

AmazingService Guy.com

Presents:

The Amazing Customer Service Toolkit



Tips, Tools, Tactics and Rules to Help You Deliver Amazing Service to Every Customer Every Time with No Exceptions and No Excuses!

By Kevin Stirtz, The Amazing Service Guy

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What is the Amazing Customer Service Toolkit?

This toolkit is a free resource for you and anyone you know who is interested in improving customer service. If you work with customers directly, you'll find plenty of useful ideas and tools you can use on the job. If you manage or own a business and you want to have more loyal customers, you'll find helpful advice here to do that too.

Whether you're in management or on the front line, you'll find handy tools and tips here to help you serve your customers better and keep them coming back.

Please feel free to make as many copies as you want. (This resource is copyrighted but you have my permission to make digital and print copies as long as you don't change anything.) Share this toolkit with your friends, co-workers, boss and even your customers. My goal in creating this is to help as many people as possible deliver Amazing Service to their customers. And, please free to quote from this using excerpts. I want you to share these ideas with others!



About the Author: Kevin Stirtz

I am the "Amazing Service Guy". I help companies increase revenue and profits by improving customer service. I am a professional speaker and trainer and I have spoken to thousands of people across the USA and in Europe about how to improve customer service.

I have been quoted in major media such as BusinessWeek, the Boston Globe, the StarTribune, Smart Money, Chicago Sun Times and others. My most recent book [More Loyal Customers: 21 Real World Lessons to Keep Your Customers Coming Back](#) has won 5-star reviews at Amazon.com.

"The easiest and most powerful way to increase customer loyalty is really very simple. Make your customers happy. Just keep 'em smiling. Do that every day and your business will be fine."

-Kevin Stirtz



1. What is Amazing Service?

Amazing Service happens when your organization:

1. Delivers what your customers want, plus a little more,
2. In the context of your business,
3. Better than anyone else,
4. Every time with every customer - no exceptions and no excuses!



The good news is this: Amazing Service is not magic. It is something every organization can and should do. And when you deliver Amazing Service to your customers, they will notice. Because you'll be giving them what they want. And you'll be doing it consistently. Customers remember this and they like it (a lot). So they'll come back and they'll tell others to do business with you.

Here's even better news:

Most companies do not deliver Amazing Service. They never will. So if you choose to make your company an Amazing Company (by delivering Amazing Service) then your company will stand out. I guarantee it.

2. Six Steps to More Loyal Customers

We all know it's important to have loyal customers. But do you know how important it is? A study by Bain & Company suggests that a 5% increase in customer loyalty can improve profitability by anywhere from 25% to 95%. It shows us there are big opportunities available for owners and managers who are willing to do what it takes to increase customer loyalty.

“Customer service is just a day-in, day-out ongoing, never-ending, unremitting, persevering, compassionate, type of activity.”
Leon Gorman, CEO L.L.Bean

The good news is, it's not hard. And you can do it with the people and resources you have right now. It takes time, effort and patience to make it successful. But you can make a huge impact on your business.

Here's what you need to do:

1. Ask your customers what they want.

This is different than what they expect. What customers expect is usually less (often a lot less) than what they want. But you need to know what they want.

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What do they want in general? What are they trying to accomplish (or avoid)? Why did they choose you instead of your competition? What are their priorities and preferences?

Keep in mind different customers focus on different aspects of what your business does and how you do it. But if you talk with enough customers, you'll see patterns and trends. You should develop some profiles of what various customers want.



Also look for how your customers want to be served. This will vary a lot and is harder to discover. Most people focus on what they want because it's easier to talk about. But people like to be treated well. We all have different definitions of what being treated well means. You need to learn what it means to your customers.

2. Tell your customers what to expect.

Some companies try to be all things to all customers. They do too much and none of it well. Your company should focus on what it does best.

Every company has a unique set of resources that gives it a competitive advantage. These are your company's strengths. Learn what they are. Use them to determine what your company can do better than anyone else in your market.

Once you know what your company does best, compare that list with what your customers want. These two lists should overlap. (If they don't, you have a problem!) Where they overlap is what your company should focus on. These are the things you need to do for your customers: The combination of what they want most and what you do best.

From this list you need to develop your message. You might call it a brand promise. You might call it your Customer Service Standards. What you call it is not as important as what you do with it. Use it to tell your story. It tells people why they should do business with you. And it helps them know what to expect when they do business with you.

Then make sure your customers, employees and management all understand your message. Do everything you can to share your message with these three groups. Post it in your store, on your web site, on your business cards, in your ads and anywhere else your employees, management and customers will see it. Get it noticed!

“Every contact we have with a customer influences whether or not they'll come back. We have to be great every time or we'll lose them.”

