



Well Informed Customers Are Critical For Customer Service Quality

By Ron Kaufman

When customers know what to do, how to do it, what to expect and why, they usually follow instructions.

When customers are uncertain about what, how or why, they will often hesitate in uncertainty and doubt.

This can be a major problem, especially when customer participation is essential to your success. When communication is lacking, customer service quality tends to plummet.

For example, medicines not taken on time will degrade the quality of a patient's recovery and healing. Automobiles with oil not changed will wear down before their time. Lawns not watered by owners after fresh fertilization will burn in the sun and die. Data backups not performed on time result in very angry customers when their hard drives unfortunately but inevitably crash. Even if these situations are due to the customer failing to take an action, your customer service quality could suffer.

Since customer performance and participation is so important (it's called compliance in medical terms), you'd think everyone would put more effort into educating customers about exactly what to do and motivating them to do it. Remarkably, this is often not the case and customer service quality suffers as a result.

Buy an inexpensive alarm clock and you'll get a 12-page user's manual on how to set the time, change the battery and work every feature of the alarm. But buy \$96 worth of prescription drugs and you might get a little sticker on the bottle saying something cryptic like "1C 3X w/meals."

This sticker does nothing to boost customer service quality.

A pharmacist will explain that "1C 3X w/meals" means "Take 1 capsule, 3 times a day, with your meals." A doctor may also advise if the medicine is best taken before or after your meals. (The cryptic code gives no clue.) They may even warn you of possible side effects and what you can do about them. (None of this useful information is found on the little sticker.)

How many people receive medication every day, but they are nervous or unwell when their doctor or pharmacist explains it to them? Back home they may forget what was said, and then they are left with only the little sticker reading "1C 3X w/meals." This, of course, doesn't tell them much and does nothing to improve customer service quality.

Under these circumstances, some patients will forget what to do, when to do it and why. They may feel uncertain and hesitate. In medical terms, they may not fully comply and customer service quality will suffer.

Consider the consequences for the doctor (an unwell patient), for the pharmacy (a dissatisfied customer), for the hospital (a complaint to be answered) and for the patient (a continued illness, discomfort or frustration). In short, a very bad situation that reflects negatively on customer service quality.

How easily this could be avoided by making a better effort to inform, educate and motivate consumers while increasing customer service quality in the process! (Every company can find a way to do this better, including yours.)

Example 1

- The drug manufacturer could provide an easy-to-understand flyer or brochure with every medication to improve customer service quality.
- The doctor could create a simple list of what to take, what to expect and what to avoid. The pharmacy could design an attractive calendar to hang on the bathroom mirror or refrigerator door.
- The calendar could include space for you to "check the boxes" and track your daily participation. The hospital could maintain a website with up-to-date information and helpful FAQs – and print the website address right on the bottle's little sticker.

More Examples

A smart computer company could send out an e-mail once a day with a simple reminder: "Back up your data now!" They could send another reminder at the end of the week with a checklist of costs in time and expense to recreate your data from scratch. Both actions improve customer service quality while providing valuable information.

A lawn care company could provide a simple notepad with every page reminding you of the next time and date to water your fertilized lawn. They could add two photographs to keep you motivated: one lush, green and beautiful; the other dry, parched and pathetic.

A car maintenance company could put a bright sticker on the cap of your gas tank asking: "Is it time to change your oil?" They might even include a note like this: "Bring your auto in on time and save 10%." What a way to boost customer service quality and add value at the same time.

The bank could send you an e-mail one week before your term deposit matures or when your checking account approaches the minimum required balance. A link in the message could take you to the right web page where you can extend your deposit, increase your balance or transfer funds as required.

Key Learning Point For Customer Service Quality

Customer participation is a key to achieving high levels of loyalty and satisfaction. Earn this participation by giving your customers the information, education and motivation they need. Do it at the right time, in the right amount, at the right place and in the most engagingly effective manner to improve customer service quality. (Hint to pharmacists and doctors: a little sticker on the bottle isn't the best in customer service quality.)

**Action Steps For Customer Service Quality**

Improve the quantity, quality, consistency, frequency, accuracy and attractiveness of the information you provide to your customers this month.

Work on improving your handouts, flyers, e-mails, checklists, informative posters and brochures, stickers and decals, manuals, user guides, videos, web pages, guidelines and instructions to boost customer service quality.

Do a better job of telling customers what to do, bring, prepare, submit, copy, file, track, complete and expect. Tell them more about the time, steps, costs, input, output, problems, indicators and guarantors of success. Make them better informed, better educated and better motivated. In short, make them better customers. Do this and customer service quality will rise, too.

© Copyright, Ron Kaufman

About the Author

Ron Kaufman is author of The New York Times, USA Today and Amazon.com bestseller, "Uplifting Service! A Proven Path to Delighting Your Customers, Colleagues and Everyone Else You Meet" and 14 other books on service, business and inspiration. He is also the founder of UP! Your Service, a company that enables organizations to build Uplifting Service cultures and enjoy a sustainable advantage.

Co-ordinates

Mail: UP! Your Service
50 Bayshore Road, Suite 31-02
Singapore 469977
Tel: (+65) 6309-9668
E-mail:

Enquiry@UpYourService.com
Web: www.UpYourService.com

**Important Notice**

© Copyright 2015, Bizezia Limited, All Rights Reserved

This article appeared in Better Business Focus, published by Bizezia Limited ("the publisher"). It is protected by copyright law and reproduction in whole or in part without the publisher's written permission is strictly prohibited. The publisher may be contacted at info@bizezia.com (+44 (0)1444 884220).

The article is published without responsibility by the publisher or any contributing author for any loss howsoever occurring as a consequence of any action which you take, or action which you choose not to take, as a result of this article or any view expressed herein.

Whilst it is believed that the information contained in this publication is correct at the time of publication, it is not a substitute for obtaining specific professional advice and no representation or warranty, expressed or implied, is made as to its accuracy or completeness. Any hyperlinks in the article were correct at the time this article was published but may have changed since then. Likewise, later technology may supersede any which are specified in the article.

The information is relevant primarily within the United Kingdom but may have application in other locations.

These disclaimers and exclusions are governed by and construed in accordance with English Law. Publication issued on 1 October 2014