Customer Service Mindset
Getting Passionate About Satisfying Others

The customer is #1.
The customer is always right.
Greet customers with a smile.
Answer the phone by the third ring.

Customer service mantras and rules are common. But are they useful when it comes to actually delivering customer service?

Will simply instructing your staff to “greet customers cheerfully as they walk through the door” have any real effect on how the staff handles questions that customers then ask? When a steaming mad customer tells you that you're incompetent and promises to have you fired, can you believe that he’s “always right”? And when your boss asks for a report at the same time that the guy in finance needs today's closing balances, are you likely to answer your phone by the third ring rather than let it go to voice mail?

Probably not.

To deliver exceptional customer service, following a bunch of rules usually isn't enough. So, instead of rules, you need to adopt an attitude, or mindset, whereby satisfying the customer is your number one goal.

If you adopt a customer service mindset – and recognize the importance of that mindset to your organization, your job, and your job satisfaction – then you’re well on your way to success. Truly great customer service is built on a genuine desire to please and satisfy the customer.

Everyone is a Customer, to Some Extent

The foundation of good customer service is the notion that everyone is a customer, at least to some extent.

Customers are obviously, customers. Your boss is clearly a customer, and it clearly makes sense to work hard to give customer satisfaction here!

However, co-workers are customers, where team work is needed. People in other departments are customers when they depend on your work to be able to do their own. And even suppliers are customers, when it comes to making sure that they're paid on time.

With all of these, you're focusing on making relationships work better. When you apply this mindset, you provide the same level of service to others that you would want from them in return.

What does this mean? You end a personal phone call when a customer walks in. You work with your supplier to create a reasonable solution when your order was misplaced. Or you stay half an hour late to help your co-worker finalize the proposal that your boss expects on his desk the next morning.

Here's where a customer service mindset may lead you:

- Your outlook will be team oriented, no matter whom you're dealing with.
- You'll work with your co-workers, bosses, suppliers, and customers to solve problems and meet needs.
- You'll use disagreements and misunderstandings as opportunitlies to learn more about your customers' perspectives.
- You'll be more positive about the people with whom you work.

All of these attributes can contribute to your satisfaction at work, and they can improve your ability to provide valuable service to your organization.

Understand Customer Needs

To develop this customer service mindset in yourself and in others, start with a clear understanding of what your customers need and want.

If they value quick service, then it makes sense to hire more customer service representatives. If, instead, you simply train your current representatives to increase their product knowledge, customer satisfaction is unlikely to increase.

If your boss places a lot of emphasis on spelling and grammar in your reports, then take the time to proofread. If, however, your boss is satisfied with the organization and depth of your ideas, then it's not worth further refining the report's layout or content.

How do you figure out what your customers want? Ask them. When it comes to customer service, communication is key.

For external customers, use surveys, feedback forms, or even secret shopper programs to gain a better understanding of their
perspectives. One systematic way of doing this is by developing a **customer experience map**.

With internal customers, try these ideas:

- Keep in regular contact with your team members, your boss, and the people who report to you.
- Make sure that you know what they need, and that they know what you need.
- Remind your team members to do the same with one another.

**Deliver the Goods**

Knowing what your customers need can be the easy part. Delivering what they need may get tricky. Always remember to match customer expectations to your ability: It can be immensely damaging to a relationship to fail to do something that you said you would do.

*If in doubt, "underpromise and overdeliver." Provide a quality product, and build systems that allow you to consistently deliver great service. From an organizational perspective, do the following:*

- Make customer service a strategic priority for your business. **culture, mission, goals**
- Communicate clear customer service expectations, and paint a picture of how great customer service looks and feels. **training**
- Recognize and reward staff for their customer service performance. **5 quarters, public praise**
- **Empower staff to resolve customer complaints.** **employee handbook, trust, leadership, training**
- Set customer service targets, and link compensation to those targets. **incentive programs**
- Assess workloads and job descriptions to ensure that staff have the time and resources they need to provide the expected level of service. **Operations Manual**
- Measure staff satisfaction as a gauge of how well internal customer needs are being met. **surveys, secret shoppers, testimonials**

Shift your whole focus to the customer experience. When you do, you’ll internalize the notion of customer service. Try these tips:

- Accept work and assignments that you know you can accomplish.
- Negotiate and agree to reasonable time frames.
- Talk with your customers about their expectations, and clarify exactly what they need.
- Adopt a customer perspective. How would your customer feel? How would you feel if you were the customer?
- Communicate continuously, and let people know about problems sooner rather than later.
- Identify organizational barriers to your customer service efforts, and bring creative solutions to the attention of others.

