

**CUSTOMER SERVICE MANAGEMENT**

---

**UNIT 1**

<b>Introduction to Customer Service</b>	<b>5</b>
---	----------

---

**UNIT 2**

<b>Customer Service Classification</b>	<b>15</b>
--	-----------

---

**UNIT 3**

<b>Steps in Selling</b>	<b>21</b>
-------------------------	-----------

---

**UNIT 4**

<b>Retail Selling Skills</b>	<b>36</b>
------------------------------	-----------

---

**UNIT 5**

<b>Customer Expectations</b>	<b>43</b>
------------------------------	-----------

---

**UNIT 6**

<b>Service Quality</b>	<b>61</b>
------------------------	-----------

---

**UNIT 7**

<b>Customer Experience Management</b>	<b>71</b>
---------------------------------------	-----------

---

**UNIT 8**

<b>Customer Loyalty</b>	<b>78</b>
-------------------------	-----------

---

**UNIT 9**

<b>Grievance and Complaint Management System</b>	<b>89</b>
--	-----------

---

**UNIT 10**

<b>Service Recovery</b>	<b>98</b>
-------------------------	-----------

---

**UNIT 11**

<b>Internal Marketing</b>	<b>108</b>
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**UNIT 12**

<b>Communication with the Customer</b>	<b>117</b>
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# COURSE INTRODUCTION

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We have become a service based economy. As competition has become more global and more intense, organizations cannot compete on price alone. Many companies have developed a **strategy** of providing superior customer care to differentiate their products and services. **Service** is important to customers and it is equally important for business growth. Customers are five times more likely to switch vendors because of perceived service problems than for **price** concerns or product quality issues. Bottom line in customer service is that customer wants to feel cared about and respected, and that they are more likely to return if these **conditions** are met. This course on Customer Service Management consists of twelve units.

**Unit 1 "Introduction to Customer Service":** The importance of developing a valued relationship with customers is essential in supporting long-term business growth. This unit introduces the concept of customer service and defines what this means to the customers. It gives an **overview** on various parameters of Customer service.

**Unit 2 "Customer Service Classification":** This unit focuses on the classification of customer service and factors that affect customer service as a function.

**Unit 3 "Steps in Selling":** Every customer is a potential buyer. This unit talks about all the **crucial** components of selling right from welcoming the customer till closing the sale.

**Unit 4 "Retail Selling Skills":** Selling remains fundamental in retail. Through this unit, you will be **able** to develop a basic understanding of different formats in retail selling and have an overview on retail selling **skills**.

**Unit 5 "Customer Expectations":** Customers perceive service in their own unique emotional, **irrational** and totally human terms - perception is all that matters. This unit focuses on the kinds of customer personalities, what does a customer wants or expects and how to meet or exceed expectations.

**Unit 6 "Service Quality":** Quality is the key consideration for the customers in selecting a **retailer from** many choices. Ensuring quality services to the customers in every transaction and at all the time is a major challenge to retail organizations. This unit focuses on defining **quality**, dimensions, determinants, benefits and issues in service quality.

**Unit 7 "Customer Experience Management":** Without the customers it is not possible for **any** business to sustain. Customer experience management assumes that products and services are no longer sufficient to satisfy the customer and elevate the value proposition to the level of an experience. Through this unit, you will understand what customer experience **means**, the benefits of customer experience and how to manage this experience.

**Unit 8 "Customer Loyalty":** Loyalty has always been important to business success and **profitability**. To keep the customer loyal and retain a customer is the key to the success. This unit focuses on factors, which affect customer loyalty and on building customer **loyalty programmes**.

**Unit 9 "Grievance and Complaint Management System":** In the retail industry we are faced with many difficult customers who have the potential to turn violent if they are not handled **correctly**. This unit focuses on the types of customers and their complaints and takes you through the complaint management process.

**Unit 10 "Service Recovery":** After going through the unit, you will be able to understand all **aspects** of service recovery and how to handle situations when things go wrong.

**Unit 11 "Internal Marketing":** To have satisfied customers, the firm must also have satisfied **employees**. This unit focuses on the employees, the importance of building a positive culture and **team**.

**Unit 12 "Communicating with the customer":** It becomes important to communicate with the customer to build effective relationships. This unit focuses on the significance of listening to the customer and educating the customer.

