Running a business is a time-consuming job and it takes a lot of effort to get your business to a position where it is profitable. You might sell certain products or provide a service but whatever you offer, you have to make sure you do everything right.

All of your hard work and efforts could be undone if you fail to understand the importance of customer service. Not every customer will be easy to deal with and that is because some simply won't be satisfied with the service or products you offer. They might experience an issue that they expect you to deal with and if you do not assist them in the right way then that can damage the reputation of your business.

The goal of customer service is to ensure that customers are managed throughout the entire journey. This might include prior to purchasing by providing them with helpful information through to after making a purchase. At every stage of the process, they have to know that you are there for them, regardless of their needs. With this in mind, how can you improve your business customer service?

Understanding the needs of your customers

It's vital that you understand your customers as much as possible. As we have mentioned, each customer is different and they will all have different expectations and so, you have to understand them as much as possible. When a customer comes to you with an issue or a query, you have to be sure that you understand what they expect and what they are asking. They might be clear and concise with what they need but some might not be as clear as you need them to be so you might find that some customers require more attention than others.

When you understand their needs, it makes the process of handling their query or complaint as efficient as possible. The goal is to meet their expectations and ensure that they are satisfied, even if they experienced a difficult problem. By taking the right steps, you can turn a bad situation into one that works in your favour and in actual fact, you can retain customers by implementing effective customer service that gets results.

Develop an effective best practice strategy

Of course, you are going to need to have a strategy that [provides staff with the necessary steps](#) and access that is required to deliver customer service. Not every case is the same but you have to remain consistent when delivering customer service. With a best practice strategy, it will inform staff of what is expected of them and what action they should take based on certain circumstances and situations.

A strategy can evolve over time, based on experiences and changes within your business but this will help to create consistency that will deliver satisfaction. Without this in place, you might find that certain customers get a better level of service than others and that alone can cause you further problems. So, create a best practice strategy and follow it because that will help to [empower staff](#) when it comes to delivering customer service confidently.

Develop a clear standard of service across your business

A certain standard of service is expected because customers have expectations when it comes to [dealing with issues](#). You will deal with a query about a product in a different way to [dealing with an issue](#) and so, having a clear standard of service will help to create consistency. Your staff must be aware that they have to do everything possible to help the customer and that will involve finding a suitable solution. Your standard of service will provide a number of different elements of [customer service](#) such as how to offer a solution and what solutions can be offered.

Depending on the customer, you might have to implement different levels of [customer service](#) and this is also the case for certain situations. However, with a standard of service in place, everyone who works within customer service will understand what is expected of them.

Meet and exceed the needs of your customers

[Customer satisfaction](#) is key and you have to go above and beyond to exceed their needs. If they have a problem with a product they are going to want a replacement, a refund or something more and you have to make sure that you clearly understand what they expect. This is achieved

through [clear communication](#) regardless of whether you deal with them face-to-face or by email.

You have to take action quickly too because customers don't appreciate being made to wait when there is an [issue](#). They might want a refund so they can make a purchase elsewhere but you should do everything possible to retain them and keep them satisfied. This might include giving them a discount, a free product or something extra that helps to ease the situation. Every customer is unique and so, you have to get to know who they are by asking them the right questions about their issue and what they want you to do. Once you have this information, it is then possible to take the right steps. The solution might be simple or it could prove challenging but you have to do everything possible to exceed their needs.

Promote internally good customer service examples

You should be proud of how you [manage customer service](#) because it is the backbone of your business. When a customer makes a purchase without an issue, then there is not a lot that you can take away from it other than the fact that you provided a good service. Sure, the customer might leave you a positive review but if they have a bad experience, you are going to have to handle it accordingly.

However, good customer service comes from knowledge, experience and training but also excellent customer service examples can help to [empower staff](#) to go above and beyond for your business. By making certain examples a focal point, it will leave [staff feeling valued](#) and that can help to improve customer service too. By promoting these examples, you are highlighting what action was taken, how staff handled the situation and how the customer felt after the experience.

