

20 TOP CUSTOMER SERVICE SKILLS FOR CONTRACTORS

1. PERSUASIVE SPEAKING SKILLS

Think of the most persuasive speaker in your organization. Is he or she a salesperson? Chances are the answer is yes. Persuasion has long been recognized as an important sales skill, but it can also be invaluable for your customer service. Every day, your reps turn problems into solutions and fair-weather customers into loyal brand evangelists.

Think they don't need to be persuasive to get the job done? Believe it or not, 74% of consumers say they've spent more with a company because of positive service experiences — up to 14% more. It's that effective. So, make sure you can speak confidently, stay positive, and offer the kind of compelling arguments that lead to positive outcomes.

2. EMPATHY

No list of good customer service skills is complete without empathy. Empathy is the ability to understand another person's emotions and to understand their point of view. How is empathy an important service skill? Consider that 70% of buying experiences are based on how the customer feels they are being treated. It's not about whether the problem was solved, if there was a refund, or how much time was spent — at least, it's not entirely, or even mostly, about those issues. Business people are so used to thinking about the bottom line, but the bottom line in most customers' minds isn't financial; it's emotional. Emotions are more important than facts, plain and simple.

3. ADAPTABILITY

When you work directly with the public, your days are never exactly the same. People aren't the same. Did you know that 60% of customers change how they contact you depending on where they are and what they're doing? That means you'll have inquiries coming in via phone, email, social media, and maybe even in person — sometimes all from the very same customers. Luckily, a good CRM is equipped to handle this challenge by integrating ticket sources and making customer information available no matter what channel you're using. Contractors need that same mental flexibility to respond to a variety of situations in whichever way your customers prefer at the moment.

4. ABILITY TO USE POSITIVE LANGUAGE

If your customer contacts you, chances are it's because he or she has a problem. But despite a customer's anger, frustration, or defeatism, you need to stay positive. It's okay to empathize with the customer — in fact, it's a key component of great service — but keep it as upbeat as you can. Steer the conversation toward a positive outcome with positive language. Focus on the solution. Thank customers for their patience, understanding, and valued loyalty.

5. CLEAR COMMUNICATION SKILLS

This may seem obvious, but you'd be surprised how many customers struggle to communicate with their customer service representative. In fact, 33% of clients say that efficiently answering questions is the most important skill that a customer service agent can have. Mumbling, losing focus, or using unclear language can be the source of many dissatisfied customer experiences. You can be the most empathetic, professional, and positive people in the business, but you also must be able to communicate well with customers.

6. SELF-CONTROL

To piggyback on a well-known truism, working in customer service is like a box of chocolates: You never know what you're going to get. It could be an irate customer one minute, a completely confused person the next, or a perfectly patient customer who turns around and criticizes your company on Facebook. In a world where a single negative social media post about your company has as much impact on buyer decisions as five positive ones, that's a pretty big deal. As stressful and anxiety-inducing as customer service can be, you will need to have self-control — even when your customers don't. You need to remain calm even when attacked, positive when faced with pessimism, and professional when a customer gets personal. There are very few consequences for a customer when they blow up at a rep. The consequences of not having self-control when interacting with a customer, however, are often irreparable.





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7. TAKING RESPONSIBILITY

Just because you solve a customer's issue doesn't mean they'll stick around, but how you solve an issue is just as important as providing a solution. The key is to take responsibility for the customer's care. You are on the front lines of customer satisfaction. 70% of customers who have left companies say they would have stayed if their issue had been resolved in a single interaction instead of several.

8. PATIENCE

When being shouted at, insulted, and rudely rushed are all just a part of your day, it can seem like playing Russian Roulette every time you pick up the phone or otherwise greet a customer. But keeping your cool is critical to great customer service. Breathe, realize that this person's anger has little to do with you, but that you have the chance to turn their day — and their problem — into something positive.

