REVIEW

Role of Effective Leadership on Empowerment, Effective Communication, and Motivation in Customer Service

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ABSTRACT

Customer service is the act of supporting customers of a business that can break a business or generate profit in the competitive environment with growing customers' expectations. Regarding the critical role of customer service to differentiate between businesses, it is considered as one of the top considerations in businesses. However, there is a range of key factors that are tied to the success of a customer service provider in offering quality customer service that will eventually lead the business through exceeding or falling short in responding to customers' expectations. Besides, businesses are prone to face some challenges in the employment of customer services that are required to be addressed. This paper aims to discuss the importance of customer service and the establishment of an efficient customer service strategy in business considering different influential factors that affect offering quality customer services. It also explains challenges that businesses may face in providing amazing customer services and how to address them.

1. Introduction

Customer service is recognized as one of the most cost-effective and influential approaches to developing a business [1]. Excellent customer service is a promising and affordable solution to market a business effectively. The provision of customer service is not a choice for business anymore. It is an indispensable part of serving customers in the competitive business environment. It is important to provide customers with appropriate customer service since each customer is a valuable asset for businesses and needs to be cherished [2]. Numerous companies have realized the advantages that they may desire to set up in the core of their businesses as competitive advantages are likely to fade away soon since they may be imitated by their competitors [2]. One of the most critical aspects of the business to concentrate in this competitive environment is considering high-quality customer service [3].

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The purpose of this paper is to discuss the customer service and its importance in business. Then, it is addressed to challenges of customer service in different aspects. It examines the role of empowerment, effective communication, and motivation in providing customer service, and offers how excellent leaders can direct a business to provide efficient customer services. Then, it explains to distinguish challenging customers and describes the employment of technology in customer service. Also, a discussion is provided regarding problem solving of customer service and some solutions are recommended. Last but not least, how to build a customer service strategy is discussed.

2. What is Costumer Service

A range of different tasks that respond to customers' demands and improve the experience of customers in their purchase journey is referred to as customer service. Business owners need to recognize varying expectations of customers and strive to respond to them by providing quality customer service [4].

Customer service is recognized as one of the most cost-effective and influential approaches to developing a business [1]. Today, businesses have recognized that quality services or products do not satisfy customers alone, and to survive in the market, businesses require to create competitive advantages through providing customer services that bring along loyal customers. According to Prof Jay's rule #1, it can make people loyal to your brand, products, and services.

As it is stated by Kumar [1], customer satisfaction is literally defined as the overall feeling of customers in a purchase journey from the beginning of interaction with the business till the end. Since customers' expectations to receive quality services may differ quickly over time and get cultivated, customer service that is mainly an excellent complexion of communication, social, and business skills plays an important role to keep customers satisfied [1].

It is stated that customers' demands may differ from person to person in different situations; however, all customers require five fundamental demands in common [3] including service, price, quality, action, appreciation. To clarify, customers have a perception of appropriate service based on the price that they are spending on that purchase to ensure that they have spent their money resources efficiently. Besides, each customer may have a perception of the quality of the product or service.

A product or service should meet customers' expectations in terms of quality features such as durability and functionality to be replaced as customers' choice. In terms of action, customers need constant support in case they have any questions or problems regarding the purchased product or service. Finally, customers need to ensure that they are respected by the business and their interaction with the business is well appreciated through maintaining positive relationships with customers [2].

3. Empowerment

In the competitive environment of businesses, leaders constantly search for new approaches to attract potential customers and make their current customers loyal. Empowerment in the customer services industry is providing a platform to make decisions that seem sensible and wise from customers' standpoint [2,5].

Customers commonly describe their challenges to the responsible person when they call the customer service provider in a company and customer service providers decide to focus on services that are more valuable from customers' viewpoint through empowerment. It is necessary for businesses that are constantly interacting with customers to have a definite purpose of statement and mission [5].

