



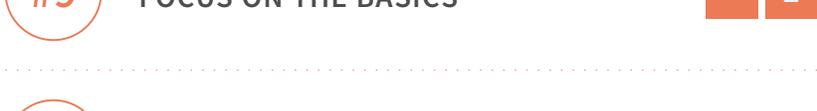
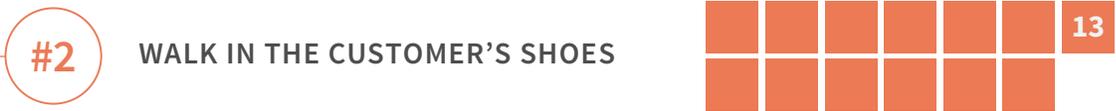
THE

# INFLUENCERS

CUSTOMER SERVICE REPORT

# What is the #1 way for any company to improve their customer service?

**We asked 63 industry experts for their take on what companies could do to improve their customer service. Each of them provided us with some very thoughtful answers. Following is a breakdown of the answers that they provided, along with each of their insights.**





## Peter Shankman

Customer experience futurist and Author of *Zombie Loyalists: Using Great Service to Create Rabid Fans*

**The best way for a company to improve their customer service is surprisingly simple: Every employee needs to understand that they're all responsible for the customer experience.**

They just need to understand that the customer expects poor service. Just being a little bit better than poor, actually listening and treating the customer like a human and not a number, is often times enough. CEOs need to know CS isn't a cost, but a profit center, as the world we live in becomes all about the customer experience that will drive the economy of the future.

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## Mike Aoki

Speaker/Trainer | Reflective Keynotes Inc.

**Train employees in customer service skills!**

I know that sounds obvious. However, many Agent new hire programs offer cursory customer service training, while CRM systems and product knowledge take up most of the training time. The solution: offer post-new hire customer service training to all agents - both new and veteran.

Topics include how to handle tough calls, build loyalty and retain customers. 76% of American shoppers view customer service as a "true test" of how much a brand values them (Aspect Software) So, invest in your Agents and give them the training they need to deliver great customer service!

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## Randi Busse

President | Workforce Development Group

**Since your employees are customers too, although not necessarily of your company, they have their own customer service experiences. Facilitate a conversation with your employees and ask them to share some of their great customer service experiences.**

Capture all of the characteristics of their experiences. Chances are, those characteristics are the same ones that YOUR customers want when they are the customer. This list, the ideal customer service experience, can be used as the template for the service you strive to provide to your customers.

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## Debbie Szumylo

Manager, Customer Experience | Thomson Reuters Elite

**The #1 way for any company to improve their customer service is to empower, engage and nurture their employees.**

The ways in which employees interact with customers is a direct result of how fulfilled and valued they feel by their employer. An empowered, engaged and nurtured employee is passionate about and committed to the company, the vision, and most importantly, the customer.

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## John DiJulius

Chief Revolution Officer | The DiJulius Group

**The quality of your customer service, and the level of your organization's customer service, comes down to one thing and one thing only: The Service Aptitude of every employee you have.**

Service Aptitude is a person's ability to recognize opportunities to exceed customers' expectations, regardless of the circumstances. The vast majority of the workforce has extremely low Service Aptitude, especially when they are entering the workforce after finishing school. And sadly, a high percentage of senior-level executives continue to have low Service Aptitude during their careers.

There are three things that shape everyone's Service Aptitude: Life experiences, past work experiences, and current work experiences. It is not the employees' responsibility to have high Service Aptitude; it is the company's job to teach it to them.

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## Al Hopper

Co-Founder, Director of Operations | SocialPath Solutions

**Any company can improve their Customer service by changing the way they view spending on contact center employees.**

Historically, Customer service teams are considered cost centers that only spend money; only marketing and sales make money. If companies embrace the typical truth of it being less expensive to keep a Customer than it is to acquire one, and the paradigm that Customer service is marketing, they can change that short sighted view to see contact centers as profit centers. Invest more in your employees who service Customers and your Customers will reward the cost with more loyalty and repeat business.

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## Dan Moriarty

Director Social Strategy & Activation | Hyatt Hotels

The biggest single way for any company to improve their customer service is to unleash their customer service agents by allowing them to make real-time decisions that solve customer problems and removing the need for agents to follow scripts – be it the conversation on the phone or through digital channels.

