



15 WAYS TO GET BETTER AT **CUSTOMER SERVICE**

INTRODUCTION

Historically, customer service excellence was reserved for luxury brand experiences only. Now, it's an almost unconscious expectation of consumers.

Every reputable company should strive to achieve excellence in interactions with customers to remain competitive and trusted.

However, not many people truly understand what service excellence is and how to get better at it.

Read on to discover 15 ways to get better at customer service.

1) SOFT CUSTOMER SERVICE SKILLS

Before we delve into 15 ways to get better at customer service, let's explore the skills you need to have:



Soft skills are hard to learn but are much harder to measure or even evaluate. But, like emotions, soft skills allow customer service professionals to “read” people, allowing them to better relate to the customers they serve.

E.g. communication, creative thinking, positivity, conflict resolution, motivation, critical thinking, flexibility and problem-solving.

2) HARD CUSTOMER SERVICE SKILLS

On the other hand, hard skills are job-specific abilities or knowledge developed through education, training, or just practice.

E.g. computer technology, hard communication skills (translating, language skills), project management software and hard marketing skills (Social Media.)

TYPES OF

CUSTOMER SERVICE SKILLS

HARD CUSTOMER SERVICE SKILLS

Easier to learn, measure and evaluate.

Job-specific abilities or knowledge developed through education, training, or practice.

Computer technology, hard communication skills (translating, language skills), project management software and hard marketing skills (social media).

SOFT CUSTOMER SERVICE SKILLS

Hard to learn but are much harder to measure and evaluate.

Help customer service professionals to “read” people.

Communication, creative thinking, positivity, conflict resolution, motivation, critical thinking, flexibility and problem-solving.

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1) BECOME A PRODUCT EXPERT

It may seem obvious, but the best customer service professionals have robust product knowledge.

How else can you suggest the right product to solve your customers' problems?

By studying your company's products and services, you can better understand your customers' experience, which positions you as their strongest advocate.

This way, you can help customers when they're troubleshooting issues by sharing specific product tips and tricks to make it easier to use.

HOW TO DEVELOP PRODUCT KNOWLEDGE

1. Read your company's brochures, pamphlets, catalogues and advertisements.
2. Tour the production centre to see firsthand how your products are made.
3. Talk to other people in your organisation like salespeople, marketing, and delivery people.
4. Talk to your customers, because no one knows more about your products than them
5. Use your products to get personal knowledge of how it works.



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2) USE ACTIVE LISTENING

Customers are trying to solve a problem when they contact you, so they may need clarification or support when you connect. At this point in the customers' journey, they need to feel understood, heard, and served.

This is why active listening is a key skill to develop if you want to be better at customer service. All you have to do is practise daily with your customers, co-workers and family.

HOW TO PRACTISE ACTIVE LISTENING



1. Approach each conversation with the focus of learning something about the speaker.
2. After the customer finishes speaking, ask clarifying questions to ensure you understand what they're saying.
3. Finally, finish the conversation with a quick summary to ensure everyone is on the same page.

By practising active listening, you're not only going to possess the ability to be better at customer service, but you'll also improve communication in your relationships outside of work.

We all know that miscommunication can be a source of stress, pain and awkwardness when finding a solution to a problem. That's why active listening is also one of the most important customer service skills in your communication toolkit.

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3) EXUDE POSITIVITY

Having a negative attitude just becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

When you have a negative attitude, you add stress to the situation. Yet when you use positive language and exude optimism, you can take the stress away from the customers' problems.

That's why creating and maintaining a positive attitude is vital for being better at customer service.

Your drive is the basis of your motivation for growing your customer service skills.

If you don't have the drive or attitude, you risk losing out to customer service professionals willing to develop and evolve in their roles.

HOW TO MAINTAIN A POSITIVE MINDSET

Coach Yourself – You've got to hold yourself accountable to work in customer service, more so you have to be your own motivator.

As the saying goes – “motivation doesn't last but neither does bathing, that's why you have to do it daily”.

To keep your motivation levels up, you've got to ask yourself coaching questions like:

- If I could do it better next time, what would I do differently?
- What would I do more or less of? Or differently?

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Remember What Motivated You – It's very easy to get demoralised or thrown off track, especially if you're working with demanding customers.

That's why it's crucial to keep a reminder of what motivates you nearby when you're working.

We all love money but studies have shown that even when people make a lot of money, it doesn't always lead to increased happiness.

So consider what you're really working for (e.g. family, a social cause, stability) and keep a reminder on your desk of what you're working toward.

4) KEEP COMPOSURE

Unfortunately, there will always be some customers that make it tough to hold your composure. Yet, the moment you lose your cool, you lose your ability to be helpful.

While this is easier said than done, remaining calm when faced with adversity and staying in control of your emotions when the unexpected happens is crucial for better customer service.

Whether you work directly with customers or reply to feedback via social media, you've got to keep the customer's happiness at the forefront of your mind.

"...the moment you lose your cool, you lose your ability to be helpful."



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5) PRACTICE EMPATHY

Empathy is the ability to understand the feelings of someone other than yourself. While some are born with this trait, it can also be acquired, developed and improved over time.

