

How to answer customers' questions and fix their problems the first time they call

Last month we talked about FCR or first call resolution – which simply means getting it right for customers the first time. We also came to the conclusion that if you can 'get it right the first time' you will increase your customer satisfaction levels, decrease operational costs and have more repeat business. This month we are going to talk about how to do this.

How do you improve FCR?

It is not a simple fix and it can require adjustments at all levels of the business, yet it is achievable.

There are many things that can impact on your customer satisfaction levels or FCR. Your customers might struggle to be happy with your service if you have any of the following challenges:

- high staff turnover and inexperienced staff
- an excess of product information which changes all the time
- staff can't find the right information when and where they need it
- many different communication channels but no processes or time to support them
- an inadequate self-service option

What are the common variables to these issues? There are four variables, staff, managers, information and communication channels, and they all need to be working together effectively to continually satisfy customers.

Staff

You need to hire excellent people. A good customer service person needs to:

- have above average listening and communication skills
- be able to move on after a difficult customer
- be able to follow procedures
- understand your products in depth
- be able to troubleshoot e.g. know what information to give to whom to solve problems and know when to escalate a query
- enjoy learning new things
- be able to contribute to the product/service information
- be able to tweak their own performance for small improvements

Managers

It is the manager's role to empower their staff to great performance levels. They need to:

- Support and train their staff
- Analyse staff performance
- Empower their staff with the ability to DO (solve customer queries)
- Encourage and reward

- Ensure the correct information is at their staff's fingertips
- Keep staff turnover to less than 5%

Information

In most organisations, small and large, information lies around on individual PCs or hidden deep in folders that are difficult to find. A high level of FCR needs to be backed up by a central knowledge base which is at customer services' finger tips. They need to be able to access it and contribute to it. This knowledge base should:

- Be a centralised database
- Support different types of media files such as PDF, video, and audio
- Have one owner accountable for its organisation and logic
- Be obvious, logical and fast to find what you need

Communication Channels

Communication channels are important because if customers can engage with you, their communication channel of choice, they will feel more comfortable. It's a bad experience dealing with an online company which only uses email for their communication channel. Sometimes talking to someone just gets a faster result. This is not to say that self-service options, social media and email don't have their place. The important factors for a strong performing communication channel are:

- Customers must be able to rely on the stated frequency and speed of the response
- Customers should be able to select their preferred response channel
- If you use telephone only, there must be an informed and helpful person to answer
- It must be supported and reviewed for effectiveness and operational efficiency

All of the points above are integral components of offering great customer service. Staff, managers, information and communication channels must work seamlessly. It is not an easy task to obtain 90% and above customer satisfaction rates. It might seem like common sense, however if you start digging in your organisation you might be surprised what you will find.

If you have any questions or are interested in learning where to start improving your customer satisfaction levels contact Cackle on 0508 222 553 – ask for Lisa.