**What customers care about today is authenticity & effort – be your human self, not a robot, and show the customer that you're genuinely trying to find a solution, not just telling them why you'd love to help but can't.**

It sounds easy, but in truth many companies still get this wrong.

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## Matt McConnell

CEO | Intradiem

**First of all, you have to recognize the fact that customers hate to wait. And they really only want two things: a speedy response, and accuracy in the answer.**

To deliver this level of service, make sure that customer service agents are truly prepared and available to deliver on these needs. Companies must demonstrate to their teams that the organization really cares about customers. Your frontline workforce must be engaged.

You must find time to train them. You must enable them to respond – not react – to every customer interaction, in real-time. That will make the frustrations of customer service wait time a thing of the past.

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## Bill Quiseng

Award Winning Blogger and Writer

**The #1 way to improve your customer service is to first CARE for your employees: Communicate. Appreciate. Recognize. Empower.**

Communicate to your employees the vision, mission and core values of your business regularly. Appreciate your employees. Be generous, yet specific, with your gratitude when your employees deliver great service to individual customers. Recognize those employees by celebrating and sharing their customer service stories throughout your organization. Empower your employees.

The Nordstrom handbook reads, Use good judgment in all situations. When confronted with a complaining customer, let them ask themselves, What would Nordstrom do? Truly CARE for your employees and they will do the same for your customers.

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## Erica Strother Marois

Community Specialist | International Customer Management Institute

**You can't deliver great customer service without empowered employees.**

If you expect your employees to treat your customers with respect, then you must start by treating your employees with respect. It sounds simple, but according to ICMI research 74% of contact center leaders acknowledge that they're actually preventing their agents from providing the best customer experience possible. If you want to improve your customer service, invest in equipping your team with the tools and training they need, and then trust them to make good decisions.

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## Justin Flitter

Digital Strategist

**Typically solving customer issues are a pain-point for staff. To solve this, change the company culture by making every employees KPIs connected to customer satisfaction.**

Deploy tools enabling any employee to solve customer questions from email, social or phone and reward them for their effort. Make sure everyone from the CEO to the receptionist is on board and participating to create a sense of community around the program.

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## Steve Curtin

Author of Delight Your Customers

**Ask employees, individually, this question: "Would you describe for me, from your perspective, what you do and what your job entails?"**

It's likely that most of what you'll hear in response to this question will pertain to job function: the duties/tasks associated with one's job role. Little if anything will be said about job essence: an employee's highest priority at work, which, for most service industry employees, is to create a delighted customer. This creates an opportunity for the supervisor to enlighten the employee about the two parts of his job role: job function AND job essence.

The great majority of employees want to perform well at work. Employees don't willfully ignore customers; they unwittingly treat customers indifferently. By having this conversation with their employees, supervisors can create the awareness needed for employees to be intentional about providing exceptional customer service.

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## Annette Franz, CCXP

CX Expert and Mentor | CX Journey

**The #1 way to improve customer service and the customer experience overall? Focus on - and fix - the employee experience first.**

It's a fact that employee experience drives the customer experience. If your employees aren't happy and engaged, it will be very difficult for them to delight your customers and to deliver the experience that you expect them to.

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## Randy Rubingh

Author of Call Center Rocket Science: 110 Tips to Creating a World Class Customer Service Organization

Increasingly interactions into the service center are becoming more complex in nature. Between internet help sites and apps, all "easy calls" are picked off by technology and customers only call you because of unusual situations that cannot be handled by an FAQ. No matter how good your training is, rep experience is often the best indicator a rep can successfully resolve these situations. Attrition of good reps is then the enemy of being able to resolve the modern customer's question.

**So if you want to improve service, one of the most important things you can do is improve your contact center culture by creating a learning culture, one that will lower attrition and lead to more engaged reps.**

One way to create this culture is to offer reps the opportunity to take elective classes within the center. Each month offer one each of the following : a class to build their skills, a class to learn about the industry (either the industry of your business or the customer service industry), and a class simply for fun. In a recent month we held elective classes in our center on: Presentation Skills, Forecasting for Call Centers, and Wine Tasting. Reps had the opportunity to choose to go to one or all of these. Of course there are many ways to create a learning culture and this is just one example. But however you do it, creating a Learning Culture is a great way to combat attrition and increase rep tenure. And having experienced reps is the number one way to improve customer service.

