

11 Customer Service Lessons on One Phone



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11 Customer Service Lessons from One Phone Call The other day, I called one of our very good clients who has a brick and mortar store, excellent mail order business, superb telemarketing organization, and a top notch web site. They don't have a retail store in my area, so I usually order on line or call them. I order from them for a number of reasons:

* They are a very good client of ours. * Their products are superb. * Their service is almost always at the Make-You-Happy level .

But even the best service businesses fall short and that's why we need to be consistent and persistent in reinforcing Make-You-Happy Customer Service in our business. One of the areas that continually amazes me is how often people assume they know what you are going to ask and therefore don't really listen to what you're saying. I had ordered top quality expensive wading boots, for fly fishing in rivers, from them. When I got them, they were too narrow. I looked through their catalog and saw that the only boot they had in the catalog was available in wide widths was a lower price model. Now, I'm not snobby, but my feet are old enough that I need the support and extra sole thickness. I called the 800 number to ask if they had any higher quality boots in wide widths.

A very nice good customer service person told me that was the only boot that actually came in a wide width, but suggested that I call back in the morning and ask for a "boot product specialist" and see if one of the boots "ran" wider than the model I ordered. I thought that was a great idea! I buy New Balance Tennis Shoes for that reason. I don't need to get a "wide", their shoes just "run" wider. So I called back the next day and asked for a product specialist. I told him that I had already found out that the only boot they carry in a wide was their inexpensive model and that the customer service person suggested I call back to see if any of the more expensive model "ran" wide and might work for me. He said, "Let me check". It was quite for a while, so I thought he was "checking" with someone else to see if any of their boots "ran" wider. But then I heard him mumbling on the phone. I found out that he was just reading from the catalog. I told him I had already read the catalog and that I knew none of the other boots came in wide widths and ask again if he or anyone there knew if any brands "ran" wider. He just went back to reading the catalog. Finally, I just said, "Never mind" and hung up. I went to the local fly shop that is not very convenient for me to get o and found that they didn't have any boots that came in wide widths either. But they did have a great boot that ran wide. I bought a \$139.00 pair of boots. And yes, you guessed it. The company I called in the first place has the same boot. The "product specialist" was very nice and polite and I'm sure he had customer service training. The company's customer service is consistently too good to think it just comes about without training. There are at least 11 lessons to learn from this one call.

1. Train your team to truly listen. Pay particular attention to people in your organization who tend to answer questions from you and others before they listen to the entire question. Pay particular attention to those who like to finish questions for other. This is so important that I'm adding it as Make-You-Happy Customer Service Secret #56. Truly listen and don't assume that you know what someone is going to say. You know what happens when you assume. You make an ass out of u and me - ass-u-me.

2. Monitor your customer service. This seems almost to obvious to be a Make-You-Happy Customer Service Secret, but I'm adding it as secret #57 because, while it is obvious, almost no one does it. Whether you use secret shoppers, your own people secret shopping, recordings or you secret shopping don't ass-u-me that your people are doing what they've been trained to do. And don't ass-u-me that they do the same things when you or and manager are around and when you're not. You surely can't monitor every customer service interaction, but in this case, over time the business I called would certainly hear a similar customer service interaction and be able to address it in their training

3. Make sure your customers know what to do when they are not being served properly. This is a continuation of Make-You-Happy Customer Service Secret #4, Be sure you Customer's Know Your Extraordinary Customer Service Expectations. They need to not only know your extraordinary customer service expectations, they need to know what to do when they don't get Make-You-Happy Customer Service. In as many ways as you can, tell your customers what to do when they don't get Make-You-Happy Customer Service. Tell them when they are on hold on the phone. Tell them in any communication that you send to them. Tell them with signage. If I had been told, "If we ever let you down, please call Bill at xxx-xxx-xxxx I would have likely called Bill who would have found out that they do have a great brand that runs wider. They would not have only thrilled me, they would have me writing an entirely different story about their Make-You-Happy Customer Service and I would have told you their name and I would have spread a huge amount of positive word-of-mouth advertising!

4. Know Your Product. I'm not going to harp on this too much because we are human and we can't know everything. But I do think that a "boot product specialist" certainly should have known if any of the brands "run" wide. And if not he should have been trained to do #6 below.

5. Know Your Customers. I am a very good customer for the company I called. Good enough that they send me a hard back version of their master catalog that is about an inch and a half thick. I certainly believe in giving every customer Make-You-Happy Customer Service. With that said, your best customers should be taken care of even to a higher degree. Yes, the customer that buys \$200,000 a year from us does get Super Duper Make-You-Happy Customer Service. In this instance, the product specialist should have pulled up my account, saw that I was one of their best customers and done something special to take care of me. What could he have done? He could have called someone in the company that knew my answer and called me back. He could have called his manufacturers and called me back. He could have gone to the warehouse and tried on some boots to see if any "ran" wide. He could have done something.

6. Train people to know where to go to get answers. I covered this a bit in #5. There are a lot of things he could have done to answer my question, but the biggest frustration was that he never seemed to listen well enough to hear the question properly. We have a lot of products at American Retail Supply. So regardless of how much training we give them, there is absolutely no way our reps can know everything when we put them on the phones. So we spend a lot of time in our training teaching them where they need to go to get answers. When they start, we constantly remind our reps of the most important sentence to learn, "I'm sorry, I don't know, but I'll find out and get back to you by ..." And then get back to them when you told them you would.

7. Create loyal customers. In this instance, one of my favorite places to shop let me down. But that's unusual. Their service, products and delivery are usually superb and because they are, I'm loyal and I'll continue to shop with them.

8. You can learn multiple lessons from poor customer service in your business. The normal response to bad customer service is to simply blame the person who delivered the poor service. As you can see by the ten things we learned from this one phone call, you can learn a great deal from one instance of poor service and there are lots of things that could have been done so that this didn't happen. It's not just the reps fault.

9. If you truly believe in, and practice, Make-You-Happy Customer Service you will have multiple ways to catch and fix poor customer service. When you implement Make-You-Happy Customer Service, you have many more ways to identify, catch, and fix, service that is less than Make-You-Happy. With Make-You-Happy Customer Service they would have had these opportunities to recognize this problem, fixed it, or it may not have happened at all:

* Training * Monitoring * The customer contacting someone else * Know your product * Know your customer * Train people to know where to go to get answers

10. Your customer service will improve when you implement the Make-You-Happy Management System with the Make-You-Happy Customer Service. When you implement the Make-You-Happy Management System all team members are trained to recognize service that falls short of Make-You-Happy Customer Service. They are trained to not only recognize it, but also do something about it. I don't have room to go into the Make-You-Happy Management System here, but it it not only reinforces Make-You-Happy Customer Service, it creates it!

11. Three Fingers Pointing Back at You. I learned a lot of wonderful lessons from my mentor Dick Thompson. One of them is, "remember, when you point your finger at someone else, three fingers are pointing back at you". If I'm with someone else and we get poor customer service the other person will often say "I can't believe how rude (stupid, incompetent, whatever) that person was." My response is always the same, "That's the management's fault." If customer service in your business is anything less than great you have one person to blame... yourself! There are only a few reasons for poor, or great, customer service and you are responsible for all of them.

About Author:

Keith is the creator of the "Make-You-Happy Management System" A system he developed when he was tired and burnt out because of the running his own business. This system creates happy customers, happy team members, but most importantly, gives you, the business owner, your life back. For more articles and information visit www.Top-Performance-Teams.com

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