

CUSTOMER SERVICE TRAINING IS FOR MANAGERS TOO

BY BILL HOGG

Good managers know that customer service is the lifeblood of any successful company. It's costly to run a business that is dependent on "new" customers. It's far more cost efficient to focus on converting customers into repeat/loyal customers through exceptional and consistent customer service.

Given this, it's no wonder that many companies invest in customer service training. What's less obvious, but probably even more important, is that customer service training isn't just for the front line; it's for managers too -- and for good reason.

Knowing how to greet a customer, how to handle a complaint or how to make a customer feel welcome and valued are all cornerstones of solid customer service. When employees understand and consistently deliver this level of service at all times, it makes a difference in a company's bottom line.

Ensuring that employees both understand and follow through with a company's customer service strategy depends on many factors -- but among the most important are the approach, attitude and behaviours of management.

People learn most effectively by example. Resource binders, tip sheets, educational tapes, role playing and presentations are all excellent ways to train staff but it is hard to beat the positive learning advantage gained by teams whose managers model the ideal customer service attitudes and behaviours desired by the company. And nothing kills a great training initiative than a manager who doesn't support the new direction.

In order for managers to "lead by example" they first have to endorse and then master the desired behaviours and that can best be achieved through customer service training specifically for managers.

It's wise for any company to first acknowledge that there may be a certain mindset in many management groups around the need for managerial customer service training. Many managers believe this to be a front-line issue requiring front-line training only.

The problem with this line of thinking is management personnel are key to the success of front line training and managers can't model excellent customer service behaviours without, in most cases, going through the training themselves.

To increase manager engagement in customer service training it's important to highlight for managers the significance of their leadership role in any customer service strategy.

The following points should be stressed in communications and presentations to management regarding their unique contribution to the company's success plan:

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- Management careers depend on the success of the people they manage. Managers can position their teams for success by mastering best practices in customer service and by serving as a model and motivator for the employees who look to them for direction and answers.
- In order for managers to be the model or example of customer service excellence for their staff, they need to have the most appropriate and thorough training they can get. Customer service training specifically for managers will encompass the necessary content and particular perspectives managers will appreciate in their role as supervisors and mentors.
- Customer service training develops many soft skills like the ability to listen well, be empathetic and follow through on promises. Often these types of skills are very difficult to learn in the workplace but have the greatest impact on customer service and manager goals. Managers have a unique opportunity to build this valuable skill set in their teams through their own sound grasp and modelling of these essential customer-services attributes.

When companies engage their managers in customer service training, the organization receives practical reinforcement for their sales and marketing infrastructure and empowers a key group of individuals who can play an important role in the company's sustained success.

Bill transforms businesses and business leaders to deliver breakthrough results! He works with senior leadership teams to build high performance cultures and focus their organizational goals around the customer — then aligning their priorities, accountability and service delivery model to improve performance, productivity and profits.

He equips leaders with the principles, processes and tools to align, motivate and empower an engaged customer-focused culture that fosters and rewards exceptional performance and productivity. As well, he is a dynamic, results-oriented speaker on the importance of a customer-focused culture, either as a guest speaker or acting as a facilitator of a group discussion/workshop.

For additional information on consulting or speaking opportunities, email [bill \[at\] billhogg \[dot\] ca](mailto:bill[at]billhogg[dot]ca) or visit us online at www.billhogg.ca where you can download [Bill's 1-sheet](#).

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