-Kevin Stirtz

3. Create easy ways for your customers to offer feedback.

This is where many companies stumble. They focus so much on getting new orders and delivering the product or service, they forget what happens afterward. The only way you can consistently get better at what you do is with a steady flow of honest and direct feedback from your customers.

Find many ways for your customers to let you know what they think. Brainstorm with your employees. Make it a contest. Copy other businesses. Ask your customers. Do a Google search! Try different communication channels and keep trying until you find some that deliver the amount of feedback you need (which is a lot).

“Do what you say you are going to do, when you say you are going to do it, in the way you said you were going to do it.”

- Larry Winget

Make sure this step is done by your employees. Don't rely on outsiders (consultants, survey companies, etc.) to do this for you. They are your customers and you need to communicate with them directly. You'll learn more from them this way and you'll develop closer ties with your customers.

You'll also get another benefit. Customers love it when a company pays attention to them after the sale. They feel important because you're asking them what they think. Your

employees can do this better than any outsiders can.

Finally, make sure your customers know how they can contact you. Publish and promote the many ways customers can connect with you. Encourage them to reach out to you often.

4. Listen to what your customers say.

Many companies talk about customer feedback. Some do it well. Most don't. Because they don't work very hard to hear what customers are saying about them. They might hear the obvious, like complaints and "thank yous" but nothing else. If you want to increase customer loyalty, you need to do better. You need to make a special effort to find out what customers are saying about your company, your products and your service.



This includes more than the feedback mechanisms you create (Step 3). It includes the many other ways people communicate about your company. The Internet is full of people's comments about their customer experiences. Make sure you are mining this resource on a regular basis.

Are you doing what you said you would? If not, what's missing? Are they getting what they want? Is the message you're sending the right one? If you have developed a brand promise, is it really what your customers want? And since things change, you need to stay abreast of changes in what your customers want.

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Look for the Amazing Service Gap. This is the difference between what you promise your customers and what you're actually delivering. Their feedback is how you know what your gap is. So listen for ideas on how to do better. Find ways to close the gap.

In addition to listening to your customers, you need to gather and store what they tell you. Most companies have plenty of contact with customers. But they never keep track of what their customers say. And if they do keep track, it's often hard to access because it's in a file drawer somewhere or buried in a database nobody knows how to use.

Make sure the feedback you gather is stored in a way that people can get to. In fact, you should publish it. Make it available to everyone in your company. The more people who see it the more ideas you can generate to use it (Step 5). By having a lot of people look at it and talk about it, you'll be able to see your customers more clearly.

Conduct regular and frequent meetings to talk about the feedback and draw conclusions about what it means. Look for trends and patterns. Also, look for what's not there. Are there things you think are issues or concerns but that do not appear in any customer feedback? If so, what does that tell you? If it's not important to your customers, should it be important to your company?

“Being on par in terms of price and quality only gets you into the game. Service wins the game.”

- Tony Alessandra

5. Act on what your customers tell you.

Information is no good if ignored. Beyond listening to your customers and considering what they say, you have to use it. This doesn't mean you act on everything. Remember, Step 2, you can't do everything everyone wants. So you need to pick and choose what feedback to act on. Focus on what will help your company do what you do best. Choose ideas that will help you close the Amazing Service Gap (Step 4).



You might find feedback that takes your company in a different direction. Your brand promise (Step 2) might be missing the mark. Maybe you have a changing customer base or a changing market. If your feedback suggests this you need to consider how it affects your business. Then either act on it or make an informed decision to not act on it.

The bottom line in Step 5 is to do something with your customer feedback. It's a gift from your customers so treat it as such. Make sure you thank every customer every time they offer feedback. And, let customers know what you do with the feedback. If they know it gets used they're more likely to keep offering it. Help them get involved and stay involved as your partners.

6. Repeat.

Like the shampoo bottle says, "lather, rinse, repeat". But in this case you should be repeating forever. This is a never ending process of learning, sharing, and working together.

Managing your company is no different than practicing a sport or hobby. The more you do something, the better you get. And since people and situations change constantly, this process needs to keep repeating so you don't miss these changes. Keep cycling through again and again. You'll get better at knowing what your customers want and at giving it to them. Your customers will see you are truly focused on helping them get what they want. They'll have little incentive to go elsewhere.

You'll never please every customer every time. But if you follow these steps you're more likely to please most of them most of the time. That will keep your customers coming back again and again.

3. To Improve Customer Service, Find a Role Model

"We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence then, is not a single act, but a habit."

