

“CUSTOMER SERVICE: EVERYONE’S JOB”



Leslie Rose McDonald
President, Pathfinders CTS, Inc.

....A job candidate was following up on a position she had interviewed for three weeks prior. She kept running into dead-ends. Neither the hiring manager or the human resources department would return her phone calls. She was very puzzled, as both had shown what seemed to be sincere interest in her candidacy when she interviewed with them....

....A purchasing agent needed to track down some financial history and other data on a previous vendor who was trying to re-establish their relationship. The information needed was older than the history available in the company’s computer system. The purchasing agent could not find anyone in the finance department who was willing to assist her in attempting to find the archived information....

Customer service is more than a department, it is a way of thinking and being within a company. It is about a way of responding: treating people with respect, finding solutions to people’s problems, responding promptly, and being efficient and courteous throughout the process.

While companies tend to focus their training of responsiveness to their customer service or customer care departments, it is frequently to the exclusion of other parts of the business. Additional departments such as finance, administration, and human resources are also service functions and should be included in customer service training as well. These departments serve both internal and external customers, yet frequently are not held to a standard of giving quality customer service.

Customer service, in its broadest sense, is everyone’s job. Good customer service – internal or external - starts with an attitude of caring: caring about the other person’s needs, concerns, and questions. It continues with action: accepting the responsibility to be responsive in getting the issue resolved, the question answered, or the phone call returned. Further, if you do not have the answer, find someone who does. If you do not have the time to return a phone call, delegate someone to do it on your behalf.

Here are some customer service tips that should be used by EVERYONE in the organization. While they may seem basic, most people will agree that in reality there is a shortage of these behaviors in many workplaces, even among professionals:

- Know that creating and maintaining relationships is everything.
- Smile and make eye contact with the person who needs your assistance.
- Make the person feel welcome on the phone, or in person.
- Be a good listener to your customer – do not interrupt.
- Project a “can do” attitude.
- Be creative in getting assistance if you do not have the information or the answer.
- Return phone calls and emails promptly.
- Help out your associates when they ask; you will inevitably need them in kind another time.
- Remember that your responsiveness can make a positive difference in someone’s day.

Just because you don’t work in the customer service department does not mean that you are not expected to give good service/responsiveness to all of your customers – in other words, everyone you come in contact with! Don’t forget: this also includes the relationship between employee and manager –you are both each other’s customers.