9. EFFECTIVE LISTENING

You could do your job better with a little more training, and an easy way to start is by teaching yourself how to listen effectively. Listening skills are about more than just turning up the volume on a headset. It's about taking the time to truly understand a customer's issue and then letting them know you're paying attention. Often, simply rephrasing the issue in your own words and asking a customer if that sounds right is enough to make them feel like you really understand them.

10. ATTENTIVENESS

43% of consumers see companies as helpful, but not doing anything special to keep their business. Instead, surprise your customers by being fully present and turning your complete attention to their plight. You don't have to scrap the canned responses but use them as guidelines rather than word-for-word scripts.

11. TIME MANAGEMENT

Time. We could all use more of it, couldn't we? Unfortunately, it's the most limited resource any of us has, so all we can do is effectively manage our schedules. When you are interrupted, it's easy to get flustered or frustrated, and it's tempting to let the phone ring a few extra times or an email sit in the inbox a little longer. But doing so is bad news. Eighty-three percent of online shoppers will abandon a purchase or take their business elsewhere if they aren't helped within five minutes. Put a customer on the backburner, even for a few minutes, and it may cost your company their business. Instead, make quick response times a priority. Streamline systems so updating customer information and reporting is quick and easy.

12. WILLINGNESS TO IMPROVE

Willingness to improve is a skill you need no matter what industry you're in. It's a skill we all need in order to succeed. Customer expectations are always changing and new technology to manage them is constantly emerging. We learn something new every day on the job.

13. KNOWLEDGE

Speaking of having the right tools, one of those tools is basic knowledge about your business. If you aren't up to date on company policies, product specs, and how the process works, you won't be able to answer customer questions efficiently. Plus, believe it or not, many customer service inquiries can be great opportunities to make yet another sale. The chances of selling to an existing customer are 50 to 55% better than selling to a new customer — but only if you know enough to make the right offer at the right time.

OPPORTUNITIES

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14. ABILITY TO ADMIT YOU DON'T HAVE THE ANSWER

Customers arm themselves with knowledge and generally attempt to solve their own issues before contacting your company. While it may be embarrassing when a customer knows more than you, if you get flustered while trying to hide a lack of knowledge, you may lose business. Instead, admit when you don't know something or are wrong, and offer to find the answer.

15. THICK SKIN

One third of customers say they'd rather clean a toilet than speak with customer service. This is the reality that many companies unfairly face every single day. That's why having a thick skin is on our customer service skills list. You are on the front lines of your business, and they need some solid armor. Insults, anger, and frustration need to bounce off them like Nerf balls.

16. INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

Regardless of what type of customer service role you're in, interacting with people is a key part of the job. If you have stellar interpersonal skills, you'll be better able to win people over and build valuable relationships with repeat customers.

17. PROBLEM SOLVING

When a customer comes to you to resolve an issue, you need to have the problemsolving skills necessary to deal with that issue, no matter what it is. If the customer is angry and has a problem with your company, you'll also need to know how to deescalate the situation and resolve the issue efficiently. Problem solving is an excellent customer service skill to have in such scenarios.

18. TEAMWORK

No matter what type of customer service role you have, you're always one part of a larger team. Knowing how to work effectively with your coworkers to achieve goals together (or just get through the day) is an essential customer service skill. Employers always want to know that you'll be pleasant to work with and will step up to help the rest of the team when necessary.

19. TECHNOLOGY / COMPUTER SKILLS

Working in the customer service industry often requires the use of specific software or equipment to help assist customers or keep track of information. Outside of the usual Microsoft Office Suite, any aspiring customer service expert should be familiar with the specific computer skills to their job. That's why having a foundation of technical skills is helpful for any aspiring customer service expert.

20. PROFICIENCY IN OTHER LANGUAGES

By nature, customer service sometimes involves interacting with people from all over the world. Being able to communicate comfortably with people in their native language is a great way to win customers over and improve your business' reputation. That's why being able to speak more than one language is a key skill in customer service, especially if you work for a business that gets a lot of international customers.

