

BE RELENTLESS IN SERVING YOUR CUSTOMERS

If you want your organization to grow and to succeed long-term, you've got to be a service leader. If you want to be a service leader, you have to be relentless. You have to have a propulsive, self-directed passion to continue to learn, improve and exceed expectations in everything you do. And it must be a lifetime commitment.

New and returning customers come into your business every day, and they all expect the same thing: great customer service. Most of them don't get it because top management doesn't fully understand the importance of service and hasn't committed to providing it.

In one sense, COVID gave companies a reason not to focus on customer service. They were struggling just to stay open and have enough warm bodies to serve their customers. Going above and beyond to provide awesome customer service wasn't on the menu.

Now that things are back to normal, many companies still aren't making customer service a priority. If you were to ask CEOs of every company in the U.S., if not the world, how they would rank their customer service on a scale of 1 to 10, most would give themselves a 10. But their customers would strongly disagree. Look at Walmart, which built its business on customer service and great prices. It still has great prices, but customer service has fallen by the wayside.

Then look at Amazon, a shining star when it comes to awesome service. I continue to be amazed that more companies don't copy Amazon, because it does everything right. If you want proof of the financial benefits of great customer service, take note of this: In 2022, Amazon had sales of \$514 billion, an increase of \$44.2 billion over the previous year. Other companies you would do well to emulate include Costco, NE Delta Dental, and Chewy.com.

I've been writing about customer service and providing customer service training programs to companies throughout the world longer than anyone else in the industry. And what I constantly stress is that the keys to great customer service should be in the hands of your frontline employees. They have 99 percent of the contact with your customers, yet they tend to be the least valued and least trained.

Why is that? One reason is top management's simple inertia. They don't understand or recognize the importance of customer service, so they don't give their employees the training that will empower them to take great care of the customers. They think that, if they provide training of any type, it will just be money wasted, because the employees will eventually leave. What they don't recognize is that if they don't provide the training, their customers will leave them.

They also don't understand, or appreciate, the importance of exceeding the customers' expectations. They take better care of their machines and technology than they do their customers. Just as manufacturing companies spend a lot of money to maintain their machines, you must invest in maintaining your employees to ensure that they are operating on all cylinders.

When you provide service that is above and beyond what customers expect, they'll bring their friends, and their money, to you. You can spend millions on marketing and advertising, or you can provide service that is so exceptional that your customers tell others about it and help drive your business through world-of-mouth.

Everything you do should revolve around a conviction that providing great customer service is critical to your success. "Good" service won't get you into the game; you need to provide service that is relentlessly awesome.

If you are to be successful, you must recognize, reaffirm, and reprioritize your goals. You must refocus your organizational mission to make providing awesome customer service your top priority. **RO**

John Tschohl is a professional speaker, trainer, consultant, and is president and founder of Service Quality Institute with operations in over 40 countries. John speaks more than 50 times each year and is considered one of the foremost authorities on service strategy, success, empowerment, and customer service. John's monthly strategic newsletter is available online at no charge. Contact John on Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter.