According to Harris [3], the main reason that justifies the existence of a business is referred to as the purpose of statement and mission is the way that a business fulfills its purpose. However, empowerment is not an event to happen accidentally, it is the result of a range of attempts including training employees, establishing guidelines and rewarding positive outcomes.

4. Effective Communication

Effective communication abilities are of crucial importance in providing customer services. Individual ideas, information, and insights are shared between people through the communication process. Efficient communication will be facilitated in case those employees have a great understanding of their customers and their demands. The establishment of customer intelligence is an applicable way to help customer service providers gain a comprehensive understanding of customers [6].

Businesses gather information, build databases based on historical data, and develop an overview of current and potential customers through the process of customer intelligence. Customer service providers will enable to serve their customers with high-quality services through the employment of customer IQ or customer intelligence since it provides businesses with the opportunity to customize their services based on customers' demands. This will eventually lead to relationship marketing since it builds a lasting and win-win connection with customers [3,6,7].

5. Motivation in Costumer Service

Motivation is the personal driving force that directs an individual through performing a task or fulfilling a specific obligation. Motivation factors vary for different people. While some individuals may become motivated by financial rewards, others get motivated by circumstances or positive experiences [8].

Customer service providers need to get motivated to provide customers with excellent services and the motivation in customer service will be executed in a business from the top management. Employment of suggestion rewards, recognition programs, and daily encouragements raise the enthusiasm of employees who work in the customer service sector to feel positive about their determining role in the profitability of a business [9].

As mentioned by Harris [3], to understand individual motivations, needs and wants should be differentiated. Personal requirements that are divided into primary and secondary types are recognized as needs. Primary needs are instinctive requirements as the need for oxygen, water, and food. Secondary needs are learned during lifespan like enjoyment or indifference in facing to a specific experience.

While needs are vital to motivating individuals, wants are referred to as desired experiences or things that are not directly correlated to individual requirements. Individual respect, encouragement from management, job security, challenging work, opportunities to express creativity, and financial security are some of the motivation factors that have been recognized among adults. Not all individuals get motivated by reliance on the aforementioned driving forces; however, these are the most common factors to keep individuals concentrated to hit their targets. One crucial point to consider in the motivation area is the importance of acquiring self-awareness about personal motives [3].

6. Leadership in Customer Service

According to Chao [10], performance in the customer service industry is highly dependent on effective leadership. Leadership that is literally the power to influence others is the main success factor in many top companies. Effective implementation of leadership skills is an important requirement to achieve goals for each business that is based on providing products or services to customers.

Leaders need to develop their skills through the improvement of their personal abilities and gain insight into the philosophies of the organization. One of the most significant characteristics of leaders is empowering their employees by asking them to get involved in decision-making processes. Leaders, through demonstrating empowerment, help employees to share their knowledge and be confident to share their ideas with customers without being afraid of future consequences [3,10].

Considering the interaction between customer service providers and customers, customer service providers play the lead role because of sharing information, values, enthusiasm, and character with their customers. Customers need to be led and treated respectfully through the process of receiving a product or service including sharing of special circumstances, methods of billing, and their specific needs. Therefore, all employees of the customer service provider are required to develop their leadership skills since customers are profoundly influenced by them as leaders [3,10].

7. Technology & Excellence in Customer Service

Today, businesses have the opportunity to benefit from many recent developments that used to seem impossible once. The emergence of social networks, Twitter, YouTube, and Facebook has provided the chance to take advantage of network effect by sharing data through e-mail, posts, blogs, texting, membership/reward programs, and many other channels in the list available. These new opportunities are broadly welcomed by customers and create new demands that it may be sometimes challenging for businesses to respond accordingly [11].

Social media is an effective electronic communication platform for both businesses and customers to share information, ideas and leave relevant comments. Businesses share information in social media to promote their products and services and raise customer awareness as a less expensive replacement for traditional costly advertisements. It is also an appropriate way to communicate with customers as sophisticated twenty-first-century customers are well aware to search smartly and make appropriate purchases [11,12].

