

CUSTOMER SERVICE

Why does customer care matter? Well, in business you get what you want by giving other people what they want. So if you give them even more than they expect, you might get back even more too. More return business, more loyalty, more recommendations.

I bought a kitchen table recently. It was very heavy, and I live on the third floor. I had told the store this. They hadn't said **delivery** was a problem. It was a problem...

Many calls later, after speaking to different people at different levels in different departments, I was very **frustrated**. At this point they are about to lose my **custom** forever. Clearly, what I needed from them was one point of contact so that I didn't feel like a football.

At last, one person in the organisation heard this clearly and took responsibility. She reviewed the problem and gave a clear plan to fix it that went beyond the original service of the company. She understood I was frustrated and disappointed. She phoned me with progress reports, and found a way both to arrange proper delivery and to assemble the table.

I felt appreciated and looked after. I was happy with the result. This person showed that the company could do more than it originally said as a gesture of goodwill for the inconvenience and upset of the original problem. Brilliant customer service.

So when you're a customer, of course you want a good product or service.

You also want clear communication, politeness, **reliability**, listening and understanding. And someone who will take responsibility.

When you are communicating with customers, whether face to face or by phone or email, you need to make sure that whatever you are responsible for, you demonstrate the qualities you would want to receive.

Practice speaking clearly so customers don't struggle to understand. You must also be good at explaining any technical issues, to make it easy for them to understand instructions or explanations. Patience is a key skill: things that seem obvious to one side may not to the other. They might be frustrated, as I was, and sound rude or impatient, as I probably did at times. It is essential to remain calm and composed during any interaction, and to make it absolutely plain that you understand their concerns. Don't argue - which will probably make them defensive and angrier. Simply listen and identify the customer's complaint in a fair, **objective** way.

Listen carefully and take notes. When you have all of the information, summarise it with the customer so you are sure you understand completely.

At all times, even though you have your own pressures try and step into their shoes as well. After all, you are a customer too.