

# 4 STEPS TO GIVE EXCEPTIONAL CUSTOMER SERVICE

BY BILL HOGG

*This is the third in a series of six articles that looks at different aspects of excellent customer service and how it leads to increased overall profitability. The full series will be available for download as a white paper once it is completed.*

In our last article we covered the reasons why employees need guidelines, not just rules. This article shares some specific guidelines on how to engage with customers. When customers are positively engaged, they're more likely to be satisfied. Satisfaction can become loyalty and this leads to overall increased profitability.

Each and every person in your organization has the opportunity to create a positive impression on your customers -- to impact their experience and potentially convert them from a lukewarm satisfied customer to a red-hot loyal customer.

From full and properly stocked shelves, to offering a friendly smile, or guiding a customer to a sought after product, the way you treat your customers will determine whether they return, or move on to the competition.

Exceptional Customer Service is always about the customer -- it's understanding and responding to their needs -- making them feel special.

Here is a simple 4-step formula to help employees remember how to GIVE exceptional customer service each and every time they interact with customers.

These guidelines work whether you are dealing with a customer for the first time or whether it is a repeat visit. They also work well when dealing with a customer complaint.

**Greet:** Greet every customer with a smile, make eye contact. This lets them know you see them and are ready to help. Asking "how may I help" rather than waiting for people to approach will create a positive experience. Greet your customers in a friendly and approachable manner and adjust your tone according to their needs -- your greeting would be different for a customer asking for information versus one who might have a problem and is a bit upset.

In every case, you want to let the customer know that you are ready to listen and respond to their needs -- and help build long-term loyalty.

**Interact:** Listen carefully to each customer's request. Are they looking for help? Do they have a complaint? Be careful not to jump to conclusions about their needs, and never take their comments personally. Remember, customers often don't express their needs clearly and ask their real question. So make sure you listen for the real question behind the question.

Choose your attitude -- be courteous, friendly and polite. A positive, caring attitude will sooth even the angriest customer and will turn a satisfied customer into a red-hot loyalist. Help them -- make it easy for them to accomplish their outcome faster, easier and more conveniently -- and you will create long-term loyalty.

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**Verify:** After you have listened to understand their needs, make sure your actions address their opportunity or concern? It is often a good idea to confirm with them what you have heard and then whether the solution you propose will address their need -- before taking action. For example, if they ask your closing time -- what they might really want to know is "what the latest time they can receive service". Or if their preferred brand is not available, you could ask how often they would be purchasing, and potentially offer to order the product for them.

Little will be accomplished by rushing an answer or hurrying off to solve an issue they don't have. There is little value in taking action that the customer doesn't need.

**Express Thanks:** Always say "thank you" -- it makes all the difference. Customers often express thanks when they receive help from a sales person or change from a cashier, but it really should be your team expressing thanks to your customers for their business. Letting your customer know their business is appreciated is an essential part of making them feel welcome and valued.

No two customers are ever alike, so train your staff to follow these 4 simple steps to **GIVE** exceptional customer service: Greet, Interact, Verify and Express Thanks.

Plus it's a lot more fun talking with people and sharing in their positive experience than standing around counting the minutes until your shift ends.

Remember; without customers we have no business -- without repeat customers we are out of business!

Download your FREE **GIVE** Poster today!

In our next article we will cover ***3 Reasons Why Customer Service Should Exceed Expectation.***

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*Bill is passionate about results and works only with clients who share that passion -- ready to take steps to achieve immediate, significant and continuous improvement. Whether working with boards or operations teams and employees, his no-excuse approach breaks down the silos and gains consensus and clarity throughout the organization.*

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