

TOP 10 CUSTOMER SERVICE MISTAKES

<http://www.allbusiness.com/sales/customer-service/3985-1.html>

Strong customer service is a valuable asset, especially in today's high-tech-oriented, increasingly impersonal business world. Therefore, if you are aware of common customer service mistakes and avoid them, you may strengthen your position in a competitive market.

1. **Untrained staff.** It does not matter whether you have two or 200 employees, you must train everyone in the art of customer service. Customers and clients will not tolerate rudeness, incorrect information, or apathy on the part of your staff. Not training the staff — and this should include everyone — is a major mistake made by too many businesses.
2. **Trying to win the argument.** It is worth remembering that it takes five times more effort and cost to gain one new customer as it takes to maintain one current customer. Therefore, to win an argument and lose a steady customer, you are punishing your business.
3. **Inaccessibility.** If you want to see repeat business, you need to be accessible to your customers. If it is difficult to contact the customer service department or speak to a manager, customers may not return. Many businesses, especially on the Internet, try to maintain a distance from their customers. This rarely works. Check out Online Customer Service Basics for tips on a positive online customer service experience.
4. **Standing by your policy.** While the clerk who is scared that he or she may lose their job can say "That's our policy," customer service representatives and managers should be able to find ways to bend policies to build customer relationships. The phrase "If I do that for you, I'll have to do it for everyone," is one of the fastest way to lose customers.
5. **Unfulfilled promises.** If you promise a customer that something would be ready by Thursday, then it should be there by Thursday. When you cannot make this happen, do not make excuses; the only words you need to remember are "We're sorry," backed up by an extra effort to make the customer happy.
6. **Poor record keeping.** If you keep referring to Mrs. Johnson of Jackson Avenue as Mrs. Jackson of Johnson Avenue, you can be sure that she will not continue to do business with your company. While any business can make a mistake, constantly misspelled names and similar foul-ups do not encourage regular customers to return.
7. **The runaround.** When someone calls for customer service, they expect a service representative to be the first or second person to whom they speak, following a receptionist perhaps. People do not like being passed from one person to another or sent from one department to another in a retail location. Passing the buck is akin to passing the customer on to your competitor.
8. **Email/online cop outs.** Since email is impersonal, many businesses send a form letter or a programmed response that answers 10 common FAQs, none of which may apply to a particular customer. Other businesses simply ignore customer complaints hoping that the customer will simply forget the issue. These are email cop outs, or excuses for not providing adequate customer service. It is very simple for a customer representative to respond to each inquiry in a timely fashion.
9. **Failure to listen.** Customer service representatives routinely do not listen closely to customers. Typically they respond with an answer that does not match the problem because they were not paying attention. Customer relation representatives need to be trained, particularly in the art of listening and even taking notes.
10. **Forgetting the basics.** "Please," "thank you," "we're sorry about the inconvenience," and so on are simple phrases that cost nothing, take little effort, and win big points.