

Retention: The Importance of Delivery

Coaching Questions

“What do your customers expect to be delivered?”

Topic Introduction

A top reason that customers are disappointed is that their expectations were higher than what the business was able to deliver. These high expectations are almost always set by a sales person.

Discussion Questions

- What is the industry norm?
- What is the competition doing?
- Are your sales people over promising?
- Do your sales people understand how delivery works?
- Do your sales people have to handle disgruntled customers?

Key Learning

Your sales people have to understand delivery to be effective.

“How do you communicate with customers throughout delivery?”

Topic Introduction

Another top reason that customers are disappointed is that they are not communicated with and don't understand what they should be expecting.

Discussion Questions

- Do you provide updates or reports?
- Do you plan weekly / monthly / quarterly meetings?
- Does the customer understand the delivery process and timelines?
- Do you have face time?
- Do you contact them with an update before they contact you with questions?

Key Learning

Communicating regularly with your customers will build your customer relationships, but it will also avoid misunderstandings.

“Do you know when you've met customer expectations?”

Topic Introduction

Customers who are dissatisfied might not tell you about it, but they will tell other people!

Discussion Questions

- Do you know what success looks like prior to closing a sale?
- Do you ask for customer feedback?
- Do you have a launch party or review meeting?
- Do you proactively follow up with customers?

Key Learning

Having a feedback loop will help you improve and avoid any negative word of mouth.

Examples

Real Life Example: What do your customers expect to be delivered?

An IT sales representative went into a prospective customer and did a needs solution selling tactics (where they probe the customer using questions to understand the full set of needs that they have and then match a solution to fit those needs). Although this sales tactic is powerful, it can be dangerous for a sales person who doesn't understand what is involved with delivery as it becomes tempting and easy to promise the world.

The IT sales representative would close contracts easily, but often when the IT solution was being implemented there would be lower margin, last minute price changes, or delayed implementation. Overall customers were not satisfied and rarely referred business to the company.

By bringing in the sales representative into the programming and understanding the entire process of delivery, the number of closes decreased (they were no longer able to promise the world) however the clients that they closed were a better fit and were more satisfied. This made the sales job for the sales representative to be easier overtime.

Real Life Example: How do you communicate with customers throughout delivery?

A paralegal (a less expensive form of lawyer) specialized in small claims which typically could take 3 weeks or more. The paralegal would get a new customer, sign the agreement with them, understand the background information, and then start to go through the steps of filing a claim.

Unfortunately, she forgot to tell the customers that it would take 3 weeks.

Very quickly customers began complaining about her service levels. She couldn't understand it. She was a great paralegal and was winning most of the claims that she was filing!

But communication is part of your overall customer service. And expectations dictate customer satisfaction. Simply by explaining the small claims process, the work involved, and the timelines upfront, she was able to have customer satisfaction levels skyrocket.

A side note, since she no longer had to worry about customers calling to complain, she ended up saving time and getting even faster at her work!

Real Life Example: Do you know when you've met customer expectations?

A non-profit consulting firm had been in business for 3 years. They had heard through the grapevine that their services were doing what they were supposed to. After any workshop or interaction, they would ask the participants in general for feedback and it was all positive.

But lately, they have started to hear through individuals that the non-profit consulting firm is perceived as ineffective with few results to date. This is dramatically different from the ad hoc feedback that had been gathered directly from the consultants immediately after an engagement.

With this discrepancy, the owner of the non-profit consulting firm desperately needed to get to the bottom of these disturbing rumours. He wondered why the firm was hearing such different things.

- Could it be that the consultants were only asking individuals that they knew had had a good experience?
- Could it be that the individuals were resistant to giving negative feedback directly to the consultants?
- Could it be that the feedback system was too ad hoc and didn't have a standard way to compare apples to apples?

With all of this in mind, the non-profit firm created a standard online evaluation form that rated the program work, the consultants, and the firm objectively. By setting up this system, they were able to focus on hiring improvements, improving processes and content, and ended up updating their customer relationship management system based on direct feedback.