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# UNIT 1 INTRODUCTION TO CUSTOMER SERVICE

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## Structure

- 1.0 Objectives
- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 What is Customer Service?
- 1.3 Customer Service is an Attitude
- 1.4 Need and Importance of Customer Service
- 1.5 Selling and Customer Service
- 1.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 1.7 Terminal Questions
- 1.8 References

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## 1.0 OBJECTIVES

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After studying this unit you will be able to:

- **Explain** the meaning of customer service;
- **Understand** your role in providing superior customer service;
- **Describe** the importance of customer service; and
- **Correlate** selling and customer service.

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## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

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Customer Service also known as "**Client Service**" is becoming a vital business issue as organizations **realize** the benefits of managing customer relationships by providing effective customer support. From small customer **service** departments to large call centers, the importance of developing a valued relationship with customers is essential in supporting long-term business growth. The best product in the world is just going to **stay on shelves** and gather dust if you don't support it with customer service that **makes** your product 'better' than the identical product offered by the competitor. Good customer service is the life blood of any retailer.

**When** we talk about customer service we are also talking of **Normal Customer Service** and **Great Customer Service**. Great customer **service** means giving customers **what** they want. That's easy to say, not **so** easy to figure **out**, and occasionally difficult to do! Great Customer Service requires satisfaction of **the** customer; satisfaction with **the** services provided and satisfaction with the way **we** provide them.

**Customer** service is meeting the needs and expectations of the customer as defined by **the** customer. "**Meeting the needs and expectations of** the customer" means you know what your customers want and what they expect, and you provide that to them on a consistent basis. And to know what your customers want, you've got to ask **them!** Realizing the importance of customer service the 'Journal of Retailing' - an international journal on retailing came out with a special issue in **2007** entitled '**Competing Through Service**'. According to the journal it came out with the **special issue** because those firms that leverage service **can** build strong **relationships** with

customers that will generate **barriers** to competition, increase customer loyalty and make market activities more efficient.

As obvious as that may sound, many companies establish customer service initiatives without ever **talking** to their customers. "As defined by the customer" is a very important point to get because it says that if the customer doesn't perceive you as offering good customer service, then you aren't. The customer is the judge here. No matter how good your internal records claim you are, the customer is the only voice worth listening to. So in order to have an effective customer service initiative, you must know what your customers want, provide it to them consistently, and ask them how you're doing.

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## 1.2 WHAT IS CUSTOMER SERVICE?

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Customer service is a series of activities designed to enhance the level of customer satisfaction – that is, the feeling that a product or service has met the customer expectation. Providing Customer Service means creating a positive and memorable experience for every customer. Customers are satisfied when the service are met or exceeds their expectations. Customers are dissatisfied when they feel the service falls below their expectations. Customer service hence could mean:

- Taking care of customers needs
- Going beyond what is expected
- Adding value and integrity to every customer interaction
- Being at best with every customer
- Lalonde and **Zinszer define** customer serve as " Those activities that occur at the interface between the customer and the corporation which enhance or facilitate the sale and use of the corporation's products or services".

According to Zeithaml and Bitner, customer service is the service provided in support of a company's core product. Customer service most often includes answering questions, taking orders, dealing with billing issue, handling complaints, and perhaps scheduling maintenance or repairs. Customer service can occur **onsite** (as when a retail employee helps a customer find a desired item or answer a question), or can occur over the phone or via internet. Many companies operate customer service call centres, often staffed around the clock. **Typically** there is no charge for customer service. Quality customer service is essential to building customer relationship.

Customer service that gives retailers their robust sales figures is more complex than the superficial "How may I help you" of yesteryear. Today, retailers have to respond to the customer demands on many levels, from making the store an inviting destination to **restocking** shelves regularly and stocking the right mix of products. At the same time, training for customer service representatives on store floors has become much more important as well as rigorous. World class customer service providers believe that customer service is not a department but a philosophy - a way of life - that should be practiced by all employees at every level of the organization and that it's their people that set them apart from the competition. It involves a thousand, concrete, minute actions performed by everyone in an organization to keep the customer happy. Good customer service is all about bringing customers back.

### 1) My Role

As a salesperson what is my role. Am I really important? Lets look at the following questions.

- **Does the** customer know the Store **Manager**?

- Does the customer know the Floor Manager?
- **Does** the customer know the Category Head?

In that case:

- Who is the only person the customer interacts with?
- Who is the person who can influence whether the customer likes the store or not?
- Who can ensure whether the customer will come back or not?

It is " YOU as a salesperson who is directly in contact with the customer.

- I **am** the face of the organization.
- I **am** the face of the store.
- I am the face of the **product/brand**.

## 2) **Some hard facts about the customers**

- It is 10 times more expensive to acquire a new customer than to retain a current customer
- A typical dissatisfied customer will tell 8-10 people about his problem.
- 7 of 10 complaining customers will do business with you again if you resolve the complaint in their favour.
- If you resolve a complaint on the spot 95% will do business again.