Add a personal touch to your customer service

Every single customer will want you to make their needs a priority. They won't want to feel as though they are just another person that passes through your [customer service](#) system. This is the reason why you have to provide a personalised customer service experience that works for them. Making it personal will leave your customers feeling as though you have recognised that they are more than just another customer. This will create

a feeling of assurance as they will feel that you are dealing with their query or request.

This might involve asking them their name or finding out further information about their situation and what they expect. This is a part of the process that is relatively easy to get right but it can make a huge difference to the overall outcome as well as the experience for the customer.

Develop a customer focus culture within your business

It is too simple for businesses to focus on profits and turnover without understanding what it is that drives their business forwards. At the heart of any business sits the customer and the customer is everything. Without customers, businesses simply wouldn't make any money and that is why they have to be the focus of all that you do.

Every product or service you provide has to provide a solution for the customer but you also have to understand that the customer is hugely important. Assuming that customers will return or that they are satisfied is not enough to guarantee success. Therefore, customer service has to involve the likes of surveys, questionnaires and feedback to ensure you provide a streamlined service. When you create a customer focus culture, it will mean that all employees value the customer and appreciate what they do for your business.

Ensure members of staff have the right skill sets

Many make the assumption that customer service is something that comes naturally to everyone. It is also too easy to believe that it is a role that requires little skill or knowledge but it is actually more important to have the right skill set.

Dealing with customers can prove a challenge and the range of skills required to deliver customer service is more wide and varied than you might realise. You need understanding, empathy, patience, understanding, confidence and the ability to communicate effectively. All of these skills have to come together to create a perfect solution that the customer appreciates. Some people will possess these skills naturally and others will have to undergo training to learn new skills but it is so important that

members of staff have the right skill sets. If they don't have the right skill sets, they are going to fall short when it comes to meeting the needs of the customer.

Set measurable goals and objectives

It is important that you understand how effective your customer service is because this will enable you to determine what you are doing well and what needs work. Dealing with customer service on a customer-by-customer basis is not enough to help you identify areas of weakness and that could cause problems further down the line.

Of course, you need to ensure that you meet the requirements of each customer to deal with their issue but it doesn't stop there. The reality is that you have to understand how you are performing by using tangible data through goals and objectives. You might aim to deliver customer satisfaction to a certain percentage such as 90% of complaints should be resolved or you might aim to speed up the process and deal with issues faster. These goals and objectives allow you to measure and then take action should you find that you are not meeting them.

Encourage regular feedback from your staff

Your staff sit at the heart of customer service and it is those who deal with customers that can give you all the information you require. They can give you feedback on the processes that they have to follow or how each customer responds to the way in which it is being handled. Furthermore, they might also inform you that they feel as though they require more training.

Using this feedback, you can take action and the necessary steps to put things right. While you might automatically assume that feedback should only come from your customers, this is not the case. Your staff are at the forefront of all that happens and they have first-hand experience of how situations unfold and how customers react to certain solutions. You can take this information and then fine tune it to create a more efficient customer service experience for the customer and your staff.

Learn from your competitors

Your competitors will provide valuable insight into what works and what doesn't. You can browse their social media channels or online directories to find out what customers are saying and then you can link that up to your customer service and determine whether you can do things differently.

If you can see that they are slow, unprofessional or simply don't take the right action then you can identify what the customer needs. You can speed up your processes, be more considerate and understanding and make sure that you meet the needs of the customer. This insight is invaluable and is all that you need to make informed decisions on what you need to do to get things right. This is an ongoing process that you have to include as a part of your customer service procedures. You should make sure that you constantly monitor your competitors because they might make one simple change that could give you further information in relation to what you need to do. Don't get caught up on what they are doing wrong either because you can also look at what they are doing right.