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## Chip Bell

Keynote Speaker and Best-Selling Author of *Sprinkles: Creating Awesome Experiences Through Innovative Service*

**The answer to the question is known by the front line employees who daily serve customers ear-to-ear, face-to-face, and click-to-click.**

Too often organizations develop sophisticated surveys for gathering customer intelligence or they hire smart consultants to provide scholarly wisdom. The best insights and most accurate answers can be obtained from deep conversations with the people who directly serve customers.

Make it a practice of regularly talking to the front line about what they believe matters most to customers. The more you listen and act on their insights, the more they will learn making them increasingly more astute.

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## Sean Hawkins

Sr. Manager of Customer Support | LeadPages

**The most important thing a company can do to improve their service short term, is to properly evaluate, hire, and adequately train staff.**

This is something any company can start doing now! Long term, I would suggest journey mapping. The insights gained allows you can improve service, reduce customer effort, identify and remove barriers, reevaluate internal process, and understand how your organization as a whole influences the overall customer experience.

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## Tema Frank

Customer Experience & Usability Expert,  
Podcast Host, Author, International Speaker  
| Frank Reactions

**The best way for a company to improve its customer service is by taking a walk in the customer's shoes.**

We make too many assumptions about what our customers want and how they interpret the things we present to them. Kodak, for example, buried its own invention of a digital camera because it thought customers wanted printed pictures, and Kodak made lots of money in that process.

Far too late they realized that what customers really wanted was a convenient way to capture and revisit special moments. Walk through every possible interaction your prospects and customers have with you and consider their perspective.

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## Kevin Fredrick

Managing Partner

**The #1 way to improve customer service is to know your customers so well that you can pre-empt their service needs.**

The future of customer service isn't finding new ways to engage your agents or reduce average handle time- it's using data to predict what each individual customer needs before they even realize it.

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## Teresa Allen

Owner | Common Sense Solutions

**The #1 way to improve service in any organization is to map the customer journey and take all necessary steps to consistently meet and exceed customer expectations on that journey.**

Since different customers and different products and services entail varied journeys often in multiple channels, this is a complex yet critical endeavor. Every employee must understand their personal impact on the customer's journey and on the customer's satisfaction and delight.

A training program that focuses on specific interactions on the customer journey will enhance success in the organization's endeavor to meet and exceed customer expectations. Soliciting customer feedback on satisfaction at specific points along the customer journey will insure that the service strategy is working and will highlight areas where improvements are needed.

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## Lon Hendrickson

Executive Director | CCNG Magnet Program

Delivering quality customer service is significantly more complex and more difficult today. The fundamental path to success, however, isn't radically different and provides direction for companies large and small to follow.

**Know your customers and use that knowledge to treat them as individuals (VoC programs, customer and transaction analytics, and seamless CRM).**

Make it easy to do business with you (integrated customer-interaction channels, effective self-service options, knowledgeable agents, and low customer effort). Empower, educate and support your employees so they can successfully carry out the mission (on-going training, emphasis on employee satisfaction, and efficient agent desktops and contact center technology). Every company is different and every customer unique. The path to quality customer service is there for all of us.

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## Russel Lolacher

Speaker, Coach, Strategist | The Upsell: Podcast and Blog

Feel and show empathy. A business needs to genuinely care about their customers and their pain points, how the business impacts (or doesn't impact) their lives, what they can do to solve their problems with their services/products, what they can do to make it easier on the customers to ease those challenges, and on and on.

**By putting themselves in the customer's shoes, showing some humanity and compassion, they will build relationships that will last, trust that matters and loyalty that is the envy of the competition.**

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## Ralph Capocci

Founder & CEO | Danjus Public Affairs

When asked to name one way for a company to improve their customer service, my thoughts immediately turned to a meeting I had with an architectural firm, tasked with designing a public transit system servicing a busy international airport. The lead architect explained that the guiding principal for the design team was to visualize the journey from the perspective of a person either pushing a stroller or facing a mobility challenge.

**In mapping out your customer service experience, identify who your customers are, then focus in particular on those individuals who face the greatest challenges on their customer service journey.**

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## Jeanne Bliss

President & Founder | Customer Bliss

**Make every business decision through the lens of asking yourselves, "does this improve customers' lives?" or "does this improve employees' lives?"**

At the end of the day, customer interactions cost more and push customers away because they are built from the companies' point of view. From what they want to get from the customer, versus delivering an experience that customers want to have again and tell others about.

