

CUSTOMER RELATIONS

QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT



- Why are customer relations important in business?
- What are the key aspects of customer relations?
- Is taking care of customers a part of your job description? If so, what does it include?
- What can worsen customer relations?
- How can they be improved?
- How should businesses deal with customer complaints?
- Is customer feedback useful for businesses? If so, how?



READING ACTIVITIES

1 CUSTOMER RELATIONS



Read the following articles, notice the key expressions, and check their meaning by completing the task below.

Customer relations

Providing excellent **service** is critical to the success of any business. Understanding the needs of customers and offering the right support can lead to positive **interactions** and build **loyalty** over time. Companies believe that offering **top-notch customer support** is **crucial** in **fostering** customer success.

By focusing on providing **exceptional** service, companies can **ensure** that their customers feel heard and **appreciated**. When customers feel valued, they are more **likely** to return and recommend a business to others. Building a loyal **customer base** is therefore an essential part of any **long-term** strategy.

Customer retention

Customer relations are key to **customer retention**. Retention is related to offering **discounts** or **promotions** as well as building **meaningful** relationships with customers and showing that a company **genuinely** cares about their satisfaction.

Companies also **place emphasis on** listening to their customers and their **feedback**. They believe that customer feedback is **invaluable** in helping them understand their needs and **preferences**, and it allows them to make **informed decisions** that ultimately **benefit** the customers.

To collect feedback, companies regularly **conduct surveys**, engage in **social media listening**, and **encourage** open communication through various **communication channels** such as email and **live chat**. They take every piece of feedback seriously and use it to **guide** their product development, customer service strategies, and **overall** business operations.

All in all, it is important to believe that by putting customers first, a company will continue to see growth and success. In order to achieve this, it is recommended to follow the following list of strategies.

Customer retention strategies

1. Improve user onboarding

During the **onboarding** process, a company should ensure that the client is **aware** of the key benefits that a product offers. One way to do this is through training sessions that teach users about best practices and standardised **workflows**. Giving customers the tools they need to succeed will maximise customer satisfaction and decrease **churn** over time.

2. Create an achievable roadmap with customers

It is vital to be realistic when it comes to setting and **delivering on** customer expectations. An important step is to map out a roadmap that a new client is comfortable with. The **roadmap** should include realistic **milestones** and **achievable goals**. Key players, such as the customer success team, should be able to easily access this customer roadmap and act on this.

3. Get personal with social media support

Social media is the channel of choice when it comes to immediate response. Clients expect immediate and personalised customer service and social media really lends itself well to this task. Social media is a way to quickly **resolve** potential customer support issues or **queries**. What is more, it is also a way to create a connected and unified **customer experience**.

4. Segment customers to deliver the right content at the right time

The way a business collects, groups, and **ultimately** acts on data is vital to its success. Sales **CRM** software usually allows the **segmentation** of **prospects** and customers into groups based on how they interact with a brand. Businesses can use these insights to **tailor** marketing campaigns to the individual level of awareness of its customers and prospects. When it comes to **retargeting** efforts, email segmentation is the key to **delivering** the right content at the right time. A loyal existing customer does not want to receive offers for an **initial purchase**.

5. Use automated emails to encourage inactive users to take action

One way to increase retention is by ensuring customers are as active as possible. If a user has remained inactive for a while, an **automated email** through CRM system can **induce** this user to take action. For example, if a business is **tracking** how users interact with their product and notice that they have only used a small **array** of the features, an email explaining how to use other features could **reignite** their interest. Emails could include educational content such as best practice guides or successful case studies from other customers.

6. Upsell to existing customers

Upselling is a way to **boost** customer retention amongst loyal customers. By **convincing** them of the need for a premium or upgraded service, they become more **invested** in the brand. Using existing **content assets** such as e-books and **whitepapers** is a way of reminding existing customers about all the features product offers while ensuring that they remain as active as possible.

7. Create a personalised customer loyalty programme

A customer **loyalty programme** is a way of giving something back to customers while at the same time offering a chance to build a personal connection. Companies may enjoy success in providing retailers with a **trackable** loyalty points programme and **insightful** analytics into customer behaviour.