Since the prevalence of social media has become broad, even traditional businesses are pushed by the force of social media to redefine and reevaluate their approaches to serving customers. Customers expect service providers to be available, accessible, and accountable. In other words, services should be designed to be available and appropriately meet customers' schedules, the service provider should be accessible to respond to customers' demands, and be accountable in case of any problem or dissatisfaction [11].

Technology is progressing exponentially and customers are increasingly excited to experience the value that new technologies may add. Customers are embracing new technologies because of various reasons based on

their demands; however, one common reason for being responsive to developments of technologies is becoming more user friendly and easier to use to a great extent [13].

In accordance with Harris [3], introducing new technologies to employees will result in facing considerable resistance to change and adaptation challenges. Some employees may be enthusiastic to employ new technologies; however, breaking old habits does not seem pleasant to others. Table 1 illustrates steps that are recommended [3] to facilitate the process of introducing new technologies.

Table 1. Steps to Introducing New Technologies [3].

1.	Prepare the staff before introducing the new technology and make them involved in the process from the beginning.
2.	Train employees that have leading roles to prepare their team members and make positive preconceptions.
3.	Develop a team to support the new technology to advocate the whole members through a "change championship" mission.
4.	Let the employees realize the positive impacts of the new technology to facilitate their tasks.
5.	Share successful experiments of implementing the technology in other organizations.
6.	Prepare yourself and your team to resist the bombard of complaints.
7.	Recognize milestones and celebrate their accomplishment with your employees.
8.	Avoid the temptation of "shelf ware syndrome" and postpone the application of the technology to the ideal time in the future since it does not exist.

In terms of selecting the appropriate technology to offer, it is true that there is a great range of new technologies to employ; however, businesses are highly recommended to seize the opportunity and offer emerging services based on their customers' expectations. Service providers need to have loyal customers since customer loyalty is one of the crucial areas that demonstrate whether their performance has been accepted or not. Communication technologies such as e-mail, Facebook, and Twitter have facilitated businesses to be in constant contact with their customers and eventually make loyal customers [13].

Businesses are required to define a level of excellence in customer service based on their goal in the tough competition of today and resist accepting anything lower than this level. It is true that offering excellent customer service and considering customers as valuable irreplaceable assets of a business is spoken by many businesses; however, a few of them pursue the appropriate path to cherish customers regarding their excellence in customer service objectives [13].

8. The Challenges of Customer Service

We face people from different walks of life daily. We may find some of them easy to communicate with and others so tough. However, in the customer service sector, employees are commonly asked to spend most of the time interacting with challenging customers with different kinds of fears, hesitations, questions, problems, and complicated personalities that require more attempts to get connected. Since communication is a two-way process, different employees may not find the same customers challenging. Despite the difficulties of making effective communications with challenging customers, customer service providers need to train their employees to treat this specific segment of customers respectfully and provide them with satisfying services [3].

Businesses commonly underestimate customer service misapprehending that it is not simple to develop it. However, it is a valuable concept that can equip businesses through addressing challenges that may exist in the way through developing customer services within an organization, realizing customers' expectations and perceptions, and creating value for customers [6].

Despite the evident advantages that customer services can bring along, there is also a range of different challenges to delivering effective customer service in a business including poor communication skills, indolence, poor time management, lack of adequate training, and attitude [3]. However, these obstacles to achieving effective customer service can be addressed through diligent effort.

One crucial consideration in delivering excellent customer service understands customers' perceptions. Perception is the way that a customer defines an experience including his or her understanding of people, situations, products, and services. Perceptions reflect customers' values, prejudices, priorities, and preferences and constantly develop over time [14].

Another consideration is customers' expectations that are the outcomes that a customer believes that should be received in a purchase experience [14]. Expectations are mainly based on expectations that are likely to be negative or positive in various cases.

The next consideration to deliver excellent customer service is respecting values. Values are generally referred to as a combination of one's perceptions, beliefs, and ideas. Each member of an organization has a series of personal values. It is of vital importance to integrate personal values with corporate values to ensure delivering effective customer services in the customer service industry [3].