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## Mitch Lieberman

Expert in the areas of customer relationship management (CRM), customer service, and customer experience.

**In order to improve customer service, companies need to change the mindset of what customer service is and what it means to a customer.**

Most companies consider customer service to be an interaction between a customer and company only when there is an issue to be resolved. In a world that is increasingly focused on service being the product, or at least a significant component, customer service requires a new model. It is now about all the touchpoints along the journey starting at a time before there is even a transaction to through and including product use - the duration of the company/customer relationship. This is not about technology.

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## Flavio Martins

VP of Operations and Customer Service at DigiCert, Inc.

**Really get to know your customers.**

Once you know your customers then you can create your customer experiences that focus on the three elements of service: results-focused processes, empowered service agents, and data-driven technology.

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## Leslie O'Flahavan

Principal | E-WRITE

**The most important way to improve customer service? Cultivate true empathy for the customer and let that empathy flow through all your interactions.**

See your world through your customer's eyes. Empathetic companies don't force customers through IVRs that start "Listen carefully as our menu options have changed..." Empathetic companies don't offer a stale FAQs page and call it self-service. Empathetic companies don't copy and paste robotic-sounding templates into emails and click send.

What do empathetic companies do? They hire friendly customer service agents and trust them to do their job. They give their agents the systems and training they need. These companies understand that the customer may not always be right, but the customer's point of view is real and it's important.

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## Blake Morgan

Flight Digital

**Most companies don't take the time to walk in the customer's shoes. As a result they have no idea what it's actually like for the customer.**

The first step to improving customer service is a walk through the customer's journey. Walk yourself through the same steps the customer would take to get help from your company. Run through the many scenarios.

That includes a phone call, an email, a tweet, chat, a Facebook post on the brand's wall, time spent in your forums if you have them, how about a complaint sent on a niche social network or blog? How easy is it to navigate the website? How fast are the company's agents able to respond? How many times does the customer have to repeat information? Does the agent have customer context from a CRM?

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## Adam Toporek

Founder | CTS Service Solutions

**The #1 way for a company to improve its customer service is to take a fresh look at its customers and the experience being provided to them.**

Too many companies get lost in the mechanics of customer experience and forget to step back and reevaluate who their customers are and how they are interacting with the journey.

Have expectations shifted? Have processes deteriorated? Have unnecessary policies added additional hassle? Periodically reevaluating the customer journey and how it fits the current customer base can ensure that you are always delivering Hero-Class® customer experiences.

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## Jeannie Walters

CEO of 360Connex, Writer, Speaker and CCXP

**What's the #1 way for any company to improve their customer service? Advocate.**

When goals and outcomes for business are the only metrics, it's easy to stop thinking about the customer. Think about what the customer has to do to work with you, then do everything you can to make it easier for them. Understand WHY they are your customers, and then advocate for them in every meeting, during every design session, and each time you innovate.

Advocate for them by training your customer service professionals to listen first. Advocate for them by learning what root causes are the source of problems, then fixing those problems. Consider yourself a customer service superhero and see what can happen!

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## Ty Sullivan

Director of Marketing and Social Media | Fresh & Co.

**Invest the time into having bi-monthly meetings to review, engage in customer service drills, have some fun and use that time to also identify team members who have excelled and celebrate them.**

This shows the other members of the team that we are observant of what's happening customer service wise and we really appreciate those that lead the pack. Give them something to strive for. The meetings also serve as a regeneration of that spark they were originally hired for. Their true authentic awesome selves!

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## Michel Falcon

Customer experience consultant and keynote speaker

**A non-negotiable that must exist within a company that strives to improve their customer service is alignment.**

The entire company, from the c-suite all the way down to the newest frontline employee, must understand how world-class customer service looks, acts and feels like. Having this alignment will allow individual teams within a company to make operational and strategic decisions to deliver a seamless customer experience for their customers.

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## Rosetta Lue

Director of the Philly311 Contact Center

**The number one way for any organization to improve their customer service is to make it a cultural priority.**

Every business and/or organization has a culture influenced by a shared mission and vision. Customer service starts here: at the foundation. Having a mission and vision that align with your customers' needs, and keeping those priorities at the forefront of your processes, reinforce purpose.

Customer service truly starts from the ground up. It is not an afterthought or a focus that is implemented arbitrarily. Broadening your idea of who the customer is from the onset also assists in shaping your culture. Identifying your external and internal stakeholders is an excellent first brick in a creating a customer centered organization.

