

Building customer relationships

Your customers are the most important part of your business. By building good relationships with your customers you are more likely to encourage them to keep coming back. They will also recommend your business to their friends.

Listening to your customers is vital. When you hear that a customer is unhappy, you have a chance to fix problem areas within your business. It is a fact that not all of your customers will tell you they have a complaint. Those that do, provide an opportunity to improve your business and keep them as customers!

First impressions do last!

To leave a good lasting impression make sure:

- that service areas, staff and contact numbers are easy for customers to find and access
- your staff and service areas are clean and presentable
- you always have fully trained and competent staff available to deal with customers in a responsive and professional manner.

Telephone success

Convenience of use and immediate access make telephone contact attractive for your customers. So, it is important that your business practices and telephone staff work together to provide good customer service. Some useful tips are:

- Ensure staff who answer the phone are fully trained, efficient and have the knowledge to help any customer with any question.
- Provide the business name and your first name, when answering, to build customer rapport.
- Set target time frames for answering telephone calls and responding to messages left by customers.
- Ensure calls reaching a wrong area are transferred quickly and pleasantly to the correct area.
- Where customers are placed 'on hold', make sure you apologise for the delay and continually acknowledge them through the waiting period.

Customer orders

When customers apply for goods and services that are not immediately available, or are to be used in the future, they are placing an order with you. Always make the ordering process as easy as possible for them by:

- being clear about how and where to order
- providing a range of options for customers to place an order - telephone, face-to-face, in writing, electronically, via the website
- being clear about what to expect and when
- keeping customers informed of any progress
- telling customers when orders are completed.

Confirming customer orders

When confirming the order remember:

- If a customer is ordering via the telephone, repeat order details back to them to ensure they are correct.
- Provide written confirmation of the order immediately if face-to-face, or within 2 days if electronically or by phone and include:
 - your reference number
 - reference to any customer/order/job number
 - name of the customer who placed the order
 - description of what has been ordered (plain language)
 - full details of all costs
 - information about delivery or installation (dates and any customer requirements)
 - a business contact number for customer queries
 - any legal requirements regarding the order.

How delivery affects your business

Ensuring promised goods are supplied to customers, within a reasonable time, is essential. Not only is it a prosecutable offence for a business to accept any payment for goods or services it doesn't intend to supply,

or supply as promised, it is also poor business practice. Make sure you:

- have sufficient stock to meet your orders
- take into account possible distribution or manufacturing delays before committing to a delivery date and accepting payment.

IMPORTANT - Advise customers of any delays with the delivery of goods and services and confirm when the order has been completed.

Billing

Billing is yet another opportunity to offer friendly, efficient service to your customers. Make sure all bills, invoices, and statements are:

- clear and easy to understand
- accurate and honest and include any related costs
- correctly addressed and arrive at the correct time
- have a variety of convenient payment methods.

www.fairtrading.nsw.gov.au
Fair Trading enquiries 13 32 20
TTY 1300 723 404
Language assistance 13 14 50

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