To deliver excellent customer services, businesses

need to attract customers' attention in terms of credibility. A business is recognized to be credible in case of being trusted and believed by customers. The reputation of a business in the market, professionalism, and its current knowledge and experience in the field shapes the credibility of the business. Credibility can determine the success of a customer service provider in the business environment [3].

One of the determining areas in the failure or success of a service provider is customer loyalty [3]. Customers may be exposed to various services daily; however, it is of crucial importance for businesses to make their customers loyal to their services or products [1].

9. Problem Solving in Customer Service

Individuals and corporations face problems on a regular basis. Businesses may make attempts to prevent challenges; however, some of them are irresistible. Deal with the person and then deal with the problem. One of the main areas of concentration for customer service providers is solving customers' problems as an active resolution in challenging and complicated situations [15].

To provide solutions for problems, various approaches and strategies may be taken into account including [15] brainstorming, diagramming, and negotiation. Brainstorming is a commonly used strategy for problem-solving that involves the participation of groups of individuals. To provide a visual representation of the problem and its associated factors, diagramming can be a promising strategy. Different alternatives including customers' requests, complaints, and challenges should be considered for solving complicated problems in the professional environment of the business efficiently. To select among offered possible solutions and reach mutual benefits, negotiation is an effective strategy that is dependent on discussions among different parties [15].

10. Strategy Planning in Customer Service

Excellent customer service can be achieved through appropriate strategy development [3]. Strategy is an essential plan to accomplish goals. Planning is the initial step for the development of a customer service strategy. In other words, customer service providers are required to set goals to accomplish at the beginning of the strategy development process [16].

Infrastructure that consists of physical facilities, networks of people, and supportive information is one of the major pillars of customer service. Besides, the extraordinary culture of each organization that is a composition of shared norms, beliefs, and values within an organization should value customer service to instill a practical customer service environment [3].

To develop a customer service strategy that works appropriately, businesses also need to segment the market and realize similarities of customers to classify them into specific groups based on their characteristics. This helps businesses to customize their services based on the specific demands of their customers [16].

A seven-step guideline is proposed to create a strategy for customer services after ensuring employment of planning, infrastructure, customer-oriented culture, market segmentation, and analysis of consumption behavior as it is shown in Figure 1 [3].
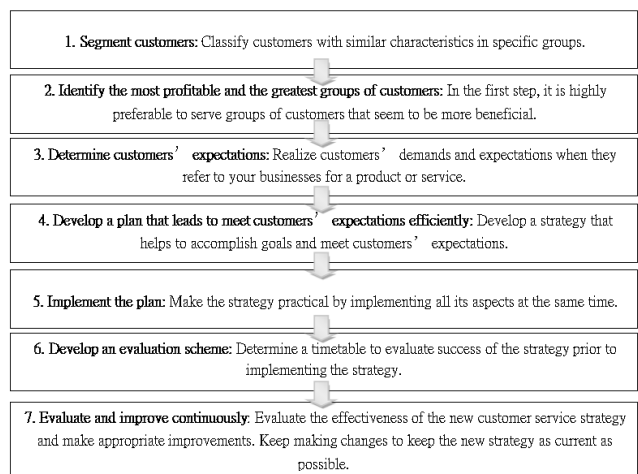

Figure 1. A seven-step guideline to create customer service strategy [3].

11. Conclusions

To ensure effective customer service, the provider needs to think like a customer. This helps the provider to become sensitive about requirements and factors that are likely to enhance customer satisfaction. Besides, customer service providers need to collect data about customers' purchase behaviors and decision-making approaches to extract patterns that help to predict and get prepared for the future through the establishment of appropriate strategies.

Employees should be trained and developed to provide valuable outcomes for the business and respond to customers' demands appropriately since the customer service industry is facing increasingly tough competition today. Besides, it is not easy to provide excellence in customer service, and it requires to be equipped with knowledge and skills that are of significant importance to compete in this industry and finally achieve individual and organizational excellence goals in customer service.

Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest.

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