8. Create a referral programme

A **referral programme** can **incentivise** satisfied customers and increase customer loyalty. By offering upgrades, credits or other **extras** to existing clients, the number of new signups can be increased while engaging the existing users at the same time. Actively turning the most loyal customers into **brand ambassadors** increases their emotional connection to a brand – and that boosts retention.

KEY VOCABULARY



Match the key expressions from the article above to their definitions.

- | | | | |
|----|---------------------|---|---|
| 1 | customer support | A | the process of building and maintaining positive relationships between a business and its customers |
| 2 | promotion | B | to encourage and promote the development or growth of something |
| 3 | informed decision | C | the provision of assistance or guidance to customers who have questions or concerns about a product or service |
| 4 | customer retention | D | an adjective used to describe something of the highest quality or standard |
| 5 | to conduct a survey | E | the group of customers who regularly purchase goods or services from a particular business |
| 6 | customer relations | F | a reduction in the price of a product or service, offered as an incentive to encourage customers to make a purchase |
| 7 | top-notch | G | a choice made after careful consideration of all available information and options |
| 8 | discount | H | the ability of a business to keep its existing customers over a period of time |
| 9 | to foster | I | to gather information or opinions from a group of people through the use of questionnaires |
| 10 | customer base | J | a marketing activity or campaign designed to increase the visibility and sales of a product or service |



2 CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS AND TIPS TO SOLVE THEM



Read the following text about customer complaints and answer the questions below.

Customer complaints - A guide for small businesses

Many business people regard a customer complaint as a negative **experience**. However, if a business **handles** complaints properly, previously unhappy customers may start **singing their praises**. It is recommended to consider a complaint as one of the best opportunities businesses have to show their **commitment** to creating another satisfied customer. Customer loyalty is one of the biggest **assets** a business has, therefore, it is vital to fight for this loyalty and be **passionate** about it.

Complaints should be handled **sympathetically** and **promptly**. Some businesses believe that if they do not receive many complaints, their customers must be satisfied. However, this is wrong as only a few customers will complain. The majority will not return to a business and will tell others about their bad experience.

Why should a business welcome complaints?

Facts to consider:

- a typical business hears from only 4% of its dissatisfied customers; the other 96% just go quietly away and 91% of them will never come back,
- a typical dissatisfied customer tells more than 8 people about their problem,
- 7 out of 10 complaining customers will do business with a business again if it resolves the complaint **favourably**.

Handling complaints

Try putting the following points into practice:

- Set up a complaint handling system and train staff to handle complaints well,
- Make it easy for customers to **lodge** a complaint,
- Welcome customer complaints and deal with complaints promptly.

Customer complaint tips

Customer complaint **resolution** is a form of service **recovery** that enables a business to resolve a customer complaint and improve the customer's experience. Here are five best practices for **efficient** complaint resolution.

1. Make answers easily accessible

Customers have a need for speed, and that means businesses need to act promptly. A **searchable** and accessible knowledge base can help agents and customers find the answers they need quickly. This allows agents to provide faster support and **tackle** more important issues. An **accessible** knowledge base can also **empower** customers to solve problems on their own. Companies use **chatbots** and keywords to make it easier for users to find what they need.

2. Ensure relevant details move with the customer across channels

Customers who have to repeat themselves throughout the complaint process may end up feeling frustrated with a brand as a whole. **Arming** their team with integrated support software that houses all customer information in one centralised location allows agents to find the relevant details about each customer—including their **grievance**, contact information, and purchase history—from the moment they start communicating with them. The conversation can stay connected, no matter how the customer chooses to interact.

3. Cultivate the right tone of voice and use reflective listening

It is common sense that confrontational customers can be **temperamental**, so even though it is challenging to stay calm and **collected** when dealing with an angry buyer, it is **paramount** that agents do so. Agents must **strive to diffuse** the situation with **measured** responses while remaining human, empathetic, curious, helpful, and **knowledgeable**. Customers who are **upset** want to feel heard. With this in mind, businesses try not to resolve consumer complaints before taking the time to understand them. Instead, they start by being present and using **reflective** listening. Repeating the customer's complaint back to them can confirm they understand.

4. Acknowledge their frustrations

Sometimes, customers may be frustrated with things that are beyond businesses' control. Other times, though, businesses find themselves in the wrong. Taking responsibility for their actions demonstrates that their business values **integrity**, which will increase the customer's confidence in them.

