

## How do you provide excellent customer service?



*If you can imagine it  
you can achieve it!*

### What do customers usually complain about?

“She’s always got an excuse for yet another delay.”

“He’s always too busy to talk to me.”

“She talks a foreign language to me. I wish she would make it plain.”

“How much? He never said it could cost that.”

“She never returns my calls, letters or emails.”

“He never lets me know what’s going on.”

### The aim of the first meeting is to establish the facts of the matter

Establish what the customer wants to achieve, it may not actually be what you think they want to achieve, so listen carefully.

Establish how you will communicate with each other and how often.

Inform them of the potential cost, always leaving yourself room to alter the figure and communicating that possibility to them.

Let them know how often you will send out bills, when you will expect payment and keep them informed on costs.

Agree actions and allocate those actions, with a ‘to-be-done-by’ date; again leaving yourself, and communicating to them, some flexibility for the unforeseen.

Record, and communicate to the customer, actions to be taken, estimated times, costs and what was agreed - try to keep this brief, just bullet points; they don’t want a four-page letter stating what they told you.

### Build a relationship

Find out some of their personal interests and record them: it helps ease communication.

Consider visiting them and look around their office for signs of their personal life (partner, children, interests), are they going away: it can help in conversation.

Find out how they work best: email, phone, letter, then don’t just ignore that.

Try to establish a rapport with the customer through mutual interests, not just the matter at hand.

When working with the customer, always say to yourself, **“This job will be done to ensure I get the next one or a recommendation.”**

Customers will no longer simply accept what you say: they are now much more sophisticated, more intelligent and more willing to question you; and rightly so.

Loyalty is no longer a ‘given’. Customers will move the next job elsewhere if they are not satisfied with the service. They are much more likely to move to another organisation because of bad service than because of costs.

### It costs a great deal more to win a new customer than to retain an existing one



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Stewart Graham has managed professional services organisations for over 15 years. He has been a business mentor and speaker to Investor in People Assessors. He has given numerous seminars on a variety of topics.

Avalon Solutions supports your business by looking at your business support and administrative processes and improving them. Avalon Solutions also offers business coaching and seminars on a variety of management topics.

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