-Aristotle

It makes sense that if you improve customer service, you will increase customer loyalty. But improving customer service is not necessarily easy. It takes more than a seminar or a motivational speaker. It takes effort and time to make a sustainable improvement in the level of service you deliver your customers.

Not long ago I was talking with Dr. Alan Weiss about customer service. Among the many good ideas he mentioned to improve customer service, one stood out. Alan said "*if you want to improve customer service in your company, get a role model*". So, with thanks to Dr. Weiss for his thought starter, here are some suggestions on how to find (or create) an Amazing Service role model in your company.

Almost every business has someone who stands out in how they care for customers. They care about people and it shows. They always take an extra step or two for their customers. They're friendly, courteous, warm, patient and knowledgeable about what your company does. They listen well and they are focused on helping customers get what they want. They follow through and they follow up. They are the people your customers ask for when they come back. And they're the employees your customers write letters about, telling you how wonderful they are.



They are your customer service champions. They are your role models.

First, define what you want in your Amazing Service role model. What personality traits and behaviors do you want in this person? Then prioritize them (because you'll never get them all). Paint a picture of your ideal employee, from your customer's perspective. These are your Amazing Service standards.

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You should include employees and customers in this process. Get their input. Ask them to share their views on what they should expect from your company. They will give you an incredible amount of valuable information.



Next, watch, listen and learn. Pay attention to your employees as they take care of your customers. Watch what they do and how they do it. As you do this, remember the ideal employee profile you created in step one. Make notes of how various employees measure against your Amazing Service standards. Then list these employees and rank them.

If you have one employee who is a perfect (or almost perfect) fit great. You have your first role model. If not, pick a couple who offer the best match. Make sure the people you select cover all the Amazing Service standards you created earlier. This way you will be able to model all the important aspects of Amazing Service to the rest of your employees.

(If you don't have any employees who come close to meeting your standards, then you need to think about adding or replacing staff.)

Once you have one or more role models, you then need to find ways to transfer their Amazing Service behaviors to the rest of your employees. Here are some suggestions.

“The more you engage with customers the clearer things become and the easier it is to determine what you should be doing.”

- John Russell, President, Harley-Davidson

1. Publish your Amazing Service standards.

Print, distribute and post your new Amazing Service standards. Make sure all your employees know what they are and what they mean. Let your customers know what your Amazing Service standards are too. Use them to make a statement about what they can expect from your company. Use posters, emails, flyers. Make laminated cards to give to every employee. Put them on customer receipts, signs, menus, brochures, websites - anywhere your customers and employees will see them.

2. Record your role models in action.

Use audio or video to record your Amazing Service role models working with customers. Show these in staff meetings on a regular and consistent basis. Highlight when and how the employee is doing things that meet or exceed your Amazing Service standards. **Note:** avoid focusing on what they do wrong in these sessions. No one likes to get criticized by a group of their peers. It will make the process less effective.

3. Have regular coaching and role playing sessions.

Schedule regular meetings with your staff. Coach them on your Amazing Service standards. Use role playing as a coaching tool in these sessions. Pick one standard each meeting. Prepare several

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staff before the meeting to play the parts. Let them know you're serious about using it as a tool for improvement. Make it fun but useful.

4. Reward employees who deliver Amazing Service.

Set up a program to reward and recognize employees who are "caught" delivering Amazing Service. Create ways to acknowledge their efforts publicly. Give prizes, plaques or other incentives to employees who demonstrate the service standards you are looking for.



5. Reward employees for noticing when other employees deliver Amazing Service.

This is key. As an owner or manager, you can't be everywhere, so you need to engage all your employees to help. Develop ways to reward employees for observing and "turning in" other employees who deliver great service. If employees are looking for Amazing Service, it means they're thinking about it.

Plus, it means they're engaged in the process. To observe a fellow employee delivering Amazing Service, they need to know what it is. They need to understand your Amazing Service standards.

"Care more than others think wise.
Risk more than others think safe.
Dream more than others think
practical. Expect more than others
think possible."

-Howard Schultz, CEO Starbucks
Coffee

6. Get your customers involved.

Engaging employees to observe and report Amazing Service is good. Getting customers to do it is great. Find ways to get them involved in the process. Let them know what your standards are. Encourage them to nominate employees for recognition and rewards. Make it easy for them to do this. The more engaged your customers are in this, the more loyal they will be.

When we think of improving customer service, we usually think of training. But that will only take us so far. To have a measurable and sustainable improvement, you need to focus on it constantly. Finding and using role models is an effective way to do this. Try this for 90 days and you'll see a significant improvement in the quality of your customer service.

4. Four Things Any Company Can Do to Improve Customer Service

Poor customer service seems like the norm in many companies. It's almost cliché. In some industries it's so common that when we do get great service, we feel like we've won the lottery, if only for a moment.

