

Communicating With Your Customers

What happens when customers try to communicate with your company? For example, when they have a complaint or want some information? Is it a positive experience—one that will ensure their continued loyalty? Or is it a frustrating experience—one that will make them easy prey for your competitors?

I'm sure at sometime you have ended up in "voice mail hell" after you have gone through the "press one" for this and "press two" for that. In a recent customer service class, several participants told me that the impression they receive when they have to navigate through a long automatic routing system is the feeling that the company does not really care about the customer, just in saving money.

What about your company? Do you have several methods for customers to contact you? Or do you set up as many barriers as you can to try to force them to use your website? Yes, websites definitely have a place in the communications mix, but customers should have other options, too. Not everything can be answered in a FAQs section.

Are your systems highly responsive? Are your e-mails, voicemails, and tweets checked often? Do you have online, live chat available? Everyone is in a hurry today and they need information NOW, not in 48 hours as one company told me when I requested information. At least they set my expectations by telling me when to expect a reply. Many companies do not even do that.

In the "old days," our method of communication with customers was by telephone or the written word. Then it moved to FAX and finally e-mail. Now you can put up a portal to the company and your customers can literally plot their own course. The key is a variety of choices that make communication fast and easy because that is often one of the ways your customers judge your company and decide whether to do business with you or not.

In general, make your contact channels customer friendly. I recommend that you perform a "dummy check" on your various methods to contact your company. Have a friend or business associate call your company to see how easy it is to get their questions answered. You may be surprised!

And as always, please think of me to help your organization establish a culture of true customer service or build better teams. peggy@peggymorrow.com

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