



# HOW TO INSPIRE NEXT-LEVEL CUSTOMER SERVICE

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## INTRODUCTION

Customer service can make or break a business. Whether that means calmly responding to phone complaints when a technical product is on the fritz or greeting guests to your office with a smile, employees must be trained to properly handle any situation and motivated to continuously do so.

A good customer service experience can spark more future purchases for nearly half of customers, according to research by Zendesk. And when a business leaves its customers feeling all warm and fuzzy, 24 percent will seek out that vendor two or more years after the positive interaction. At the same time, 39 percent of shoppers will avoid a brand for two or more years following a disappointing or frustrating customer service interaction.

Employees are the front line of your business's customer service experience and motivating them to go the extra mile can have exponential returns for your bottom line. Customer Service Week, which kicks off October 5, serves as an annual reminder to acknowledge the rockstars on your team and inspire better service across the company. Here's how to do that this week and every week.



## AT YOUR SERVICE

There's no question that how employees treat your customers has a direct impact on the health and profit of the business. When the Economist Intelligence Unit surveyed 832 companies across North America, Europe and Asia, it found that a whopping 84 percent of companies believe that customer service is either very or moderately important to their financial performance. And most companies recognized customer service as one of the most important factors in keeping repeat customers happy.

The rapid pace of innovation means that customers have more ways to interact with a business than ever before, from old-school phone calls to 24/7 instant messages, social media and online reviews. When customers reach out, they expect your employees to be helpful, informed—and fast. A study by Lithium Technologies found that 53 percent of customers who posted a

question to a business on Twitter expected a response within an hour. When they posted a complaint, 72 percent expected resolution within the hour.

At the same time, word of mouth has been supplemented with the “word of click,” as many customers have broad social media networks and are active on review sites such as Yelp and Google+. That means when customers have a bad experience with your brand, they can easily and swiftly share that experience with their networks, amplifying the negative impact it can have on your business.

With the stakes so high, motivating employees to go above and beyond for customers is a modern must. For most leaders, that means taking a two-pronged approach: recognizing the standout employees who already excel at serving customers and finding ways to inspire better customer service across the company.

## STAND AND DELIVER

Business leaders can talk until they're blue in the face about the impact customer service has on the bottom line, but for most employees real motivation stems from recognition and inspiration.

It's been proven by study after study that when companies recognize an awesome trait in their employees, those employees are more likely to double down on that skill in the future. A survey of roughly 2,000 employees by Glassdoor showed that more than 80 percent say they're motivated to work harder when their boss shows appreciation for what they do. And while money might be the first thing that comes to mind when it comes to showing your appreciation, nearly half of employees reported wanting an unexpected token, such as a thank you note or small gift.

For Customer Service Week, consider formally recognizing the office's top three to five customer service champions. The recognition can be as simple as a heartfelt note and meaningful award or as elaborate as a trophy presented at a company-wide meeting.

You could consider getting the whole office involved by having employees nominate their peers for standout service moments. Or poll team leaders for nominations to make sure that all departments are represented in the recognition. One benefit of announcing the winners far and wide (whether that means hosting a meeting or sending an all-staff email) is that public recognition broadcasts the message that your team takes customer service seriously.

Aside from applauding and appreciating your best talent, this week can serve as an annual reminder to put customer service front and center. Now might be the time to update staff on customer service tools or procedures that have changed in the recent past, or revamp your office décor to make the reception area more inviting and the work area more inspiring for great customer service. You might consider announcing a customer service contest, where staff can track customer compliments or faster resolution times and work toward quarterly prizes or awards.

When it comes to recognizing and inspiring employees, a little bit of effort and creativity can go a long way. But the most important step is simply the first one you take: Any measure of appreciation and motivation can radically elevate how your employees regard customer service, which will ripple out to how customers experience your brand.





## A FEW GREAT GIFT IDEAS

When it comes to shopping for a gift to spark long-term engagement around customer service, every employee is unique. Yet there are some suggestions that offer universal appeal for their ability to inspire long-term.

If you're looking to recognize an employee who went above and beyond in the name of customer service in the past year, consider making them feel extra special with a customized star award. It instantly conveys achievement, and because the employee can display it on his or her desk, it can motivate everyone within eyesight.

Motivational posters are a cost-effective way to inspire an entire office or area. This waterfall poster can serve as a visual reminder that customer service isn't a department but an attitude that should flow through and nourish the entire organization.

A colorful stress reliever for employee desks can serve two purposes: it offers them a playful way to cool off when they're dealing with an irksome or difficult customer while also serving as a clear reminder that attitude can make the difference between simply dealing with a customer and delivering great service. Motivating mugs are unique in that most employees are guaranteed to interact with them at least daily. That makes putting an inspiring message here all the more powerful, and when you opt for one with a heartfelt message like "you make the difference," it can rally employees to go the extra mile for a great customer experience.

No matter what award you choose to give or which location you choose to give it, you must be sure to implement a strategy that is sure to motivate and encourage your employees to deliver next-level customer service on an ongoing basis.



1.800.535.2773



ContactUs@successories.com



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