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But it doesn't have to be that way. A lot of organizations have big challenges that can be obstacles to providing great customer service. But so do many other companies. Yet they find ways to provide amazing service to their customers. They choose to overcome their challenges. They take care of their customers very well. And they do it consistently.

Here are four things any company can do to improve the quality of service they're providing to their customers. I know many companies already do some or all of these things. And for those that do, it shows. They are the organizations people rave about. They are the Amazing Service superstars.



1. Get management in direct contact with customers.

All levels of management should be exposed to customers. And I'm not just talking about focus groups or round-tables. Members of management need to roll up their sleeves and do the work of their employees once in a while. And they should talk to customers. In most cases, it's not hard. (If you don't know where to find your customers, maybe you shouldn't be in management.) I'd bet my mortgage payment many customers would be happy to spend a few minutes chatting with an executive from the company they do business with.

The work of any business happens at the point of customer contact. It does not happen in executive offices or board rooms. Customer-facing employees and their customers are the two groups of people who know exactly how your company does business. As a company leader, you'll never know this by reading reports. You need to get this information by experiencing it. There is no substitute for direct customer contact.

“Ask your customers to be part of the solution, and don't view them as part of the problem.”

-Alan Weiss, Ph.D.

2. Get customers involved in creating customer service standards.

No one knows more about what your customers want than they do. So get them involved. And I don't mean lengthy surveys or phone calls by consultants. Talk to them like real people. Get your employees out where your customers are and talk to them. Buy them coffee or lunch and get them talking. Doing this one on one using your employees will produce much better results than using consultants or survey companies. If you want your customers to be honest with you, start by being authentic with them.

Then use their input to create meaningful standards in how you will serve your customers. Not that you'll do everything they want. But you should do everything you can within your mission, your resources and the context of your business. Too many companies disregard and disrespect their customers. They think all the answers reside at the corporate headquarters. That arrogance will ruin a company. Talk to the people who know. Talk to your customers.

3. Get employees involved in planning and implementing customer service standards.

Customers will tell you what they want. Employees will help you figure out how to do it.

Employees do the work of the company day after day. They see (and hear and feel) how things work. They know what works and what does not. They see how the business is changing. They see this all at the point of service, which is where your company produces its revenue.

Everything in the company should support what happens at the point of service. Anything that does not support a successful point of service needs to be questioned.

As you gather information from your customers about how to best serve them, make sure your employees are part of the process. Get them involved from start to finish. Include them in

“The first responsibility of a leader is to define reality. The last is to say thank you. In between, the leader is a servant.”

- Max DePree

planning, information gathering, customer service standard setting and implementation.

4. Leadership must show everyone customer service is a priority.

There are many examples of employees who deliver fantastic service. Some people will do this no matter who leads their company. But these

people tend to be exceptions. I’ve never seen a company that delivers great service consistently without 100% support from the top leaders of the company.

The leaders set the tone and direction for a company’s culture. If the top leaders expect great service for every customer every time, then they will naturally do what it takes to create a culture that breeds such service.

Ultimately for a company to deliver Amazing Service consistently across their organization, the top leaders need to make it a priority. There are no alternative paths to getting this done. The company’s leadership must decide to make service a priority. Then they need to demonstrate this in their words and their actions. It needs to be at the core of everything they do.

Steps one, two and three are tactical. Any company can do them. And if you do them well, you will see positive results. But for long-term results, step four must happen first. Without it, most service gains will be short term. They will not live beyond employee turnover. Eventually the motivation that drives them will fade away as they lose their champions and other issues take priority.

For true, sustainable improvement in customer service quality, an organization must make a commitment at the highest level of management to deliver the best service they can to every customer every time with no exceptions.

“Here is a simple but powerful rule - always give people more than what they expect to get.”

- Nelson Boswell

5. Five Steps to Increase Customer Loyalty

There are many things you can do to deliver good customer service. Often it depends on the customer and the situation you're facing. That can make it hard to create customer service rules that are carved in stone, because every situation is unique.

But there are some general guidelines that can help. And if you follow them consistently with every customer you'll find the quality of your service will improve and it will keep improving. Better yet, you'll have more fun and your customers will be happy and loyal.

1. Serve your customers.

Serving your customers means putting them first. It means helping them get what they want. Remember, your customers come to you to accomplish something they want or to avoid something they don't want. They believe you can help them. (Otherwise they would have gone somewhere else.) They have chosen you!

Honor their choice by doing everything within your ability to help them. This means focusing your attention and efforts on discovering what they want and helping them get it. You put their interests and desires first. It means your sole motivation is helping them get what they came for.

