

Free growth plan

Grow your business with excellent customer service

Maintaining a competitive edge and managing the bottom line can be a pricy endeavor in today's economic climate. Costs are rapidly rising and it seems like there is always new competition. One cost that remains constant, that also adds money directly to the bottom line through loyalty and reputation, is customer service. In fact, it's constantly free. Providing excellent service only requires concern, time, dedication, empathy and awareness.

Many greenhouses spend thousands upon thousands of dollars on lavish, high-tech buildings and marketing programs yet overlook the core service and day-to-day customer interaction. If that's the case they might as well use their money as fertilizer. They can have the best product in the world and the biggest, most expensive greenhouse around, but if they don't have great service, they have nothing at all.

Some owners and managers aren't even aware of the level of (or lack of) customer service that exists in their business. They say they are too busy to be concerned with something so simple and obvious. Who doesn't know how to provide great customer service? Surely, everyone knows how. Do they?

First and foremost, owners, operators and managers must make a commitment to provide excellent service and to strive to improve it. They must be involved and aware. They need to invest time, not money, into improving and maintaining the highest standards of service on a consistent basis.

Customer service is the face of business, and it starts from the first second a customer comes into contact with a business. First impressions are free — good or bad. If it's good, so is business. But, if it's bad, so is the business' reputation. As basic as customer service may be to the people in charge, the customer

service representatives that are on the front lines representing the business to the public may not agree, understand or even be aware of what customer service really is.

Poor customer service can cost everything. But, the best service around won't cost a cent.

So, how does a business grow through free customer service? Customers want to patronize businesses where they feel special, where they feel appreciated and where they are recognized. They want to feel like they are part of the business' family. They want to be served consistently, honestly and with manners. They want service with a smile from a positive and undistracted representative. This can all be done for free with proper supervision and accountability.

Customers want businesses to do well, and if they are welcomed with open arms and excellent service they will help any business grow and succeed. Satisfied patrons will become the best marketing campaign anyone could ever wish for by promoting their experiences with family, friends and acquaintances. Through repeat business and priceless word-of-mouth advertising, excellent customer service will grow the sales and the bottom line.

Make the commitment today to train customer service every day to grow your business.

Try these free, simple, yet effective, customer service tech-

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niques to start improving your bottom line today:

- 1. Greet every customer:** Upbeat greetings put customers at ease, make them feel welcome and create invaluable first impressions for your business. Train your customer service staff to greet every customer with a smile, without fail.
- 2. Learn and use customers' names:** Regular customers feel invested in businesses. They are part of the family. Teach your staff to learn, use and share customer names.
- 3. Thank customers:** Say "thank you" to all customers, even if they don't make a purchase. They may just be browsing or gathering information and plan on making their purchase at a later time.

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William Pearsall is the author of "Customer Service Is FREE." The book includes 101 free things that you can do now to improve service. The guide is a beneficial, quick read that is suited for anyone involved in customer service. For more information, visit www.customerserviceisfree.com.

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? HAVE A QUESTION? You can contact William at belfry@bex.net.