# What is Customer Service?

Many terms in business, or life in general, are used so frequently, and become so familiar, that we don't really know what they mean any more. Sometimes it helps to look at the root of the words to put things into perspective and think about what their **true meaning** is.




Let's examine these words.

**'Customer'** **'Service'**

- What is a Customer?
- What is service?

Why don't we examine other words which share the same root:

| |
|---|
| **Custom** |
| **Customary** |
| **Serve** |
| **Servant** |

Try and find a **definition** for each of them.

Often by uncovering the roots of words you can expand your vocabulary and also improve your comprehension. Words are composed of roots: **prefixes**, **suffixes**, and **bases**. The English language borrows roots from dozens of other languages. The most common roots come from the Latin and Greek languages. Words with a greek or latin root or prefix are often very similar to French words. *(fract – break, extra – outside or beyond, inter – between, scrib – to write, vers- turn, vis – look or see, auto – self, gen –race or kind etc..)*

The roots of VERBS are also important, the verb root or basic form is the form listed in the dictionary, it's the same as the infinitive. These root forms are often used with prepositions to form phrasal verbs which have a different meaning from the original root verb.
For example

- **To serve** – to help someone, give them assistance, to be useful to them.
- To serve **up** – to put food on someones plate
- To serve **as** – to have the role of, to act as

***We want the ikea restaurant to serve as a reason for customers to spend a whole day in our stores. We want to serve up wholesome dishes they will enjoy, at a low price. We want our staff to serve all the restaurant customers with a smile.***

If you have a good understanding of the 'root' of the verb then you will find it easier to recongnise the meaning of phrasal verbs. You should watch out for **verbs + prepositions** and learn them by making a note of them as you encounter them. *You will need to seem them in use several times before you remember them and start to use them.*
If you want to really understand a **word** it's useful to consider its **origin**. For example the word CUSTOMER comes from the middle English word CUSTUME (13th century), which derived from the French word COSTUMIER. The costumier would make individual clothes for people, made especially for them. The word CUSTOM came to mean a habit, a practice, or something which was repeated and accepted as the best thing to do.

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The word SERVICE comes from the middle English (12th century) SERVISE which meant CEREMONY, again, a customary action or series of actions which are repeated. The root of the word comes from the Latin SERVUS meaning 'SLAVE', a person who does things for other people, who makes their life easier.

**So your CUSTOMER expects you to provide SERVICES which are made for him. Services which take his needs into consideration. He expects someone to help him and make things easier for him. And if he gets that kind of service he will come back, it will become customary for him to return.**

There are other terms we use to talk about customer service. What distinguishes one from another ? For example what's the difference between customer service, customer care and customer relations ? What are your thoughts on that ?

The word care comes from the Old English 'CEARU' which meant anxiety, sorrow or grief the verb is CEARIAN which means to feel concern or interest. So customer care is about caring or feeling concern for your customers, it's about showing and feeling empathy for them.

The word RELATION has French origins and comes from the 14th century word RELACIOUN meaning a person related by blood. Today it is used to talk about a connection between two things, a significant association.

**It's true that if you really want to offer excellent customer service you need to establish a strong connection with your customers and to do that you have to know them, relate to them and understand them. Sometimes it helps even, to imagine them as members of your own family. How would you treat them, what kind of an interest would you take in them, if they were not just visitors, potential clients or clients, but members of your own family.**

1. So, who is the customer to you?
2. What service are you providing to him?
3. What relationship do you expect to have with him?
4. How can you best serve your customers?
5. Do you feel empathy for your customers?
6. Do you think you really know your customers?
7. What would you like to find out about your customers?
8. How can your improve customer service at your level?




These are the **basic questions** any company has to ask in order to keep their customers satisfied. In order to answer these questions clearly use the **linking words** (on the last page of this lesson) to make sure you use **short sentences and give well structured answers**.

*(If you are interested in expanding your vocabulary and in the origins of words – try out the visual thesaurus). http://www.visualthesaurus.com/*



# EASY ACCESS ENGLISH

Here are some **definitions of customer service** in use today: **Questions**

1. **Which do you like the best, the least?**
2. **Which do you think applies the best to your current customer service?**

-"Customer service is the ability to provide a service or product in the way that it has been promised"
-"Customer service is about treating others as you would like to be treated yourself"
-"Customer service is an organization's ability to supply their customers' wants and needs"
-"Customer Service is a phrase that is used to describe the process of taking care of our customers in a positive manner"
-"Customer Service is any contact between a customer and a company, that causes a negative or positive perception by a customer"
-"Customer service is a process for providing competitive advantage and adding benefits in order to maximize the total value to the customer"
-"Customer Service is the commitment to providing value added services to external and internal customers, including attitude knowledge, technical support and quality of service in a timely manner"
-"Customer service is a proactive attitude that can be summed up as: I care and I can do."

***(Source customerservicemanager.com)***

## Read the article By Frank Sonnenberg **and then answer his questions, using the linking words again.**

Even though your company may have hundreds or thousands of customers, some large and some small, each deserves to be treated as your sole customer.

Remember that every customer wants to feel special. No one likes to be treated like a number. Every customer expects employees to be courteous, to know their personal nuances, and to answer questions in a clear and non-condescending manner. Perhaps most important, customers do not want to be taken for granted.

In all too many companies, however, no customer is treated as special. Companies often place policies and procedures ahead of customers.

If organizations want to deliver service excellence, employees must learn the value of long-term customer relationships and understand the consequences of not properly servicing them. They must abandon the view that customers represent immediate sales transactions and a quick buck. Instead, they must view customers as long-term relationships, keeping in mind the potential business that these relationships will bring over the years.

They must learn to see themselves through their customers' eyes rather than focusing inwardly.

Remember, it is easier and five times cheaper to keep an existing customer than to recruit a new one. Treating each customer as your only customer brings far more long-term rewards than the "love 'em and leave 'em attitude." Not only will you improve market share and reduce your marketing costs, but you will also improve employee morale. In the end, you'll feel good about yourself and know that your customers feel good about you.

**Questions**

1. **Do employees in your company know that customer satisfaction is their top priority?**
2. **Are you accessible when your customers need you ?**
3. **Does your company take customers for granted ?**
4. **Does your company encourage and reward employee performance that is in the best interests of customers ?**

# Expressions to structure your answers:

## To introduce what you are saying
I'd like to start by saying
Essentially
Basically

## To introduce a point
Obviously
Clearly

## To add an aside
Incidentally
Still
Besides

## To link two opposing ideas
However
Nevertheless

## Contrasting
On the one hand
On the other hand
Despite the fact that
Although
On the contrary

## To clarify/add emphasis
In other words
Let alone

## To refer to something
Regarding
As regards
As far as …… is concerned

## To give an example
Namely
Say…
For instance

## To go on to say something more
Moreover
Furthermore
In addition
Likewise
What's more

## To deduce or draw conclusions
Therefore
This means that
What this means is that…
As a result
For this reason
This is why
Consequently
Despite this
Hence

## To conclude what you are saying
Finally
On the whole
To sum up
In conclusion
All in all
I'd like to conclude by saying

