

## PROVIDING OUTSTANDING CUSTOMER SERVICE

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Providing outstanding customer service in the rehabilitation industry is essential for success. Information technology has given our clients access to equipment options, pricing, information and availability. Therefore, offering 'Core Service', that is, the exchange of a product for a fee is simply not sufficient. It is essential that we recognize the need to go beyond 'Core Service' by offering *outstanding* customer service to ensure complete customer satisfaction!

The challenge is to offer 'outstanding' customer service at all levels in our delivery chain. That is, the retail (showroom/store) transaction, the outside sales and assessment and the equipment delivery. In order to be successful with this commitment, we need to have a motivated, loyal and knowledgeable sales team. The team that offers outstanding customer service must be confident, excited and, most importantly, well trained.

Any and all individuals, who have contact with the customer, need to embrace the model of Outstanding customer service. Why? Because, a customer's experience working with your organization should be a positive, delightful one from the assessment through to the delivery.

Everyone can recall a time when they had a bad experience as a customer. Whether recently or in the past, that recollection can be vivid. An interesting statistic reveals that 68% of customer loss is due to 'perceived' indifference. That is an overwhelming dilemma especially when you consider that the customer service representative may not have intended to be aloof. Imagine the cost of losing a customer simply because a staff member had a bad attitude!

Keeping customers happy and keeping them for life can be doable. According to author, Ken Blanchard, "it's never too late to build a customer-focused company". Building a customer-focused business means that we can identify exactly who are our customers. Rather than those who have simply purchased products, customers can be anyone who has an impact on our business! That broadens the customer base to include purchasers, internal customers, external customers, and past, present and future customers!

Many businesses set the competition bar by offering core service, customer service and enhancers to keep their customers happy. For example, we can look at the services provided by a hotel. The core service provided is the room. The customer service may include valet service, free parking, toiletries, newspaper delivery, and free continental breakfast. The 'enhancers' in this scenario may be complimentary fruit basket, free Internet service, free movies or perhaps a robe and slippers.

Teaching staff how to communicate with the customer will establish long lasting customer relationships. The core service and customer service offered to rehab clients is built upon the confidence they receive from the staff. The confidence is built on trust and the trust is built on knowledge. The organization has the task of ensuring that all staff be completely knowledgeable about products and their use and listen to their customers!

Providing outstanding customer service is exceeding customer expectations. When you go above and beyond the expectations that your customer has of your company, you will create a happy customer. When you create a happy customer, you create a loyal customer, and when you create a loyal customer, they will tell the world about your company!