A good customer service hence becomes essential for the business to increase productivity and to gain an edge over the competition.

## 3) **Good and Bad customer Service**

Good and Bad customer service leaves following impact on the customers:

### **Good Customer Service**

Leaves a positive memory of you and the store

- Meets and exceeds customer expectations
- Creates loyal and returning customers
- Gains more customers
- Leads to profits
- Positive publicity
- Positive image

### **Bad Customer Service**

- Leaves a negative memory of you and the store
- Does not even meet the basic customer expectations
- Creates indifferent and non-returning customers
- Loses customers
- Leads to loss

- Negative publicity
- Negative image

If as the service provider, you don't feel good about your work, how will you make a customer feel good? If you think you are not special, how will you make somebody else feel special...!!

*"Remember, excellent service is a win-win experience!"*

#### **4) Why Improving Customer Experience is Important?**

Everyday we have experiences that come from interacting with people and companies. We go to the coffee shop, fill up our gas tanks, call our bank to transfer funds, and so on. Our experiences leave us with both physical and emotional impressions. The physical impressions come from what happened during the experience. Emotional impressions come from feeling good or bad about the people and the services we come across. This is called "customer experience".

Customer Experience plays a large part in the customer's overall loyalty. Loyalty is important in building long term commitment. People remember the experience they have had – especially the very good ones and the very bad ones – and these experiences are shared with friends and colleagues. Companies who focus on customer loyalty have a distinct advantage over companies that do not. Customer retention leads to profits, loyalty and creates new demand from new customers.

#### **5) Parameters that help in good customer service**

- a **Attentive Listening:** The salesperson should be able to focus on what the customer is explaining and not what is convenient for him to understand..
- a **Positive attitude:** Maintaining an optimistic attitude helps in effective customer service. Salesperson should be able to create a vibrant and positive atmosphere around him.
- a **Clarity in communication:** Effective and clear communication involves: using simple language; avoiding technical terms; speaking customers language.
- a **Giving feeling of confidence to the customers:** The salesperson should understand the product well and get all the facts right to be able to give confidence to the customer that he has knowledge and knows what he is talking about.
- a **Make customer feel important:** While interacting, he should be totally engaged with the customer and his attention should not be diverted on anything else.
- a **Ability to sooth ruffled feathers:** The salesperson should have the ability to handle conflicts, if any, in the interaction.

#### **6) Barriers to customer service**

- a **Unhelpful Attitude:** Customers are a part of the salesperson's job and not an extension. The salesperson should understand that customer service is more important than selling the product,
- **Laziness:** Trying to avoid the customer through laziness is not going to help the interaction.

- **Poor communication skills:** Not having good communication skills makes the customer confused and does not help in **decision** making for the customer.
- **Poor time management:** Customer does not like to wait too long to be served. Having poor time management results in **customer** waiting unnecessarily for long time, which results in losing of a customer.
- **Lack of knowledge:** Customer expects you to have good knowledge of the product you are selling. If the customer does not get the answers to his questions he may be unable to make a decision of buying the product which can result in you losing a customer.

*"Removing these barriers is important. All you have to do is be aware of your mistakes and learn from them"*

### **Activity 1 :**

As a customer, identify a positive and a negative customer service experience you had over the past month. List out your reasons for:

#### **a) Outstanding Customer Service**

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

#### **b) Unsatisfactory Customer Service**

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.....  
.....  
.....

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## **1.3 CUSTOMER SERVICE IS AN ATTITUDE**

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In order to be committed, you need to be able to see the purpose of what you are doing. Make sure you keep developing and maintaining a positive attitude towards your job.

Let us look **at** a number of different attitudes to life as expressed in the attitudes people have towards their job, and the commitment they put into it.

### **Single and Double Bagger**

A person putting customers shopping into bags in a supermarket is called "**Bagger**". In many supermarkets a bagger can be found **working** behind the cashier. They take the customers groceries from the cash counter and put them into bags.

To become a "Bagger" requires little or no education. The job may not offer many possibilities for development - at first sight. However, like all other jobs it can be carried out in different ways, with differing results, dependent on the bagger's attitude to life.

You can have different attitudes to your job. You can be a "Single Bagger" or a "Double Bagger"

**Single Baggers:** *Single baggers are people who limit their own development and the development of others.*

Single baggers have a negative attitude towards their work, their colleagues, and their surrounding. They lack commitment and have made up their minds not to consider their working hours to be a rewarding and worthwhile part of life.

