Creating Service: A Common Sense Approach

If anyone's told you that good customer service is just common sense, then they haven't experienced the chaotic life of a front-line service provider. Customer service today means understanding complex products, working in a cost-driven environment, handling customers who expect zero defects and delivering solutions with unprecedented speed. More likely than not service providers are expected to solve difficult problems, establish warm relationships, up-sell additional products, educate customers and keep their customer contact time to a minimum. Add to that the fact that the majority of customer contact jobs are low or entry level positions and you're starting to understand how challenging it can be to equip service representatives with the skills and knowledge they need to succeed.

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The impact

Many of us are very familiar with the statistics that prove the importance of quality customer service in attracting and retaining customers. We know that customers who are dissatisfied tell more customers about their problems than those who are satisfied. We know that customers who are satisfied with how their complaint is resolved are more likely to buy again than customers who had no problems at all. We even know that customers value the opinions of customer service reps regarding products and services more than they do the opinions of sales reps. So there's no doubt of the impact that one customer service representative can have on

the organization as a whole. Whether that impact will be positive or negative is in large part due to the approach to learning and development.

The approach

Despite how complex service has become, the 'common sense' approach still works best. That means doing things that inherently make sense when developing the skills of people:

- Clearly indicate what is expected
- Demonstrate what high quality service looks, sounds and feels like
- Provide people with the awareness, knowledge and skills required to do the job
- Give people time to practice while providing feedback and encouragement
- Phase in the use of newly learned skills

Whether learning is provided through high tech eLearning or low tech classroom methods, these same principles apply. This approach to learning serves companies well and makes their investment in learning pay off. After all, it's just common sense, isn't it?

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