It's a vital skill to develop if you want to be better at customer service, as your ability to empathise with customers and craft a message that steers them towards your solution is invaluable.

HOW TO PRACTISE EMPATHY IN CUSTOMER SERVICE

*Read and listen carefully to the customer
Try to understand the problem from their perspective
Consider how this makes them feel
Repeat and confirm
Stay positive and be patient
Always be respectful*

By practising empathising with customers, you'll be able to understand their frustrations and challenges better. Making the customer more receptive to your advice, and therefore helping to avoid or de-escalate a conflict and creating a more enjoyable interaction with your company.

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6) BE WILLING TO LEARN

Learning and customer service are ongoing – so if you want to become more valuable to your customers and your employer, you need to learn more to earn more.

The more information you have, the more knowledge you have, and the more wisdom you have, you can pass that on to your customers, and you become a valuable resource.



7) PRIORITISE REPORT

As the saying goes, 'People do business with people they know, like and trust'. So, of course, you need to build rapport – and quickly.

One of the most effective ways to do this is to use your customer's name and, probably more critically, know how to pronounce it! It helps you connect with them because they feel heard, and well, people love the sound of their names.

However, make sure to use their name naturally in the conversation – otherwise, you'll come off as disingenuous.

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8) ASK FOR FEEDBACK



Did you know 69% of customers stop doing business with a company due to one bad experience?

Meaning that even if you think things are going well, they might not be.

That's why customer feedback is the holy grail of unique insights about your products and service.

You can even use it to measure customer satisfaction, learn about customer behaviour changes, and identify areas that need immediate improvement.

But you shouldn't just wait for customers to give feedback, be proactive and check in frequently; ask them how they find your service and product when there is an appropriate opportunity.

9) IMPROVE COMMUNICATION SKILLS

The ability to communicate verbally and in writing is essential in customer service, especially if you speak to someone who has a different native language.

Everything from your voice quality and volume, to how well you articulate, dress, posture, walk, and even your handshake forms powerful and lasting impressions with customers.

Your job as a customer service professional is to help your customers and colleagues feel as comfortable as possible. This means communicating with them in a manner unique to their personality. This is what we like to call style flexing.

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It's a universal truth that people like people like them. They're comfortable with people who are like themselves. However, please make no mistake; this isn't simply a case of mirroring their gestures, parroting, or paraphrasing. Rather you want to adopt characteristics unique to their communication style.

If you want to sell successfully to all of the communication styles – Supportive, Open, Closed, and Organized – you need to Style Flex. Adapt your style to suit that of your customer. That will help you to build rapport and trust, establish credibility, and close those important deals.

a) Supportive

Supportive communicators have a high sociability level and low dominance. What exactly does that mean? High sociability means they're very friendly, outgoing, helpful, and thoughtful; They're quick to form relationships and business friendships.

Supportive communicators like a lot of information. They like to take their time to make decisions and absorb information. These are the people that often request detailed summaries or more often, the whole report. So it should come as no surprise that they typically won't send you a short email; it's going to be a long detailed email.

b) Open

The Open communication style has both a high level of sociability and a high level of dominance. Open communicators tend to be expressive and excitable, often seeming restless.

They're open (obviously), honest, and friendly; You know where you stand with them. Like Supportive communicators, they're very friendly and sociable, and they like to form relationships quickly, like a business friendship, so they're speedy to build relationships with you.

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c) Closed

The Closed communication style has a high level of dominance and a low level of sociability. Meaning that Closed communicators tend to be demanding, aggressive, determined, and often frank.

They like to get down to business quickly, so they're not seeking to be your friend. They don't care about your weekend. They don't care about any personal aspects of your life. A stark comparison compared to the other communication styles such as the Open which is high sociability and the Closed is low sociability.

d) Organized

The Organized communication style has a low level of sociability and a low level of dominance, so naturally, they tend to be reserved and cautious.

They don't like chit chat, they don't want to get too personal, and definitely don't want to find out about your personal relationships. They're not interested in forming any friendship per se; they'd rather get down to business and keep things at a professional level.