Single baggers use only one bag – hence the name – and do not care whether this one bag will be secure. The groceries are stuffed into the bag randomly, grapes and potato chips first, and perhaps a bottle of tomato ketchup on top.

This "Tricky" operation is done without much trouble and toil. Often accompanied by sighs, moaning and groaning and any other clear signals of displeasure. Single baggers feel the victims of circumstances and complain about the miserable pay, the lack of breaks, appalling draught from the door and the poor prospects for the future. Their body language clearly reveals their lack of commitment. Their eyes dimmed long ago, they have a drooping mouth, their body stopping, they move in slow motion.

If their colleague at the check out says, "Hurry up! Can't you see we have a long queue" – the single bagger gives his colleague a blank look, shrugs his shoulders and says with a gesture of despair "Well, what do you expect – I've only got two hands!" That is what makes single baggers so special. They only have two hands – therefore there is not much they can do with their lives!

**Double Baggers:** *Double baggers are people who develop themselves and help other develop too.*

Like single baggers, double baggers also have two hands – but they put both to good use. Double baggers have a positive attitude to life, and deeply committed to their work and their personal life. They generally strive to get the best out of life.

Double baggers make the bag secure with an extra bag – hence the name. They sort and pack the groceries efficiently and safely. And they still have time and energy to give a smile and a friendly remark to customers. They may even find the time to see the customers to the car park and help them load the groceries, saying "Thank you for shopping with us. Hope to see you again soon". Double baggers take responsibility for their own lives. They realize that total commitment to their work brings its reward. They meet happier customers, they get attention and recognition from colleagues and managers. In this way double baggers boost their own morale and their sense of well being and feel more optimistic about the future.

Double baggers have a positive attitude to life, are deeply committed, feel responsible for their achievements. They have neither the time for nor the inclination to negative criticism or complaint. They spend their time creating positive results and good relationships.

The double bagger attitude prevents many conflicts between people at home and at work and instead, contributes to solving most problems.

Single baggers and double baggers are found everywhere in society – not only in supermarkets – they are also found in the home, in public and private organizations. There are single bagger and double bagger sales, staff, lawyers, waiters, managing directors, secretaries, guests, course participants, customers, parents, spouses, etc.

Single baggers can be prisoners of their own attitudes. They have come to a stand still. They haven't got the strength to move on. When late, which is often, a single bagger blames the weather, the traffic, the lack of spaces in the car park, and everybody else.

You can have the best product, a sound marketing plan, and an ideal location. But if your **customer-** contact employees don't deliver on the promise, nothing else matters.

An excellent customer service from you should be

- Making customers feel special, giving them the impression that they are your priority number one.
- Giving every customer a memorable experience, ensuring they will be pleased to return to you next time.
- Treating every customer with respect.
- Anticipating and exceeding customer expectations, giving them something extra to remember you by.

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## 1.4 THE NEED AND IMPORTANCE OF CUSTOMER SERVICE

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Customer service is the critical factor for success in business. Your **customer service** must be better than your competitors if your business is to attract and retain customers. Remember that the greatest profits result from customer retention, loyalty and repurchase rather than new customer acquisitions.

Much of customer service comes down to common sense. Give customers what they want and make sure they are happy. If you just manage complaints, offer refunds, or smile at customers, you are only providing a small part of excellent customer service. Customer service also means going out of your way for the customer, doing everything possible to satisfy the customer, and making decisions that benefit the customer.

**That** doesn't mean that you should give away the store to the customer. However, you **must** know when and how often the customer is right. When customers **try** to take advantage of you, or become disruptive or abusive, they definitely are not right. While they may not always be right, they are always the customers. That's the only point you **have** to remember.

Customer service pays. You may have to spend some money in training programmes for **staff**, and there may be other costs involved in revamping or revising the service delivery **systems** within the organization. Still, in the long run, customer service always pays off, and the way it pays off the most is in long-term customer retention.

**While** improved customer service continues to be a major focus for retailers, the path to **achieving** it can vary from one retailer to another. Some retailers simply collect and maintain customer contact information to use as part of mass- marketing campaigns. Others track their customers purchase histories to better understand customers buying habits and tailor specific marketing messages to select group of customers. Still others implement unique, value-added services to create a one-of-a-kind shopping experience that will separate them from their competitors. Regardless, the recognition of customers **as the reason retailers are** in business, and the related emphasis **on keeping customers satisfied, continues** to be the focus among successful **retailers today**.

