

# First-Rate Customer Service

Tips for taking the best care of customers

## Overcome limitations

### *It's all in your mind*

You may believe that you face obstacles in achieving success on the job and in your career. The truth is, most limits are self-imposed. *The following five steps will help you realize your dreams:*

**1. Develop a positive self-image.** Others will see you in the same light that you see yourself in.

*Actions:* Limit contact with coworkers who have negative attitudes and complain often. Recognize your value to the organization and celebrate your accomplishments. You will build self-confidence, even if you have to pat yourself on the back.

**2. Seize opportunities to learn new skills.** The saying "knowledge is power" is true. Capable people are in demand and tend to be rewarded with promotions, raises and coveted assignments.

*Actions:* Consult with your supervisor about the skills that will let you move up the ladder. Take advantage of training offered by your organization and use education reimbursement credits if available. Remember that "people skills" are as important to career advancement as technical knowledge.

**3. Invest in your future.** If your organization doesn't offer training benefits, pay for it yourself. The investment is worth the money.

*Action:* Decide how much money you will set aside each month for training and professional development. Resources can range from

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*Bottom line:* Goals refer to a measurable accomplishment, while strategies define the desired transformation. You need both if you plan to succeed.

### **Avoid lingering doubts**

Don't leave loose ends at the conclusion of a customer transaction. Customers won't feel secure if they have questions, and you will waste time revisiting issues later down the road. *Tie up loose ends using these suggestions:*

- End every call or transaction by saying, "What else can I help you with?"
- Wait about five seconds at the end of a phone

books and magazines to seminars and conferences. *Tip:* Search your local newspaper or the Internet for free presentations on business skills offered at your local chamber of commerce or library or an industry association.

**4. Set realistic goals.** Before you add a goal to your list, ask yourself whether it is possible for you to attain each step in the process.

*Action:* Visualize your success. For example, if you want to improve your ability to cope under stress, imagine yourself handling difficult customers with ease. Develop an image of yourself remaining calm and answering questions competently.

**5. Deliver.** If you promise to call 20 customers by the end of the day, make sure to follow through.

*Actions:* Prioritize your workload and incorporate time management techniques. *Example:* It is 4 p.m. and you still have five customers to contact to meet your goal by the end of the day. Review your to-do list and move "Review product updates" to the top of your list for the next morning.

—Adapted from "What Is Your Dream? If It's a Promotion and More Money, Read On," John Tschohl, The Service Quality Institute, [www.customer-service.com](http://www.customer-service.com).

conversation with a customer. That gives both you and the customer a little extra time to think of additional questions or missed information before you hang up.

—From the editors.

**We'd love to hear your feedback on the *First-Rate Customer Service* newsletter. Send your comments, suggestions and story ideas to [bhintch@briefingsmediagroup.com](mailto:bhintch@briefingsmediagroup.com).**

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