5. Set realistic expectations and present a solution

Being **upfront** with customers about how long it may take to resolve their issue or how much a business can do for them, not making promises they cannot keep may make people understand any limitations on what an agent can offer, as long as a reasonable expectation is communicated from the start. As soon as a business understands the problem, they follow up and determine the best path forward—whether that is talking the customer through **troubleshooting** steps, sending a **replacement** product, offering a **refund**, or genuinely apologising when they cannot deliver what they were hoping for. Giving customers something so they walk away feeling better about the brand is highly **appreciated**.

KEY VOCABULARY



Find words and phrases in the Customer complaints text above which mean:

1. take action in order to solve a problem (three synonyms):
2. showing your approval (idiom):
3. willingness to give your time and energy to something (noun):
4. useful qualities or advantages that have a value for the company (plural noun):
5. repeatedly purchasing goods or services from one company; not changing for another company (phrase):
6. immediately (adverb):
7. not satisfied (adjective):
8. make an official complaint (phrase):

LISTENING ACTIVITIES

1 TYPICAL COMPLAINTS



Before you listen, look at the following typical complaints on the left. Match them to the possible excuses/reasons on the right:

Complaints

- 1 damaged goods
- 2 goods never arrived
- 3 a late delivery
- 4 an overcharge
- 5 an overdue payment
- 6 lack of customer service

Excuses/Reasons

- A a delay at the border
- B a lost invoice
- C a missing order
- D an accounting error
- E bad handling
- F business is short-staffed



Listen to the four dialogues.

Which complaint and excuse from the previous exercise did you hear in each dialogue?

What action was decided on in each dialogue?

Dialogue 1

Problem:

Solution: The supplier promises to ...

Dialogue 2

Problem:

Solution: The supplier promises to ...

Dialogue 3

Problem:

Solution: The supplier will ...

Dialogue 4

Problem:

Solution: The manager offers to ...

2 QUALITY



Before you listen, answer the following questions.

- What does quality mean to you?
- Do you buy quality products? What types of products are they?
- Why do many people buy low quality foods, electronics, clothes etc.?



Listen to the discussion about quality and complete the gaps with up to five words.

On the programme, there are Jon Moulton, founder of private equity firm Better Capital, entrepreneur and investor Deborah Meaden, David Haines, CEO of German sanitary fittings manufacturer Grohe, and the presenter.

1. The presenter is asking about the differences between companies which prioritise quality and those for whom the ethos is “_____”.
2. According to Jon, companies that focus on quality products do things differently from those that aim to _____.
3. Quality has a significant _____ for companies, provided it is there.
4. Ryanair is an example of a company focusing on _____.

5. The presenter wants to know whether Deborah would rather work for a company with a(n) _____ ethos or for a company where good quality would be enough.
6. According to Deborah, customers don't buy when _____.
7. This, according to Mr Davis, is a(n) _____.

3 PRODUCT RECALLS



Before you listen, answer the following questions.

- What are product recalls?
- What may be the reasons for product recalls?
- Have you ever heard of a product recall in your home country?
- Do you know of a recall of products of a famous brand?



Listen to a BBC radio extract in which the moderator, Evan Davis, and his three guests discuss product VC recalls. As you listen, complete the gaps with up to five words.

Guests:

Gerard Bos, UK and Ireland, Ikea


Chris Dee, Chief Operating Officer, E.H Booth

Vince Shiers, Managing Director, RQA Group


1. People usually think of companies such as _____ when recalls are discussed.
2. Recalls are still connected with the feeling of _____.
3. Gerard Bos's position with Ikea is that of _____.
4. Ikea sells approximately _____ products and there are about _____ product recalls a year.
5. Sometimes, the risk in a product is _____ years after product launch.
6. Booth, a supermarket chain, is a(n) _____ company.
7. Chris will later discuss a specific case, which, according to the moderator, made _____.
8. RQA's consultants work with _____.
9. Several years ago, RQA dealt with a recall of a(n) _____. It contained a wrong description of a surgical _____.

VIDEO ACTIVITY

THE SERVICE IN CUSTOMER SERVICE

 **Before you watch Simon Sinek's talk about the importance of customer service, look at the following questions and try to answer them.**

1. Do you know Simon Sinek? Have you ever heard any of his speeches?
2. Why might some companies be lazy to do customer service?
3. What makes a company do a better business?
4. What customers are the best ones?
5. In what ways can companies manipulate customers? Think of some examples of manipulation.
6. How do manipulative mechanisms work?

