

What Customers Want

By Mike Stewart, CSP



The customer is always right is one of the old sayings that we don't always keep top of mind. Despite all the customer relations training, slogans, and mission statements we have been exposed to, there is still this nagging little voice whispering in our ear, "No he's not!" and it's true. In reality, we know that the customer is NOT always right, but...

The customer is always the customer, and is the reason your company is in business. Every outcome of your enterprise - your personal sales goals, your earnings, the company's earnings, shareholders' return, and the benefits to virtually every other stakeholder - ultimately depends on the customer being satisfied.

To most of your customers, you are The Company. As such, they look to you first as the measure of their relationship with the company. Experience and research through the years have consistently shown that the following areas are among those most important in connecting with customers and creating relationships of trust and confidence.

1. Understand the customer's problems. This is the keystone to successful sales performance because business-to-business customers make buying decisions that enable them to prevent problems or to make existing problems go away. To do a better job of understanding your customers' problems use open end questions and work on your communication skills.

You will find specific skills training in these areas in my book: "Close More Sales! Persuasion Skills To Boost Your Selling Power"

Link to book: <http://tinyurl.com/5qwma>

2. Put the customer first by focusing on how your offering can solve his problems, then selling the benefits the customer is looking for. Don't waste everyone's time and energy talking about the attributes of your offering (the features) or how it

does what it does (the advantages), instead get to the bottom line and show your customer what's in it for him.

3. Take personal responsibility for the company's relationship with your customer. When there are problems, and there almost always will be at some point or another, resist the temptation to put the blame where it belongs, accept the responsibility and accountability on behalf of the company, and take immediate action to fix the problem. Instead of saying something like, "That customer service department has fouled up again!" apologize and say, "I'm really sorry about this. I will take care of the problem for you as soon as possible. I'll find out what happened and be back in touch with you before the end of the day."

What your customers think and say about you will bear directly on your career and personal sense of who you are. Nobody really wants his customers, and others, making derogatory remarks about him or her. When you understand your customers' problems, put them and their interests first, and take personal responsibility for everything that happens in your territory, your reputation will be solid and people will pay you a great compliment when they say,

"He's a stand up guy."
or
"I couldn't get along without her."

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