

# NINE STEPS TO A SERVICE CULTURE

Customer service has never been as critical as it is today – this became abundantly apparent during the pandemic, when millions worldwide relied on businesses to provide what they needed to survive personally and professionally.

To distinguish yourself and your business from your competitors, it's imperative to create a service culture, from your frontline employees to the CEO.

Here are nine principles of creating a service culture – a culture that is focused on doing whatever it takes to satisfy the customer, attract new customers and retain your current customers.

1. **Create a relentless strategy.** Create a lifetime commitment to customer service, a propulsive, self-directed passion to continue to learn, improve and exceed expectations in everything you do. You have to be relentless in serving your customers – it has to be a way of life.
2. **Reduce friction.** Remove stupid rules, policies and procedures. Most rules are created to prevent the customers from taking advantage. But what most managers don't understand is that rules reduce the chances that a customer will want to do business with you. Advertising and prices might get customers in the door, but if they have problems with a product or service and your rules don't allow you solve it for them quickly, they won't be back. Make it easy to do business with you.
3. **Empower your employees.** Empowerment is the backbone of great service. Everyone must be empowered. If a frontline employee doesn't have the power to satisfy the customer on the spot and to the customer's satisfaction, the customer will be forced to do one of two (bad) things – he'll move his complaint up the ladder, often all the way to the CEO, which will cost you time and money; or he'll simply never do business with you again.
4. **Do everything with speed.** People today expect speed. You must drastically reduce the time for everything you do. This includes everything from answering the phone within the first two rings, to meeting or exceeding the deadline for a customer's project. If something normally takes three weeks, do it in two. If you say you'll get back to a customer within a week, do it within days. To improve on speed, all employees must organize, prioritize, manage their time, and be constantly on the lookout for efficiencies.
5. **Train your employees.** Employees at every level must be trained on customer service every few months. Ninety-nine percent of

customer interaction takes place with your frontline employees, yet they are probably the least trained, least empowered and least valued. When you spend the time and money to train your employees, and do it continuously, you'll realize a return that will drive your business to new heights.

6. **Remember customers' names.** The most precious thing customers have is their name. Call your customers by name whenever you interact with them. Doing so will let the customer know you value them and their business, that you acknowledge and respect them, and that they are important to you.
7. **Practice service recovery.** When you make a mistake, admit it immediately and do whatever it takes to correct it. All employees must practice the four skills of service recovery: act quickly, take responsibility, make an empowered decision, and compensate fairly.
8. **Reduce costs.** Price is critical to all customers. Service leaders are frugal and are always looking for ways to reduce costs and eliminate waste. When you reduce costs, you improve your bottom line. To realize even greater benefits, pass on at least a portion of those savings to your customers. It will give you an edge over your competitors.
9. **Measure results.** To keep management passionate about creating a service culture and motivated to make the financial investment and take the time to do so, you must measure the results of your efforts. It's critical to know where you came from and where you are. When you can show that what you're doing is having a positive impact, you'll gain support throughout the company.

Serving the customer builds the bottom line and long-term growth prospects of your organization.

For more information on John Tschohl and the Service Quality Institute, visit [www.customer-service.com](http://www.customer-service.com).

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