### Some Quotes on Customer Service

- 'The goal as a company is to have a customer service that is not just the best, but legendary.'  
- Sam Walton
- 'Being on par in terms of price and quality only gets you into the game, service wins the game'  
-Tony Alessandra
- 'You'll never have a product or price advantage again. They can be easily duplicated, but a strong customer service culture can't be copied'  
- Jerry Fritz
- 'It starts with respect. If you respect the customer as a human being, and truly honour their rights to be treated fairly and honestly, everything else is much easier'  
- Unknown
- 'The best way to sell is to make it convenient to buy'  
- Unknown
- 'Although your customers won't love you if you give bad service, your competitors will'  
- Kate Zabriskie
- 'If we don't take care of our customers, someone else will'  
-Unknown

## 1.5 SELLING AND CUSTOMER SERVICE

Effective and efficient selling depends, to a large extent, on good customer care. Customers who know they are being treated well will be willing to continue as customer and so will buy again and again, provided they are given the opportunity. Selling is the leading edge of customer care – until someone becomes a customer you cannot provide high-quality after-sales service. At the same time, high-quality customer care encourages people to buy. Customer care, therefore, is the bedrock of efficient selling. No one person in an organisation is wholly responsible for either selling or for delivering customer service. There is a customer care loop in which sellers, service providers and customers operate. By serving and selling well, each person creates 'windows of opportunity' to generate more sales and deliver more service.

Good **customer** care is the basis of increased sales. Regular customers use their past experience of staff actions and attitudes as part of their decision to buy (or not to buy). Customers also need the opportunity to buy products presented to them in a professional and customer-friendly way. Customers, therefore, buy more than the products or services on offer – they also buy (or reject) staff attitudes and service levels. Staff must be aware of this and also of their own attitudes if they are to contribute to increased sales.

"Some customers expect a lot from salespeople, some expect very little, and some don't know what to expect"

Frequently, customers expect salespeople merely to be suppliers of products rather than resources with solutions that can save time, make them money, increase productivity, and retain customers. Salespeople who have developed the skills to open a customer's mind to a new set of expectations are often the most successful.

Following are the **points** to keep in mind for Effective Selling via Good Customer Service.

## 1) Ownership

The Mantra for good customer service is "Ownership". This means:

- *Own Your Store*

Take pride, be a great team player, be knowledgeable about things **you** sell so that you can answer queries such as 'How does it work?' or 'What does it do?'

- *Own Your Space*

Keep it clean, organized, and well stocked

- *Own Your Appearance*

Be clean, be presentable, wear clean well ironed **uniforms**, smell good

- *Own Your Behaviour*

Smile, welcome customers, extend help and support, provide information, answer queries and solve problems, maintain positive body language. Customers **are more** likely to ask you for help if you have already shown yourself to be **friendly** and approachable.

- *Own Your Customers*

Go the extra mile to make them happy, be proactive, and take responsibility for their needs, providing quality product and **service**. If a customer asks for something that is out of stock or discontinued, offer an appropriate alternative.

## 2) Promises

Good salespeople give customers a reason to return to the store. And that's **important** because no retailer sells anything that customers can't get from another retailer.

Following is a list of customer-service promises that each employee can use:

- *"I promise to treat customers the way I would like to be treated."*
- *"My most important job is to make sure the customer comes back."*
- *"I understand how much customers hate waiting in line to check out, and how much they hate being ignored."*
- *"I promise not to make personal phone calls when I am working."*
- *"I promise to smile when I answer the phone, and to not put customers on hold forever."*
- *"I promise to say 'Thank you' to all customers."*
- *"I understand that I am empowered to solve customer problems."*

This is a huge deal. Empowering **employees** can set the store apart from most others.

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## 1.6 LET US SUM UP

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Customer service is the service provided in support of a company's core products. Good customer service is the lifeblood of any retailer. It generates barriers to competition, increases customer loyalty and makes the company's activities more

efficient. Customer service has a lot to do with employee attitude as it is you as a salesperson who is directly in contact with the customer and for him you are the face of the store. You must have the attitude of a 'double bagger'. The Parameters that help in good customer service include active listening, positive attitude, clarity in communication, giving a feeling of confidence to the customer and making them feel important. Effective selling via good customer service involves ownership by the salesperson in terms of owning the store, space, appearance, behaviour and customer.

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## **1.7 TERMINAL QUESTIONS**

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- 1) What do you understand by customer service?
- 2) Explain the role of salesperson in providing customer service.
- 3) What do you understand by the terms 'single bagger' and 'double bagger'? Explain with examples.
- 4) Discuss the importance of customer service for a retailing organization.
- 4) What are the key points to be considered by you for effective selling via Customer Service?

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