2. Connect with your customers.

Connecting with your customers means getting to know them as people. You develop a relationship with them. Of course you keep it professional and in the context of your business. But it's okay to learn about them as you help them. In fact, the better you get to know them, the better you can help them.

As you develop a relationship with them, you build trust in each other. They trust your ability and motivations. You trust what they tell you. This helps you help them. It improves communications.

“Providing great customer service is the most natural activity in the world. It's fun to help others because it feels good.”

-Kevin Stirtz

This does not have to take long. Sometimes a “social chemistry” can develop within minutes. It shouldn't be phony or manipulative. It needs to happen naturally. If you care about your customers, if you use your people skills, if you ask pertinent questions, if you listen and really focus on helping them, then you'll develop a great rapport with them quickly.





3. Have fun.

One of the biggest reasons customers don't return is they have no reason to. Sure they might get what they want but they often get it with no personality, no sparkle, no sizzle. Their experience is a dud. It's about as exciting as cleaning your ears. There's nothing memorable about it. Or worse, employees are crabby, grouchy or even angry and they show it. Yuk!

On the other hand, companies that enjoy tremendous customer loyalty offer their customers something they can't get anywhere else: FUN. They provide them an unexpected, positive experience. They have fun with them. The employees enjoy their work and each other and their customers. It's not that they goof off or waste time. They don't. But they find ways to bring joy into their work and they bring their customers along for the ride.

4. Be flexible.

With most things there is no one right answer. There is almost always more than one way to accomplish something. But we don't always admit it. Too often we focus on one way to do something. Maybe it's the only way we know. Maybe it's the fastest, cheapest or easiest route to helping our customer. But that doesn't make it the best.

Our goal is to help our customers get what they want, within our resources. So we always need to look for alternatives. We need to be creative. We need to think beyond the first solution that comes to mind when we're working with our customers.

Being flexible means offering customers more than one solution. By offering choices we're making it more likely they'll get what they want. There are few things worse than being a customer and someone says "that's the only way you can do it".

Being flexible also means being willing to try new things and go the extra mile for customers. It means being a problem solver rather than an order taker. Customers know the difference. (So do managers.)

5. Make them happy.

This is the most important thing you can do with your customers. If they are happy with your service they will come back. They will help increase your job security because they'll stick with you and your company. Note, this does not mean you do anything and everything to make your customers happy. You're always limited by the resources and policies of your company. But it does mean you do everything within your ability to make them happy. Get creative and look for ways to give your customer a great experience. You want your customers to leave happy. That's your bottom line. Make that happen and everything else will follow.



6. What Real Customers Say About Customer Service

My company conducts a regular survey to hear what people think about customer service. Here are some recent results.

What is great customer service? It happens when employees:

- Smile
- Are real people, not automated systems
- Treat customers like people
- Respect customer's time
- Are reliable
- Remain accountable
- Listen
- Do not offer excuses
- Move forward with a solution
- Take responsibility for their actions
- Are able to answer all customer's questions
- Are always friendly
- Strive for accuracy
- Show genuine concern for making their customer happy
- Bring fast resolution of problems
- Do what they say they will
- Have empathy
- Are flexible
- Are always courteous
- Follow-up consistently
- Take notes
- Deliver on their promises
- Say "thank you"
- Use prompt and clear communication



“We make a living by what we get, we make a life by what we give.”

-Sir Winston Churchill

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What is lousy customer service? It happens when employees:

- Don't answer the phone promptly
- Can only help you via email (no phone contact)
- Act like customers are a burden
- Treat people like numbers, not people
- Waste your time
- Act like they (or their companies) never make mistakes
- Ignore customers
- Argue with customers
- Lack knowledge about company's products or services
- Don't know how to deal with a variety of customers and situations
- Are poorly trained
- Don't finish helping customers
- Let their stress or personal problems interfere with helping customers
- Don't recognize how long you've been a customer
- Don't use past purchases or preferences as they help customers
- Obviously do not care
- Sound or act like robots
- Put customers on hold for a long time
- Transfer customers too many times
- Fail to do what they say they will
- Are inflexible
- Don't have authority to resolve problems
- Do not listen
- Take too long responding or calling back
- Are rude
- Do not use common sense when helping customers
- Are not willing to correct bad service
- Offer better deals to new customers than existing customers
- Seem bored or indifferent about their jobs
- Are too slow

“Be alert to give service. What counts a great deal in life is what we do for others.”

-Anonymous



7. Use the Five P's to Keep Customers Coming Back

One of the best ways to keep customers coming back more often is by living the old Boy Scout motto: Be Prepared.