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## Roy Atkinson

Customer Service Advocate

**It's simple, really, though not easy: Make up your mind to improve customer service.**

Once you really do that, you will hire the right customer service people, train them properly, measure the right things (satisfaction, repeat business), and get better at listening to customers. But everything follows from that one decision to get better.

Getting better means either improving on an already terrific service organization or getting one in place. You can start this change anywhere--even at the front line--but if you require deep, broad changes, you will need buy-in at the top. Plead your case with good data. Show how service makes a difference.

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## Kirk Weisler

Chief Morale Officer and Speaker

Too many companies treat customer service like an event instead of a lifelong pursuit. Subsequently this leads them to have special all-hands-on-deck meetings or presentations on it. But an occasional presentation on customer service is like an occasional visit to LA Fitness. It's a nice gesture but even if you spend a full day pumping iron and doing yoga stretches, if you only go once or twice a year you will not see any positive results.

**For customer service to improve it must become a part of the culture, a part of our daily routine and rather than a presentation, we need to facilitate a continuous ongoing discussion about what it is, how it looks and feels and why it's so critical to our personal and professional brand.**

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## Jess Greene-Pierson

Senior Customer Experience Manager | Insightly

**Make providing an awesome customer experience a company-wide endeavor - not just something your support team manages.**

Everyone from your office administrator to your CEO should understand how they individually affect the customer experience. When your exec team is onboard with making an awesome customer experience a non-negotiable, your employees feel empowered to make decisions that put the customer first, and know that everyone from their boss on up to the CEO will back those decisions up.

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## Shep Hyken

Customer service expert, business speaker & New York Times bestselling author

**The number one way for a company to improve service is to clearly define what customer service is for the company. That is where it all starts; at the top with leadership defining the customer service vision.**

The key is it needs to be simple and easy-to-understand – just one sentence or even less. For example, the Ritz-Carlton's Credo is: We're ladies and gentlemen serving ladies and gentlemen. Everyone gets it. Even the customer. Once the vision is defined, everything will flow from there. It will be communicated, the employees will be trained to it and the customer-focused culture will form.

WWW.HYKEN.COM [@HYKEN](#)



## Micah Solomon

Customer service consultant, author & keynote speaker

**If you want to improve your customer service in ten minutes a day, build a daily routine into your work, such as a "daily lineup."**

No matter how large or small your company, have every department at the start of its shift spend ten minutes - no more than ten minutes - discussing one of your service values. A different person can lead the lineup every day, so it doesn't become a burden on any one employee or manager, and you'll be amazed at the difference it makes.

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## Jeff Toister

Toister Performance Solutions, Inc.

**The #1 way for any company to improve customer service is to define what great service looks like. Without this definition, you'll wander around aimlessly.**

With this definition, you'll have a clear understanding of what you're trying to achieve. The definition can't be generic since every company is different. Great service at a fast food restaurant is different than great service at a four star hotel. Companies need to create a definition that's specific to their unique situation. And, they need to make sure that employees understand and embrace this definition.

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## Colin Taylor

CEO & Chief Chaos Officer | The Taylor Reach Group

**Any organization can improve the Customer Service by improving their customer centricity.**

To be customer centric is to place the customer at the center of everything that we do. It isn't just about the call center or customer service department, but every department in the organization.

Practically in the call center it means eliminating barriers to the desired Customer Experience, such as eliminating policies, process or procedures that create points of conflict with the customers, aligning goals and objectives from the frontline agent to CEO to support the Customer Experience and equipping the frontline staff with the empowerment, tools and training they need to be effective.

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## Sandra Dunne

Owner | Customer Central

**“Begin with the end in mind.” -Stephen Covey. This great quote is very relevant to improving a company's customer service.**

1. Look ahead and write down where you want your business to be in a years' time.
2. Consider your customers; what do you want them to be saying about their experiences with you, your product and your team? From this work you will have your model of excellence.
3. Work backwards to identify the gap from where you are today.
4. Consider and document all the steps you need to take to close the gap. When completing this task, involve your teams; share your vision and use their knowledge to help you identify all the actions and timeframes. This will ensure that they are part of the process.
5. Collect a good dose of customer feedback to check you are on the right track.
6. Keep your teams informed and involved on the journey and listen to their valuable feedback as your business makes the changes needed to improve.
7. Enjoy the process; this is all positive change which will impact your bottom line.

