

So What



Trey is a technology coordinator for a local school district. He recently needed to purchase several new monitors and printers for one of the school libraries. He found a great price on monitors from ABC Company and a great price on printers from XYZ Company. The shipment arrived on time. They called to verify the order and to find out if they could get a better price. The company, however, had already delivered the monitors to a representative who packed the shipment and let him know that it was late due to bad weather and would arrive the next day. He never heard back from ABC Company, although the monitors did arrive two days later.

What does this situation illustrate about the importance of customer service in selling? ABC Company gave Trey the best price, but will it be enough to turn him into a repeat customer? Customer service is a key component of the selling relationship. Read on to learn more about this important aspect of selling.

## Objectives:

- 1 Explain how customer service facilitates sales relationships.
- 2 Identify opportunities to use customer service in facilitating sales relationships.

# Beyond the Sale

If you're headed for a career in sales, you're going to learn a lot about how to make a sales presentation and close the deal. And when the deal is done, your work is over, right? Wrong! Servicing the sale is one of your most important tasks as a salesperson. Making the presentation and closing the sale are just the *beginning* of the long journey of generating and keeping loyal customers for your business.

## Customer service in selling

When it comes to selling, what does customer service really mean? Is it a counter at the back of a retail store that accepts returns and exchanges and provides gift wrapping? Well, maybe. In that case, customer service is more of a *function* than a *process*, more of a *department* than a *relationship*. The kind of customer service you need to demonstrate as a salesperson goes far beyond the boundaries of a mere business function. It's an attitude, a set of skills, and a style of work that you should carry with you for your entire career.



Simply put, **customer service** encompasses all activities and benefits provided by a business to its customers to create goodwill and customer satisfaction. Customer service should result in enhancing and facilitating the customer's use of the good or service. For instance, if a

customer purchases a new digital camera, how useful is it to him/her without knowing how to use it? A successful salesperson provides quality customer service to that customer by making sure s/he has the necessary training to use this product, whether that means going through the manual during the sales presentation or demonstrating it in the store.

## The competition starts here

In selling, customer service is where the real competition among businesses begins. Over time, the quality of certain products can be easily matched among competitors. One example is cellular phone service. The product itself does not vary greatly among providers, nor does the price. Therefore, customer service



Besides repeat business, another benefit of having loyal customers is referrals. When your customers are satisfied, they will tell their family and friends about your good service. In a sense, these satisfied customers become another “sales force” reaching out to prospects for you. What makes this benefit even better is that this sales force can reach potential customers whom you might not be able to reach on your own!

- *Generating new customers.* Sales increase when organizations create new business and new accounts. Providing high quality customer service can help generate new customers by building an excellent reputation for the company. When a business has a reputation for good customer service, prospective customers are more likely to bring their business there.

### Summary

Customer service encompasses all activities and benefits provided by a business to its customers to create goodwill and customer satisfaction. Servicing the sale is one of your most important tasks as a salesperson. The kind of customer service you need to demonstrate goes far beyond the boundaries of a mere business function. Customers’ expectations vary and depend on past experience, word-of-mouth information, advertising, and personal needs. The two main benefits of providing quality customer service are building profits through existing customers and through new customers.



1. What does customer service in selling mean?
2. How does customer service affect competition among sales organizations?
3. Describe the factors that affect customers’ service expectations.
4. Describe the two main benefits of providing quality customer service.

## The Gray Zone



Lee’s company is holding a contest for its salespeople, and the winner gets an all-expenses paid cruise! Of course, Lee really wants to win. To do so, he really needs to close the sale this month. The customer’s product can be delivered in a bit of a stretch, but he promises the customer on-time delivery for Thursday. Even if the shipment is late, he’ll still win the cruise, and he can smooth things over with the customer later. What do you think? Are Lee’s actions justified?

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- *Have a good attitude.* You can do everything a customer asks and provide quality service, but if you do it with a bad attitude, you will still have an unhappy, alienated customer. Help your customers willingly, as if there's nothing in the world you would rather do—even when that's not really the case!



### Summary

Salespeople can provide customer service before the sale by suggestion selling, providing product information, and making only promises they can keep. Post-sale opportunities to provide customer service include order processing, shipping and delivery, installation, warranty issues, maintenance and repair, credit/financing, technical assistance and support, and customer training. The keys to providing quality customer service are soliciting feedback, keeping in touch, being prompt, and having a good attitude.



1. How can salespeople provide customer service before the sale closes?
2. How can salespeople provide customer service after the sale closes?
3. Describe the keys to providing quality customer service.

## Make It Pay!

Take a look around your house, and make a list of all the products you see that required (or may still require) customer service. Examples might be appliances, furniture, or electronics. Choose one or two items, and ask a parent or guardian about his/her service experiences with the business/s/he purchased from. What was s/he pleased with? What could the businesses have done better? Would s/he buy from these businesses again?

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