Understand what you competitors are doing well

As we mentioned, looking at your competitors and what they are doing wrong can really help you to step ahead of them and do things right. It almost gives you a free pass to improve the service that you offer but of course, there will be things that your competitors are doing right because after all, they are your competitors.

So, have a look online again - social media in particular, and then look at what people are saying. Are they saying that your competitors offered them more as a way of providing compensation for a lack of service or are they providing them with other solutions that achieves a satisfactory outcome. Whatever you find, you can determine whether it is going to work for your business and then look to implement it yourself. It can be the smallest of changes that make a difference but if your competitors are doing it and are doing it well, you would be wrong to overlook it and ignore

it.

Seek and promote customer feedback

We live in a world that is smaller than ever before because we are connected in so many ways. Word of mouth was once the best way of increasing the reach of your business and that is still very much true but you now have more options than ever before.

Feedback is vital to your business and you have to show it off because how else are people going to know just how good you are? Naturally, you might think that you should only show positive feedback which is true but what about the feedback that starts with a negative tone and then finishes with a positive outcome? If a customer leaves feedback that begins with a theme explaining about a bad experience but ends with them stating how you put things right, this will work in your favour. It will inform potential customers that you are a company that doesn't always get things right from the start but will go above and beyond to put things right should an issue arise. This type of feedback can have a massive impact on your business which is why you should share it on the likes of social media and your own website.

Gather customer concerns and complaints

To determine what action you should take and how to create impactful customer service processes and procedures you have to understand concerns and complaints. These are vital to the way in which you plan ahead for the delivery of customer service. These concerns and complaints will tell you what you are doing wrong, what customers dislike and will then help you to take the necessary action.

It is also possible to categorise them by breaking them down into different groups such as product complaints, service complaints or complaints relating to how staff handled situations. When you have groups, you can create processes that can be implemented for different scenarios and that can help staff to take the right action.

Reviewing those customer concerns and complaints

Once you have collected and collated the concerns and complaints, you will find that you now have the potential to make decisions based on

tangible information. Through reviewing them, it will show you where you are going wrong and how you can address these problems. Are you selling products that are constantly underdelivering or are there parts of your service that you have to improve? Whatever it might be, through regular reviews, you can constantly adapt and change how you operate.

If you make improvements to products and services, then you will find that complaints will reduce and if you improve your customer service, it will result in an improved image for your company. These are all relatively easy changes to make but it does require you to review complaints and concerns because they are really important to how you work.

Develop an effective complaint handling plan

If you choose to handle complaints on a case-by-case basis with no plan in place then you are going to find that you hit further problems. With no direction or guidance, customer service staff are going to look unprofessional and they are not always going to take the right course of action.

Complaints have to be handled in the right way and although you shouldn't handle complaints with no plan, you never truly know what the customer is going to complain about. However, you can have some element of planning in place that works as a back bone for complaints, giving staff the ability to benefit from some kind of starting point. Dealing with a customer who has not received an order will be different to dealing with a customer who is unhappy with the service they have received. This is where a plan can help you to differentiate between different complaints, enabling you to take the right action.

Reward good customer service (staff)

Without committed customer service staff, your business would face a huge range of problems. They are the face of your business because they communicate with customers directly and that means that they become your brand image. If they deliver poor customer service, then this will reflect badly on your business but if they get things right, it will undoubtedly help your business to thrive and improve.

Customer service staff should be rewarded for their efforts because the role can prove challenging but you also have to recognise what they bring to your business. You can give them gifts, vouchers, meals out and many

other rewards but in doing so, you will show them that you value the work that they do.

Provide effective customer service training

Customer service is constantly evolving and staff have to keep up to speed with the needs of the customer and a changing landscape. For those who might have already had training, it doesn't hurt to give them more training as a way of refreshing their approach but also giving them access to any new information or skills that they require. For those who haven't received training then effective training will ensure that they deliver customer service in line with the expectations of your business and the customer.