

The importance of customer service and interpersonal skills

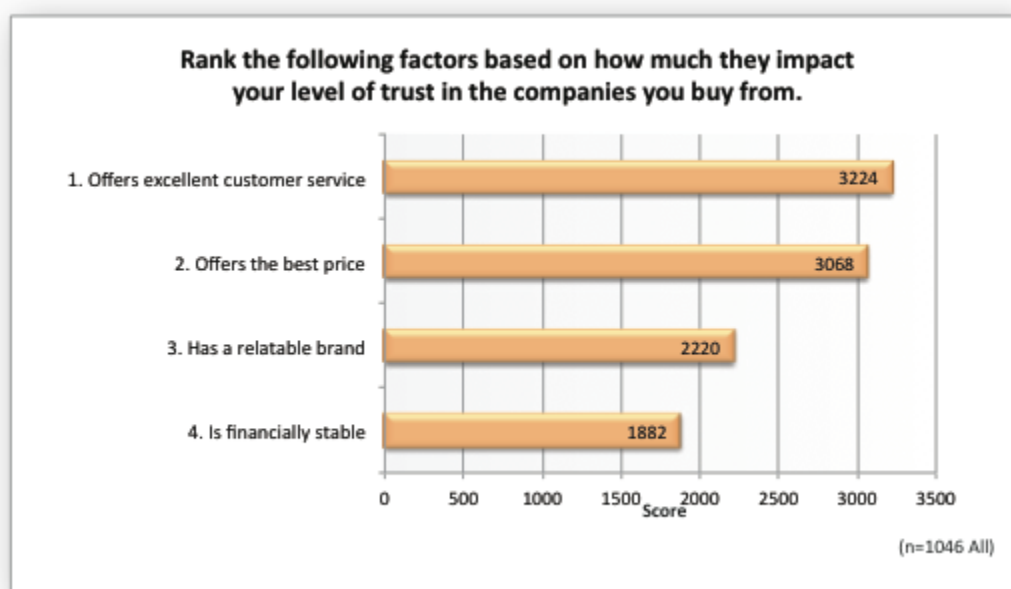
Excellent customer service and interpersonal skills should be a number one priority for any tourism based company.

Customer Service and Interpersonal Skills: The ability to communicate a positive attitude, empathy, energy and helpfulness to customers or co-workers and to provide the assistance customers or co-workers need. (1)

First impressions can be made in just seconds, walking through a door and being greeted by a smile and an organized office, having the phone being answered with in the first few rings in a cheerful manner. But we can't stop there, excellent customer service needs to continue throughout the relationship by meeting and exceeding our customer's needs. We need to constantly be thinking of and creating ways to WOW our customers. *When your brand is represented by individuals who consistently act not just to satisfy your customers, but to wow and delight them, you have joined an elite group of customer experience providers. (2)*

Staff education and training are necessary for producing great customer service. By making sure that everyone on staff is knowledgeable with all products and services gives your team the confidence it needs to service your customers. *"70% of buying experiences are based on how the customer feels they are being treated" (3)*

An important step in customer service is asking questions, what is important to your client, what are their expectations? One of my standard questions when talking to clients is "What is important to you?" I learned this very early in my career. I was working at a reservations call center with a bride to be. She wanted a nice hotel to stay on her wedding night. My suggestion was the Historic hotel on Main Street. I received a call shortly after their stay. It was the bride asking me what I was thinking by putting her in an old hotel! They moved from what I thought was a romantic hotel to a chain hotel across town. Had I taken the time to ask "What is important to you?" I would have learned that she preferred a modern property.



(4)

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Our customer service teams are the face of our companies. Customers will remember the interactions they have with your staff, how they made them feel and the quality of service they receive.

Some ideas for strengthening your customer service skills:

#1 Use empathy, patience and consistency, each customer is different and we need to know how to handle each customer and their individual needs.

#2 Be adaptable and able to handle the unexpected. You must be able to give the same level of service under all circumstances.

#3 Make sure that you are listening to your customers and asking questions. Repeat pieces of the conversation if you are unclear or send a follow up email recapping a conversation. If you do have a miscommunication take care of it immediately.

#4 Be available and approachable to your customers and your staff. Being open and transparent will create trust and confidence.

#5 Go the extra mile to WOW your clients and staff by doing the unexpected. Show appreciation in simple ways such as a hand written card.

#6 Give your customers and staff a way to provide feedback. The feedback you receive will help you discover your strengths and weaknesses.

Customer loyalty is fragile and is often lost, not as a result of product issues but as a result of the way that people are treated during the sales and service interactions. (5)

"We give great service to each other as well as to our guests" (6)

Just as important to giving great customer service to your guests is treating and showing your employees appreciation and gratitude. Employees that feel appreciated will perform at a higher standard and be happier with their jobs which will promote loyalty and decrease turnover. All of this will result in your organization being successful.

Interpersonal skills are important for your entire team, creating a positive respectful working environment. These relationships lead to an exchange of ideas, information and skills. By having strong interpersonal skills your team will establish mutual respect, consideration for one another's opinions and input. These skills are a necessity when creating excellent customer service throughout the business.

The importance of interpersonal relationships in workplace is evident from the following benefits:

Greater employee satisfaction.

Better decision-making. (7)

We spend a lot of time at our jobs and we need to have people to talk with and share our ideas. Creating a trusting work environment is vital to making our employees feel secure in sharing their ideas, communicating effectively as well as keeping them open to honest feedback.

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Unfortunately I have had the experience of watching a team fall apart from lack of leadership and interpersonal skills. My office has a new Executive Director, before leaving, the past director made some changes but did not communicate these changes, leaving the office trying to adjust without clear direction. Which resulted in a dysfunctional team. Fortunately our new ED has good interpersonal skills and is doing a good job at clarifying the changes, being transparent and creating a respectful positive environment.

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References:

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Zingerman's guide to good leading, part 1, page 211 Ari Weinzweig (6)

<https://www.cleverism.com/skills-and-tools/interpersonal-relationship/> (7)