When customers get the service they want, they're likely to express their gratitude – or, at the very least, not be frustrated or irate. And this is much more enjoyable for your team. So adopting an effective customer service mindset not only helps you attract and retain customers, but it also helps you attract and retain staff.

**Tip 1:**

Even when you're highly attuned to customer needs, and when you're truly dedicated to helping them get what they want, you may encounter customers that you simply can't please. Do all that you can, but then politely explain that you can't do any more. Perhaps you can suggest another supplier who is more able to meet their needs?

**Tip 2:**

Not all companies are built on a customer service model. Some companies rely on low costs, and they may put their energy into logistics and other operational efficiencies, rather than into face-to-face customer service. Their main service to customers may be providing the lowest prices possible, and customers may be willing to trade "point of sale" service for "low price" service. If this describes your company, an intense focus on customer service may not be productive.

**Key Points**

Great customer service comes from inside. To consistently meet and exceed customer expectations, you need more than rules and guidelines for customer care. You should develop, in yourself and in others, a passion for service and for helping internal and external customers get what they want and need.

You can foster a customer service mindset throughout your organization with systems that support superior customer service, and by linking personal performance and satisfaction with customer satisfaction.

When you reach that point – whether you’re speaking with a paying customer or working with a colleague on a project – the customer service mindset will serve as your compass. It will guide your actions and reactions to the people you encounter on a daily basis, and it will help make your company a really wonderful place to work and do business.

**Apply This to Your Life**

Do you have a customer service mindset? Ask yourself these questions:
Do you enjoy customer and co-worker interaction?
Do you like helping a customer find a solution, or would you rather just make a sale?
When you talk about customer experiences, are they mostly positive or negative?
When you talk about co-worker experiences, are they mostly positive or negative?
Can you easily adopt a customer perspective?
Do you view customer or co-worker questions as annoying interruptions or opportunities to assist?
Do you regularly clarify other people's expectations to make sure that you know what they need and want?
Are you honest about your ability to deliver what you say you will?
The more you answer "yes" or "positive," the more likely you are to have a customer service mindset. Regardless of your current status, set a goal for yourself to continue to develop this mindset. Then be a model for this behavior for your team members, colleagues, and managers.

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As another tool, I want to add to this, the Yes, And conversation I've spoken to many of you about. If you have not had this experience yourself, you've never been a true ass to a customer representative for one of the corporate monsters such as TMobile or IBM on the phone. It is a humbling experience. It is impossible to remain angry at someone who keeps saying "yes and" to you. By the way, this works with family members too!

Having this conversation is sometimes about being the only adult remaining in the room; about maintaining your demeanor. It simply entails replying to everything with a yes and then and.

for example:
Yes, I understand, and we will have it ready for you in another 15 minutes. (get it to them in 10)
Yes, we are very busy today, and we can have that in 2 hours. (deliver in less)
Yes, it would have helped if you'd called it in first, and we will have it for you at 10. (deliver by 9:50)
Yes, we should have had this done by now, and we are doing the best can. Your issue will be resolved by.... (and deliver early)
Do NOT bring up why or who. It is not their problem. An you look like your trying to deflect.
If it is beyond your control and you are not blaming a human, you can offer that, but in the same context as before and with an empathy tag (something that allows the other to be empathetic.)

EX:
Yes, and our server went down, it put us very behind as you can imagine, we can have it ready by....
Yes, our poor driver was in an accident (not made one, had one) and we are running late. We will...

And y'all, when it is your fault, consider offering something a little extra. Perhaps keep 10% off coupons at the cashier station and give them one offering they browse while waiting. Some store do this all the time - everyone who stays and waits for their script gets one.