Be prepared to take care of your customers better than anyone else can or will. If every customer you work with is impressed at how knowledgeable you are, they'll tell others. If you are able to help them get what they want every time without fail and without hesitation, they'll come back.

For you to be prepared to help anyone, you need to learn and understand a mountain of information. Here's a system to make that task a little easier. I call it the Five P's of Customer Service.

The Five P's provide an easy way to group the stuff you need to know about your company. They help you sort and organize the many things you should understand about your company so you can help your customer better than anyone else.

The Five P's of customer service are:

- People
- Products
- Policies
- Procedures
- Places

“To my customer. I may not have the answer, but I’ll find it. I may not have the time, but I’ll make it.”

- Unknown

1. People

Nobody can do everything on their own. We all need help from others to do our jobs the best we can. That's why teams are so important. The more people you know in your company (not just on your team) the better you will be able to serve your customers. Get to know people throughout your company. Make sure you know people at all levels and on every team, in every department. Having good relationships with people in every department can help you cut through red tape and get right to the answers you need as you work to help your customers.



2. Products (Includes Services)

You need to know your products and services. You need to know their features, benefits, prices, and competing products. You also need to know what problems they solve or what opportunities they can help create. The more you know about all your company's products, the better you can suggest and advise your customers. A great way to get to know your products is through customer application examples. Collect stories about how your company's customers have used its products to meet their needs. Document these examples so anyone in your company can use them. This information is golden and will help you do more for your customers than anyone else.

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3. Policies

Your company's policies tell you what you can and cannot do for your customers. They give you boundaries. One of my good friends likes to say *"it's easier to break a rule when you understand it"*. His point is, policies can be broken but you need a good reason. You need to understand the reason for the policy before you can know when it's okay to violate it.



Knowing your company's policies can save your customers time. Some things simply cannot be done. If you know this upfront, you can help your customer understand it. Other policies might be flexible. If you are aware of where the rules can be bent, you can help your customers have a more realistic expectation of how you can help them. You can show them you're working for them and maybe prevent them from being disappointed.

4. Procedures

It's almost impossible to help a customer if you do not understand how your company does things. Procedures are the life blood of a business because they tell us how to get things done. And, if things are not working well, established procedures provide a place to start to fix the problem. Know all you can about the procedures your company uses to deliver its products and services. Only then can you help your customers navigate the maze and get what they want.

5. Places

If your company has more than one location, you need to know about it. Sometimes, different locations are similar, as in retail stores. Often they have different functions, such as a warehouse and a showroom. Either way, you should know about every location your company has and what they do at each one. Find out how each location plays a part in helping your company deliver its products and services. Then you can put that knowledge to work as you help your customers.

As you increase your company knowledge across these five categories, you'll find your confidence and credibility increase. More people will come to you for answers because you'll be able to help them. You'll become the "go to" person others look to for help. And, you'll find more customers want to work with you because you're able to help them get what they want better than anyone else. That's how you keep customers coming back.

"The customer's perception is your reality."

-Kate Zabriskie



8. Details Keep Your Customers Loyal

One of the best ways to keep your customers coming back is by offering them details. The more specific you are, the more your customers will appreciate your efforts. When you offer customers details, you're telling them you are willing to be thorough and complete as you help them. And you're telling them you know what you're doing. Details give you credibility.

For example, as I was paying bills one day, I noticed a charge on my credit card that did not belong. It was from a hotel I stayed at. So, I called the hotel to ask about it. The person who answered told me she would have to research it and call me back. She didn't say when she would call me back.

A better way would have been to offer me her name and a time range during which she would call back. That would tell me she's willing to be held accountable. And it would give me something to plan against. If she didn't call back in the promised time frame I could call again and escalate the matter.

Think of details like this. If you sit down in a restaurant, look at the menu and notice there are no prices, how does that make you feel? Does it make you want to stay? Or would you rather have the prices on the menu so you know what your options are?

Of course, in most restaurants, we expect prices on the menu. But many people in many businesses leave their customers wondering on a regular basis without ever giving it a second thought. We could all come up with dozens of examples...

At the doctors office: "Please have a seat and we'll call you when the doctor is ready." (Will that be today?)

The cable company: "We'll be there sometime next Tuesday morning." (Who has time to waste an entire morning?)

The grocery store: "It's in aisle 8." (Along with 2,000 other items!)

At the airport: "Gate 5 is that way."

Often people's voice mail says: "I'll call you back as soon as possible" (I'm guilty of this). But that says I'm focused on my schedule, my needs and my priorities. A better approach would be to tell callers when you will be returning calls or offer them another way to reach you.

