

Six of the worst customer service practices... and how to fix them

 By [Andrew Cook](#)

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Customer experience management (CEM) is a strategic process that companies should implement across the entire organisation to look after their customers.

Here are some of the worst customer service mistakes companies make and ways to turn them around so that your customers remain loyal.

1. Hiring the wrong people for the right job

And vice versa. Hiring customer-facing employees (whether in leadership, client services or account management) based on technical knowledge or skill alone is a costly mistake to make. Hiring on a hunch or to fill a position as quickly as possible could cost you more in the long run.

Do this instead: Hire slowly and according to a predefined profile that ticks the customer-facing boxes in terms of communication, attitude and empathy. Create a strategy for your hiring process, conduct psychometric screening and make the effort to create the right fit for the employee - it's a two-way street.

2. Failing to understand the customer journey

Thinking of each department as conducting separate functions in your business creates a silo effect - not only for your organisational culture but also for the customer's experience. Not viewing your business through the eyes of the customer means your business will not develop a customer-centric culture.

Do this instead: Invest in customer journey mapping - the process of detailing each step, or touch point, of the customer's engagement with your business. Find out what your customers experience. Where do they encounter moments of magic or moments of misery? How can you respond to their pains? Experience your business as though you were a customer - call your call centre, use your website, sit in on sales meetings.

3. Making communication difficult

Limiting the number of channels your customers can contact you on may make it easier for your employees to manage and control the flow customer feedback, but it will make it harder for your customers to let you know when problems arise. If your customers prefer to communicate via email but your customer care centre only offers telephonic assistance, you're only going to add to their frustration.

Do this instead: Understand that no two customers are alike and that your customers will have varied preferences for methods of contacting you - some prefer self-service or automated options, others prefer a personal touch. The key is to make communication easy. Make sure they can contact you via SMS, USSD, QR Code, email, website and telephone. Mobile apps are increasing in popularity and tech-savvy customers may prefer the practicality and convenience of communicating via a dedicated app. The more options, the better! Just make sure you're responding across each channel, too.

4. Vacating your social media

Thinking that social media can be overlooked is dangerous. Nothing is worse than asking your customers to engage with you on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn or Google+ only to leave them wondering whether if anyone's home.

Do this instead: Use social media to build your brand presence, position your company as an industry leader and for customers to explore your products or services and find useful information. It is vital to monitor your social media daily and to have a team in place to engage with your customers as soon as they post a compliment or complaint.

5. Overload your IVR

It makes sense that you want to maximise efficiency in your call-centre. Often this means including as many IVR options as you can think of. Bad move. Redirecting your customers to more automated self-service will just frustrate them if they want to talk to an expert.

Do this instead: Work with the CEM pros to design your IVR options in a way that responds to the customers' needs. Include a short survey at the end of the call so that customers can provide you with feedback. Use the feedback to learn what your customers want and then refine your IVR process.

6. Thinking CEM training is for call-centre agents only

Assigning CEM training to one department or one team is a sure-fire way to let your customers down at some point along their journey with you. If you're not training every single customer-facing employee to engage with customers on the basis of the same values and processes, you need to rethink your CEM strategy.

Do this instead: Once you have mapped the customer journey and identified each step in the customer lifecycle, you can use this to form the foundation of your CEM training. Ensure that all employees across all departments understand their role in the process and the impact they can have in creating an incredible customer experience. Update and conduct training regularly to avoid any of these six worst mistakes (and the many more that can happen without a CEM strategy in place).

ABOUT ANDREW COOK

Andrew is the CEO of Smoke Customer Care Solutions (South Africa) and part of the solutions team helping to take the company's voice of the customer technology - Eyerys - to all corners of the globe. Great customer service is Andrew Cook's mission in life. In fact, it's more than a mission, it's an obsession.

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