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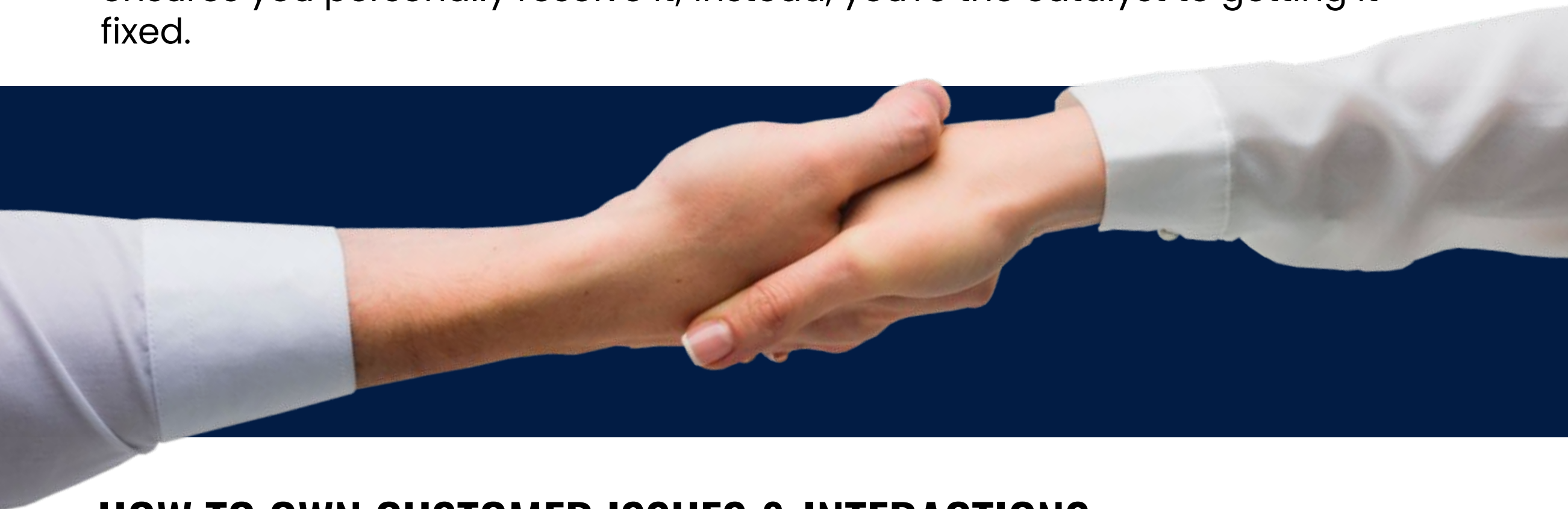
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10) OWN THE INTERACTIONS

When a customer reaches out to you for help, they feel lost, overwhelmed, and insecure. Failing to meet those conditions with a firm and steady hand leaves them trying to solve the problem alone.

To improve your customer service skills and actually help them, you need to own the interaction.

However, don't think that taking ownership of the interaction and problem ensures you personally resolve it; instead, you're the catalyst to getting it fixed.



HOW TO OWN CUSTOMER ISSUES & INTERACTIONS

1. Steer the conversation
2. Assure the customer knows they are in good hands
3. Keep your language actionable
4. Break down issues so that there's agreement on both sides regarding the problem.
5. Offer tangible steps that they can perform.
6. If the customer can't fix it on their own, share your team's plan of action with them.
7. Follow-up and check-in

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11) OWN YOUR MISTAKES

Everyone makes errors. If we didn't, we wouldn't be human! The actions you take following the mistake will most impact the customers' trust and confidence in your ability to remedy the situation.

Many people will accept a genuine apology and a reasonable solution, so be sure to own your mistakes.

12) DEVELOP EQ

Emotional intelligence (EQ) is the capacity to recognise your emotions, understand what they're telling you, and understand how your emotions affect others.

Yet, it also involves your perception of others. In particular, understanding how they feel to manage relationships better.

Excellent customer service professionals must have high emotional intelligence and be very self-aware. More so, they must be confident with frustrated customers by trusting their intuition.

HOW TO DEVELOP EQ

1. Practise observing how you feel
2. Pay attention to how you behave
3. Question your own opinions
4. Take responsibility for your feelings
5. Take time to celebrate the positive
6. Don't ignore the negative



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13) PERFECT YOUR PROBLEM-SOLVING SKILLS

Customers often know they have a problem. But self-diagnose and prescribe solutions to themselves that don't work.

Hence, customer service professionals must take the initiative to solve the problem. Or, in this situation, educate the customer and go the extra mile for their satisfaction.

Problem-solving is a vital customer service skill that allows you to offer pre-emptive advice to self-diagnosing customers.

HOW TO DEVELOP PROBLEM-SOLVING SKILLS



1. Ask the proper questions to learn what is upsetting your customer
2. Identify and confirm the issue
3. Formulate solutions based on product knowledge

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14) BE TENACIOUS

Sometimes a little creativity, standing apart from the crowd, and showing innovation can improve customer service tenfold. Maybe even in ways, your managers could never imagine.

A tenacity for what you do and a great work ethic are vital to providing the kind of service people discuss with friends and family.

15) FIND OPPORTUNITIES, GO ABOVE & BEYOND CUSTOMER EXPECTATIONS

To reach customer service excellence, you must go above and beyond customer expectations by providing good customer service by satisfying customers with plenty of support and an effortless service experience.

It's a straightforward concept; yet, good customer service interactions with customers raise the likelihood of business success, maintaining a sustainable competitive edge.

HOW TO GO ABOVE & BEYOND

1. Surprise and delight customers when it's not expected (for example, initial interactions where you're helping to diagnose their needs)
2. Try to fulfil special requests
3. Anticipate customer needs/pain points



TURN "I'M JUST LOOKING" INTO "CAN YOU TELL ME MORE ABOUT THIS PRODUCT?" /



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prosper@socoselling.com
www.socoselling.com

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