

10 TIPS

FOR MANAGING YOUR BUSINESS TO BETTER SERVE YOUR CUSTOMERS



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Today more than ever, the level of customer service that you provide can make or break your business. Customers have higher standards, more choices for where to take their business, and the ability to share stories of poor customer service across social media—possibly harming your business's reputation. Here are 10 tips for management moves you can make to ensure your customer service is stellar.

- 1 UNDERSTAND HOW CUSTOMER SERVICE AFFECTS YOUR BUSINESS GOALS.** For instance, if your goal is to increase profitability by 10 percent this quarter, but poor customer service results in having to redo many of the orders you fill, you will spend more time and money, cutting into your profitability.
- 2 ENGAGE YOUR TEAM.** Every employee, whether or not they directly interact with customers, must understand how their job performance contributes to customer service, how customer service drives business goals, and how achieving business goals is in their best interest.
- 3 SET CUSTOMER SERVICE GOALS.** Once you know what business goals you hope to achieve, you can set customer service goals. Make them specific and measurable. For example, you might have a goal to fulfill 100 percent of orders within 48 hours, or to answer all incoming calls before the third ring.
- 4 CREATE SYSTEMS AND PROCEDURES.** Using standardized systems ensures that customers receive the same quality of service no matter which employees they interact with. Develop processes and systems your employees will use to achieve the customer service goals you've set.
- 5 DEVELOP AN OPERATIONS MANUAL.** Detail these processes in an operations manual (you can keep it online, offline or both) that your employees can refer to. Your operations manual should include sections for each department in your business and should be updated regularly.
- 6 PROVIDE ONGOING TRAINING.** Train employees in the procedures and systems that you've developed; update your training as needed. Every business has its customer service stars. Enlist these top employees to train the others and give them feedback on how they're doing.
- 7 HARNESS TECHNOLOGY.** A survey this year by LivePerson found 51 percent of online shoppers will give up immediately if they can't get help right away when making an online purchase. Whether your website sells products or not, make sure your website offers a variety of ways to contact your business. Enable customers to serve themselves by incorporating tools such as maps and directions, answers to frequently asked questions (FAQs), or online appointment scheduling.
- 8 MEASURE RESULTS.** Track and measure progress toward the customer service goals you set. For example, if one customer service goal is keeping your restaurant's restroom clean by having employees check it hourly, have them sign their initials on a form when they've done so.
- 9 GET FEEDBACK FROM CUSTOMERS.** Interact with customers both offline and online to find out how well your business is meeting their customer service expectations. Tools such as comment cards, social media, online reviews at sites like Yelp! or online surveys like those you can do with SurveyMonkey are all great ways to discover what needs improvement.
- 10 DON'T GET COMPLACENT.** Give your business regular customer service audits. Enlist friends or a professional mystery shopping service that can view your business's customer service with an objective eye. Have them come in as customers and alert you to any problems or shortcomings they find.

BY RIEVA LESONSKY

Rieva Lesonsky is founder and President of GrowBiz Media, a media and custom content company focusing on small business and entrepreneurship. Before launching her business, she was Editorial Director of Entrepreneur Magazine. Follow Rieva at [Twitter.com/Rieva](https://twitter.com/Rieva) and visit her website SmallBizDaily.com to get the scoop on business trends and sign up for free TrendCast reports.



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