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#4

## PROVIDE GREAT SERVICE ACROSS CHANNELS



### Luke Porter

Co-Founder of DigiDesk

**With the rise of the digital customer, we can no longer dictate when and how a customer interacts with our brand.**

We must be ready to offer an excellent level of customer service across all channels, at any time. Companies must now look to proactively monitor, analyse and engage across all digital channels!

[HTTP://MWS-DIGIDESK.COM](http://mws-digidesk.com)

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### Holly Chessman

VP Marketing | Glance Networks

Today's customers live in an online, mobile world. When they need customer service, they want to choose how to access it, whether it's through self-service, responsive service, or live service. Take, for instance, self-service. Blogs and online success centers (knowledge bases) are great places to include information about your products, tips and tricks about usage, customer stories and use cases, and more.

Responsive service allows customers to get in contact with customer service agents quickly but not necessarily immediately. Channels like Twitter and Facebook provide a more public channel for customers to ask questions. Live service is the most intimate and personal channel of the three, yet it can also be the most challenging. Companies need to cross the online gap to give customers the feeling that they're working side by side with an agent.

**If your business can conquer all three of these channels – self, responsive, & live service – you will truly have reached customer service nirvana.**

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### Dan Gingiss

Co-Host, Focus on Customer Service Podcast

**Make it easy for your customers to interact with you!**

Acknowledge and embrace the fact that customers have different needs and will use different channels to either self-serve or ask for help. Focus on:

**SERVICE HOURS** Is 24/7 required for your business?

**AVAILABILITY** How often do your customers see “Chat Agent Not Available” on your website?

**WILLINGNESS TO ENGAGE** Is your Facebook wall open to anyone who wants to post?

Customers expect that brands will be available to help whenever and wherever they need it, so make sure you are there or someone else will be!

[HTTPS://SOUNDCLOUD.COM/FOCUS-ON-CUSTOMER-SERVICE](https://soundcloud.com/focus-on-customer-service) [@DGINGISS](https://twitter.com/DGINGISS)



### Kate Leggett

VP and Principal Analyst at Forrester

Customers want to use a breadth of communication channels — self-service, voice, digital, and social— to interact with a customer service organization, and often start their interactions online. In our recent survey, we found that web self-service was the most widely used communication channel for customer service, surpassing use of the voice channel for the first time.

**I believe that the #1 way to improve customer service is to invest in knowledge management for web self-service and agent assisted service.**

This allows customers to get effortless answers to their questions. Agent knowledge helps standardize answers, ensure compliance and reduce handle times. All these benefits mean that service is delivered in line with customer expectations which leads to customer satisfaction, loyalty and ultimately increased customer retention.

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## Marsha Collier

Forbes Top 20 Women Social Media Influencer and #Custserv Chat Founder

Enhancing your customer service strategy can be as simple or complex as you wish to make it. Recenter your brand touchpoints with your employees and be sure they are cross media savvy. Consider the preferences of your customer.

Although we often identify our brands with a definable cohort, prospective customers are everywhere and in today's tech savvy society, they have the potential to come from all groups. Build trust at every opportunity.

**Give your customer the option to reach you via their preferred communication platform. Perceptions of a brand occur daily in our online world. Be first to reach out and act on any customer interaction.**

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## Guy Stephens

Managing Consultant | Comms Lead UK&I for Salesforce & Social Customer Care/Social CRM Lead, iX, IBM

The last few years has seen the continued decentralisation of the traditional service model in favour of one that is increasingly cognitive, mobile and highly contextual; social has been a catalyst for this shift.

For customer-activated enterprises the challenge is not just how to adapt to this change, but how to adapt to it, at speed. What digital literacies will be needed not just by agents, but by all, will be a key determinant of whether organisations continue to remain relevant to the global conversations that take place around them.

**At the end of the day, however, regardless of the shifts and technological advancements, customer service is still about people: how aware are you of the gap you have created between you and your customer?**

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[@GUY1067](https://twitter.com/GUY1067)



## Martin Hill-Wilson

Customer Engagement and Digital Business Strategist

### The route to being the best:

1. Listen to customers.
2. Identify the top irritants.
3. Remove them.
4. Listen again.
5. Identify the top things that matter to them as experiences.
6. Embed them.
7. Repeat the cycle.
8. Each time get closer to it being a real-time response.

