

Customer, How Do I Love Thee? Let Me Count the Ways.
(poetry borrowed from Elizabeth Barrett Browning)

Customer satisfaction guaranteed.

Every company values its customers; right? After all, there is no business without them. But *how* does a company demonstrate that value? In what ways are tactics and strategies shaped by customer demands and driven by customer satisfaction? Perhaps they aren't. Sometimes we lose sight of the customer as we focus on the bottom line. But forgetting that the customer is the most important focus is precisely what will alter that all-important profit and loss statement. We must *love* our customers. We must treat each of them as though he or she, alone, determines our strength as a company. Because each does. And we need to show all of them just how much they mean to us.

The customer is always right.

Let's consider the things that make (and keep) consumers happy. When clients have a question or a problem, can they speak to a real person when they call your business, or must they navigate through a bothersome automated substitute? And what about when they make a special request? Does your company do everything possible to meet their needs? And have you ever followed up with customers? Have you given them a survey about their experiences with your company? What have you done with the data collected? Do you act? Reshape policy? Modify procedures? You should.

The customer is king.

Customer service is one of the most important ways you can market your products and services. Providing an exceptional experience for customers will ensure their return for future business. A very happy customer, one who has experienced extraordinary service, will tell their friends, their business acquaintances, anyone who will listen. Some will even write about their experience with your company online. That's good press. It's worth the investment.

The quality of our work depends on the quality of our people.

How do you know that your customers are really being taken of? Do you personally talk with each one? No, of course not. And that is why customer service must be a company-wide focus. You have to hire people who love people. You need to have a meeting with everyone who has contact with your customers. Even the receptionist, *especially the receptionist*, needs to have a voice in deciding how your company, your brand, will interact with the consuming world. Each of your employees must know that he or she, and therefore your product and services, will be judged by what he or she does in every single interaction with a client. There are no exceptions.

If we don't take care of our customer, someone else will.

Consumers are savvy. They know the difference between outstanding customer service and lip service. Their opinions are easy to analyze because they vote with their dollars. They also notice the little things. Maybe you hand deliver donuts to prospective clients once a month. Perhaps you guarantee to fix a glitch with your product within 24 hours and free of charge. Maybe you make sure that every employee in your office knows the names of your clients and greets them personally when they enter. You may offer a soda or water to anyone who enters your place of business. Whatever it is you do to make a customer feel comfortable and welcome is noticed. Don't be afraid to invest money in making them happy.

To my customer: I may not have the answer, but I'll find it. I may not have the time, but I'll make it.

What will be your customer service goals in the new year? What can your company do to set itself apart from the competition? How will you treat customers so that they return to you? How can you make sure that every meeting and every phone call leaves the consumer feeling at ease, at home, and ready to trust his or her business with you? You must first decide just how important he or she is to you.