how the manufacturer, the seller or the service provider then (not) treated or (not) supported him.

Whether a customer comes back depends primarily on how he felt at such a moment and not on the price

Examples of how it shouldn't work

- The classic is when an (Internet) seller refers to the manufacturer in the event of a guarantee or warranty case and leaves the customer out in the cold – sorry NO GO
- In authorities, they like to refer to a large number of § and send the customer home – sorry NO GO. It is not surprising if customers applaud when the authorities become aware of job cuts

Customer expectation

The more expensive a purchase is, the higher the buyer's perceived expectation of the customer service of the seller, the manufacturer or the service provider, regardless of what is written in the fine print. I, for example, come from an industry where you talk about unit prices of \$20 million upwards. This means that everyone on the buyer's side has the mental right to support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, no matter what the contract says. Believe me, if you leave such a customer alone with his problem, then it can be very unpleasant and, in the worst case, who wants to lose a customer who is willing to pay > \$ 20 million per piece purchased; I think that goes without saying. This has often not yet reached service providers and authorities; you pay horrendous fees and you get almost nothing in terms of service and performance. It's very bad with authorities, you have to pay fees in addition to the taxes you have already paid anyway and are often treated like the last buffoon

Communication

If you have promised anything during the sale, warranty, repair process, you should keep it. If there is a change or delay for any reason, inform the customer at the earliest possible time and give him a reason that he can understand and confidently pass on. The customers are often very experienced and know what can happen, but they also have to be able to plan and therefore they need the information from them

Customers don't ask for miracles, but customers have a legitimate expectation that they will be talked to and treated honestly

During a customer meeting, it is best never to tell the customer what is not possible or never give him a flat NO. If possible, explain the facts and offer alternatives to the customer and give them a price tag for each alternative. Never make the mistake of wanting to make the decision for the customer, always let the customer decide for himself, if possible.

Listen

If you have a customer on the phone or communicate via e-mail, listen carefully and be sure that you have understood the customer. If necessary, ask! Never part with the feeling that there are still open, unclear points. The prime example of this is, it was not clear what was intended, they start the whole machine on both sides and after two weeks it turns out that the topic is completely off the mark – Waterloo, only losers

Damage repair, problem solving

If it is not possible to help the customer in the end, because things have to be clarified at a higher level, then try to help the customer temporarily; Believe me, he will thank you forever.

If you are unable to provide competent customer service, e.g. 24/7, then one option is to provide excellent **technical data** (instructions for use, error logic, etc.), provide **forums** and **question/answer portals** where the customer can help himself. Remember, if you only want to sell, without corresponding downstream customer service, the customer will see them exactly the same way, as a disposable product

The accompanying 10 Golden Rules (which cannot be repeated often enough)

1. A **customer** is the most important person and must be treated as such.
2. A **customer** is not dependent on us. We depend on him.
3. A **customer** is not an interruption to our work, he is the origin of it. We are not doing Him any favors by serving Him; it gives us the opportunity to do so.
4. A **customer** is an integral and welcome part of our business
5. A **customer** is not just a cold statistic, a name on a computer list, or a general ledger sheet. He is a person with inclinations, prejudices, feelings and emotions like any of us
6. A **customer** is not someone you can argue with, nor someone you can criticize. No one has ever won a dispute with a customer.
7. A **customer** is a person who entrusts us with his equipment and requirements. It's our job to meet their requirements on time and within budget.
8. The **customer** expects his contract to be fulfilled with a profit for him and for us.
9. A **customer** should be treated as we would like to be treated ourselves when we are a customer
10. A **customer** expects solutions and not just explanations