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[@MARTINHW](https://twitter.com/MARTINHW)



## Brad Cleveland

Author, Speaker, Consultant / Senior Advisor | ICM

### Interaction by interaction, your customer-facing services provide immediate visibility on the effectiveness of the organization's products, services and processes.

When captured and shared, this intelligence can boost R&D and help every part of the organization improve. Simple example: a company new to this principle discovered that 11% of customer contacts on a niche cleaning product was due to the child-proof cap that was hard to remove, often sheering off the spray nozzle; their packaging supplier reengineered the cap, eliminating the contacts and, more importantly, improving the product.

Higher-end examples include everything from redesigned marketing to new product categories based on what was learned through service delivery. Think beyond service... that's the ticket to an even bigger game.

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## Neil Davey

Editor | MyCustomer

### In order to improve your service you require the best possible understanding of your customers' wants and needs - and how well you are presently meeting these requirements.

This means providing your customers with a mechanism to communicate their feedback to you, but also listening to the feedback of your staff - they are at the coal face and deal with customers on a day-to-day basis so they have great insight, and they should be given a platform to proactively contribute their thoughts on a regular basis.

It is also important to implement a process whereby you can relay all of this feedback, from the customer and your staff, to the right person, in the right team at the right time to allow your organization to respond. There is no point collecting all this information if nothing is done with it - and you will have wasted your customers' time.

[WWW.MYCUSTOMER.COM](http://WWW.MYCUSTOMER.COM)

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## Mark Bernhardt

Partner | GS Marketing Group, Inc.

### The #1 way for any company to improve their customer service is to listen (more) intently to customers who have an issue, a question or positive feedback.

There's a difference between hearing and listening. It's easy to hear what a customer is saying but to let the mind wander to other things—lyrics of the song piped into the earbud in the ear opposite the phone or what to pick up for dinner later. Hearing is passive, and acting on what you've heard may come later (if you can remember all that you heard). Listening is active, and builds momentum toward your customer's goal. Listen, and you can pick up on tone, cadence and other audible cues besides just the words. In person, you can pick up on visual cues, as well, like body language.

This applies to written communication, too, where skimming and reading are parallels to hearing and listening, respectively. Skimming for highlights or until reaching "tl;dr" dismissiveness doesn't tell you the whole story. Reading helps you understand what the customer wants, and why, and that helps you get to know the customer better.

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## Matt Hooper

Product Evangelist and Digital Transformationalist | LANDESK

### Customer Service starts with understanding limitations.

Agents cannot please everyone, or be aware of every issue. Thus, knowing what they cannot do, and why they cannot do something will go a long way to the customers who are loyal. Cheap, petty customers will come and go, but to sustain loyalty helping customers know the limits of support - and the reasonable explanations for those limits - builds an emotional partnership.

It establishes a sense of understanding that can transcend the many setbacks you will have in the lifetime relationship of that customer. The transparency and open dialogue shows a respect to your informed consumer that, "Hey, stuff breaks, that's life, but I'm here for you and within these limits will do whatever I can." Any reasonable consumer, customer, or business partner can expect nothing more.

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## Justin Robbins

Community Services | ICMI

### Provide the type of service that your customers actually want.

Companies fixate on costs to a crippling degree when it comes to making investments in their customer service functions. Instead of asking & meeting their customers channel preferences, companies resist and cling to traditional channels.

Rather than empowering the frontline representative and providing them with appropriate tools and resources, organizations built complex levels of authority and use stitched-together systems. Rather than planning and forecasting to delight customers and make their experience easier, companies take efficiency to preposterous levels. If we genuinely focus on improving customer service (over costs) it will happen.

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## Michael Pace

Principal/Owner | The Pace of Service, LLC

### The #1 way to improve your customer service comes down to 1 word: Priorities.

Every service organization has the opportunity to prioritize the quality of experience, cost, risk, and time. When you choose quality of experience first everything else falls in line – Culture, Talent, Training, Technology choices, Process, and Customer Centric Metrics/KPI's.

These priorities must be advocated from the top and delivered through each associate at every level of the company. Cost and risk dominate short term thinking, and not long term relationships.

[WWW.THEPACEOFSERVICE.COM](http://www.thepaceofservice.com)

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## Kate Nasser

The People Skills Coach™ | CAS, Inc.  
Workshops & Consulting

**The #1 way to improve customer service is to trust customers and build their trust in you. If you treat them all as potential bad apples, they will give their loyalty to businesses who appreciate them.**

To build their trust in you: listen from their perspective, empathize before you analyze, handle their emotion well, show urgency, deliver what you promise, recover from mistakes with sincere apology and action, and show appreciation with little extras! Remember referrals come from trust. Return business comes from trust. Sustained loyalty comes from trust. Improve trust; improve customer service!