There are many ways we can serve our customers better by offering them more details, more specifics and more help. Sure, it takes time and it takes planning. It's more work. But it's worth it. People don't like wondering or wandering. If your service prevents them from doing either, they'll come back more often.

"Quality in a service or product is not what you put into it. It is what the client or customer gets out of it."

- Peter Drucker

9. How to Be an Amazing Listener

Listening Skills Evaluation – Rate yourself on the following listening skills

| | When talking with another person... | Always | Often | Sometimes | Never |
|----|--|---------------|--------------|------------------|--------------|
| | | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 1 | I maintain appropriate eye contact with the other person | | | | |
| 2 | I focus on what they are saying more than how well they are saying it | | | | |
| 3 | I don't let my mind wander while I'm listening to them | | | | |
| 4 | I ask relevant questions to make sure I understand | | | | |
| 5 | I respond only when they're done or at a natural break in the conversation | | | | |
| 6 | I don't race ahead and draw a conclusion before they're done talking | | | | |
| 7 | I refrain from judging their ideas until they are done | | | | |
| 8 | I give them my full attention (no multitasking) | | | | |
| 9 | I repeat or paraphrase to confirm my understanding | | | | |
| 10 | I finish listening before I start talking | | | | |
| 11 | I give them non-verbal feedback so they can tell I'm listening | | | | |
| 12 | I am willing to listen, understand and respect their opinions even when I disagree | | | | |
| | Total Your Score | | | | |

Scoring Chart:

- 1 to 23: It's good to be honest, but you might want to take a full-day seminar on listening skills!
- 24 to 36: Well done! Keep up the good work and try to improve every day.
- 37 to 48: Excellent! You are an Amazing Listener and you should be proud!

(Then take this evaluation again in 30 days. Compare your results. Did they improve?)

Managers: Have all your employees take this assessment (yourself included). Then, as a group, discuss how you might improve your scores in the next month.

10. Eight Easy Steps to Better Listening

1. Name – Get their name and give them yours.
2. Focus – Give them your complete attention.
3. Pace – Remember we listen faster than we talk.
4. Nonverbal – Show them you're listening.
5. Open – Be open to their ideas and opinions.
6. Vent – If they're upset, let them vent.
7. Clarify – Use questions and repeating to understand them.
8. Finish – Let them finish before you start talking.



11. How to Handle Customer Complaints

Here are some rules to help you handle customer complaints. Follow these every time and you'll turn complainers into cheerleaders.

1. Listen completely.

Give them your complete attention. Don't multi-task. Don't "half-listen". Write down what they are telling you and get specifics from them. Then confirm that you understand. Focus only on them.

2. Let them vent.

Don't interrupt. Don't explain, defend or justify. They don't care why the problem occurred and they don't want your side of the story. They are angry and they want to vent, so let them.

3. Apologize and mean it.

This is often hard especially if you did not cause the problem. When you apologize in this situation you are not necessarily taking blame for causing the problem. You are apologizing for the customer having a bad experience. Put yourself in their shoes. Be sincere.

4. Ask them how you can make things right. Then do more.

Too many employees have either no response to complaints or a generic, stock response, like taking money off the bill. But that risks making the customer even more angry if that's not what they want done. In fact you might even offend someone by offering them a discount.

"Patience is the greatest of all virtues."

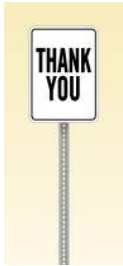
-Cato the Elder

A better strategy is to ask them what they want. You have to be genuine and polite. Most people don't want much. They usually just want you to listen. But whatever they say always do it and more. If they ask for their meal free your response might be

"Mr. Smith, of course your meal tonight is on the house. But I'd also like to buy you and your family dinner the next time you join us. Would that be okay?"

5. Assure them you'll fix the problem.

Because you listened and you confirmed their complaint you know why they are upset. Take the next step and assure them you will take action to see it does not happen again. Otherwise, why would they come back?



6. Thank them.

Without customer feedback we have no idea if we are delivering what our customers want. When they tell us we have failed they're offering priceless information on how to improve our business. They are telling us what we need to do to keep them. So thank them for their help. It's a rare customer who will take the time and effort to offer feedback. Thanking them will go a long way toward winning their loyalty.

12. What Do Customers Really Want?

In 2006, my company surveyed over 2,000 people from across the USA. We asked them what they wanted when they are the customer. Here's what they told us:

1. Listen to me.
2. Know more than I do (about your product or service).
3. Be easy to work with.
4. Give me what I came for.
5. Smile.
6. Tell me your name.
7. Acknowledge my presence.
8. Don't treat me like I'm an interruption.
9. Show me you care.
10. Don't waste my time.
11. Be honest.
12. Offer alternatives if you don't have what I want.
13. High quality and low prices
14. Don't try to sell me. Just help me.
15. Do what you say you're going to do.
16. Keep me informed.