[WWW.KATENASSER.COM](http://WWW.KATENASSER.COM)

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## Jeremy Watkin

Head of Quality | FCR

**Companies wanting to improve customer service must focus on making meaningful, human connections with their customers and must constantly work to equip those serving the customers with the tools and training necessary to solve problems.**

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## Doug Sandler

Best-Selling Author, Speaker, and Huffington Post Blogger

**No matter how amazing your company is with technology, social media, marketing and service, never forget that people want to deal with human beings.**

If you forget about building a relationship with your customer, then you forget about how to build a solid business. Customer service is about people and relationships. We are all in the PR business, people and relationships, every single person in your organization should have one common goal: Make the customer happy.

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## Diana Oreck

Vice President | The Ritz-Carlton Leadership Center

**The #1 way for any company to improve their service is to hard wire consistency into their operation and execute the basics flawlessly.**

The most important word in service is always. Always leads to consistency which leads to trust with your customers and ultimately referrals and additional business. There are no companies famous for service who deliver service inconsistently.

Most importantly your employees must execute the basics flawlessly. That is price of entry today. If that does not happen, your customers will not give you the opportunity to delight them. Do you know how consistently the basics are being delivered by your employees? When was the last time you walked your factory floor? Listened in on a customer call? Spent time shadowing your bank teller, housekeeper, nurse, flight attendant?

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## Andrew McFarland

Principal | Pivot Point Solutions

In a perfect world:

- customers know exactly what they purchased
- services are delivered when they are promised
- products operate how they were designed and advertised, and both products and services provide value (whether tangible or intangible) greater than the cost.

In our imperfect world, wide gaps exist between expectations and reality.

**So the #1 way for any company to improve customer service is to bridge these chasms. It stands to reason then that the #1 way to improve the customer experience is to close the gaps before they become customer service calls/complaints.**

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[@ANDY\\_MCF](#)



## Lisa Ford

Author and Hall of Fame Speaker

**Do it right consistently. Reliable and responsive customer service creates value and deepens the customer relationship.**

The best companies hire right to start, train well, engage and empower team members to deliver an excellent performance everyday. Great customer service means competent employees delivering the basics consistently.

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#9

## FOCUS ON THE BASICS



### Tony Johnson

Customer Service Speaker and Consultant

**The best way for any business to improve their Customer service quickly is to focus on the basics.**

Too often businesses are chasing the grand experience when most times guests simply want what they asked for. A consistently great product, a warm welcome, and a heartfelt thank you will absolutely drive satisfaction and loyalty. That is not to say that providing WOWs has no value, but too often organizations chase those big moments and neglect the basic blocking and tackling items.

The key to executing the basics is impactful training and that is an investment we must make if we are to win our Customers' loyalty. Don't neglect the basics in lieu of the "big moments" and you'll delight your Customers when it matters most.

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#11

## HAVE A HUMAN RESPOND



### Greg Meyer

Customer Champion | Rival IQ

The #1 way for any company to improve their customer service is:

**Respond to customers with a human voice and not a bot - you decide if you want to call, type, chat, or send a care package - and you'll get a more loyal customer.**

[WWW.RIVALIQ.COM](http://WWW.RIVALIQ.COM)

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### Dr. Joseph Michelli

CEO | The Michelli Experience, Inc.

**There are hundreds of books on customer service, although it is not rocket science. Nail the basics...**

Drive product knowledge throughout your organization, fix processes that create pain for your customers, design service processes such that customers get their needs met the first time, and "make it right" for affected customers when you inevitably have a breakdown.

The real key, however, is to see all the aforementioned components as table stakes and instead aspire to deliver service in the context of a "relationship" wherein you connect with your customers emotionally - fulfilling a credible, unique, relevant and loyalty-building brand promise.

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#10

## IMPROVE PRODUCT/ SERVICE



### Gregory Yankelovich

Customer Experience Management Strategist | Customer Experience IQ

**Customer service is in most cases the safety net for mediocre responses and services, so my advice is to improve your product or service.**

When you market, design and execute right, your customers will very rarely need to contact customer service.

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