"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



13. Thirty-Three Amazing Customer Service Tools

To be the best in your job, you need the right tools. Whether they are physical tools, technology tools or informational tools, the better your tools are, the better you can do your job.

So, here are 33 Amazing Customer Service Tools that are guaranteed to help you be the best.

1. Remember why you are there (to help your customer get what they want)
2. Greet them
3. Get their name and give them yours
4. Smile
5. Be sincere and caring
6. Give them your complete attention
7. Be friendly and polite
8. Judge them positively
9. Kill them with kindness
10. Respect their time
11. Be flexible
12. Let them vent
13. Ask open ended questions
14. Be an excellent listener
15. Don't interrupt
16. Discover what they want
17. Be easy to work with
18. Remember every contact is critical
19. Focus on solutions not dead ends
20. Be grateful for their business
21. Acknowledge their emotions
22. Help them get the outcomes they want
23. Never leave them wondering
24. Put yourself in their shoes
25. Remember their name
26. Stay calm
27. Remember what you control and what you don't
28. Stay positive all the time
29. Give them details
30. Thank them
31. Respect their opinion
32. Apologize if appropriate
33. Reward yourself when you do something great

“If you make customers unhappy in the real world, they might each tell six friends. If you make customers unhappy on the Internet, they can each tell 6,000 friends.”

-Jeff Bezos

How to Put This Stuff to Work

The sooner you apply these ideas and tools the more impact they will have on your organization. So rather than letting this toolkit gather dust (now that you're done reading it) let's look at how you can put this stuff to work right now.

My suggestion is to have everyone on your team read this. Print a copy for everyone or have them read it on-screen. Ask them to read the whole thing right away. (It's a fast read!)

Then plan to discuss one topic at a time at your team meetings. There are 13 chapters so if you discuss one a week you'll be done in three months. If you tackle one every four weeks you'll be done in a year.

Before each meeting, have everyone re-read the chapter you're going to discuss. At your meeting have a discussion about the chapter.

Here are some discussion starters:

- What did you think about the chapter you read?
- How does this material apply to our team or company?
- What one thing stood out as most useful for us?
- What situations have you dealt with that relate to this topic?
- What would some benefits be to our customers if we applied some of these ideas?
- How would that help our company, our team, or us individually?
- How could you use some of these ideas in your job?
- If you were to pick one idea from this chapter to implement, which would it be?
- Why that one?
- What is the first thing we would need to do to start using this idea or tool in our company (or on our team)?

“The best ideas in the world will accomplish nothing if you leave them on paper. Talk about them. Debate, discuss and argue about them. Put them into action. Then you can change the world.”

-Kevin Stirtz

Make sure your people know the purpose is to find ways to put these ideas into use in your company right away. Direct your efforts toward that objective.

Next Steps to Better Customer Service

You read this (probably) because you're interested in improving customer service. That's great! I hope you got some good ideas you can use. But, what if you want more? What do you do next?

Here are some suggestions:

1. Look at the 200+ articles on my website. They're all about customer service. You can get there at: <http://www.AmazingServiceGuy.com>

The Amazing Customer Service Toolkit

How to keep your customers coming back by delivering Amazing Service

AmazingServiceGuy.com

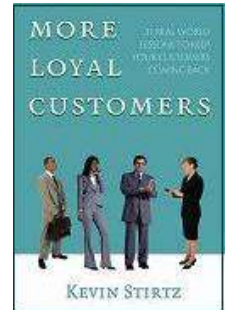
2. Get free weekly customer service tips. At my website you can subscribe to my weekly email newsletter. It's a short, practical newsletter with no ads and no sales pitches. Just useful stuff every week.

3. For more ideas and tools, buy my latest book:

It's available at my website: <http://AmazingServiceGuy.com/books/>

Or go to Amazon.com and do a search on: "More Loyal Customers"

(If you order from my website, I'll autograph it for you!)



4. Call me.

If you want to talk about other ways you or your organization might improve customer service. I am a professional speaker and trainer so I talk with groups all over the USA about improving customer service. It's all I do (and I do it well!)

You can reach me at 1-952-212-4681 or Kevin@amazingserviceguy.com.

My two most popular programs are:

- Never Lose Another Customer
- How to Deliver Amazing Service (to Every Customer Every Time with No Exceptions and No Excuses).



These are both available in keynote, breakout and workshop formats. They are useful for companies, government agencies, colleges, hospitals, associations, business groups and events.

Thanks for reading and remember, keep your customers smiling!

Kevin

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