 **Now watch the [video](#) and check your answers. Then watch the video again and complete the gaps below with the expressions you hear.**

1. Why are some companies lazy to do customer service?

Some companies are lazy to do customer service due to their _____ position and because there is no _____.

2. What makes a company do a better business according to Simon?

A company does a better business in _____ when there are higher stresses and _____.

3. What customers are the best ones according to Simon?

These customers are the _____ ones who will stick with the company.

4. Besides promotion, in what other ways can companies manipulate customers according to Simon?

Companies typically manipulate customers by _____ the price and the _____ sell of buy one get one free.

5. How do the manipulative mechanisms work?

They either add a _____ of bounty or, on the contrary, the threat of _____.

6. What are the examples of customer service approach that Simon suggests airlines use to make customers feel valued?

In order to learn more about Simon Sinek, check [his Youtube channel](#).

REVISION ACTIVITIES

1 FIXED EXPRESSIONS



Test your knowledge of the CR language by completing this [Verb-Noun expressions exercise](#).

2 WORD FORMATION



Transform the given words so that they fit in the sentences.

1. Companies that ignore customer _____ are less likely to earn repeat business. **(satisfy)**
2. Effective communication with the media is _____ for businesses. **(essence)**
3. Businesses should check their customers to _____ they are happy with their experience. **(sure)**
4. Companies should have a clear and _____ communication strategy in place. **(transparency)**
5. A strong PR team can help businesses with the _____ of their reputation with customers. **(maintain)**
6. When running a business, _____ in communication with customers must be avoided. **(efficient)**
7. Addressing customer _____ is key to improving products or services. **(complain)**
8. The major role of PR is to _____ businesses' brands. **(promotion)**
9. Building _____ with customers is needed for long-term success. **(relate)**
10. Customer feedback is _____ in helping us understand customer needs. **(value)**

3 CUSTOMER SERVICE



Answer [these questions](#) about your personal experience.

4 CUSTOMER SATISFACTION vs DISSATISFACTION



Which of the following adjectives describe good (G) customer service, and which describe bad (B) customer service?

businesslike	child-friendly	unprofessional	efficient	honest
impersonal	cold	inefficient	laid-back	personal
smooth	transactional	indifferent	unobtrusive	warm

Sources:

1. <https://blog.hubspot.com/service/customer-relations>
2. https://blog.hubspot.com/service/customer-retention?hubs_content=blog.hubspot.com%2Fservice%2Fcustomer-relations&hubs_content-cta=customer%20retention
3. modified chatGPT generated text <https://chat.openai.com/>
4. <https://www.salesforce.com/eu/learning-centre/customer-service/customer-retention/>
5. <https://www.zendesk.com/blog/customer-complaints-10-tips-manage-better/>
6. online activities created by <https://wordwall.net/>
7. [The SERVICE in Customer Service | Simon Sinek](#)
8. <https://www.linguahouse.com/esl-lesson-plans/business-english/complaining-and-apologizing>
9. <https://www.linguahouse.com/esl-lesson-plans/business-english/is-the-customer-king>
10. <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/>
11. <https://financial-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/>
12. <https://www.macmillandictionary.com/>
13. <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/>
14. picture 1 <https://globalpartnerstraining.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/L-and-D-Professional.png>
15. picture 2 https://www.pngkey.com/png/full/83-839896_customer-feedback-do-ac-logo.png

Definitions:

	Customer relations
access	to open a computer file or use a computer system
achievable	one that is possible to achieve
appreciated	having one's work or qualities recognized and enjoyed by other people
array	a group or collection of things, especially one that is attractive or causes admiration
automated email	message automatically sent from email service provider in direct response to an individual user's specific actions made (or not made) on website or web app
aware	knowing that something exists
benefit	to be useful to somebody or improve their life in some way
boost	to increase or improve
brand ambassador	a person who is paid or given free products by a company in exchange for wearing or using its products and trying to encourage others to do so
business	the fact of a customer buying goods or services at a shop
churn	to decide to stop using a service offered by one company and to use another company, usually because it offers a better service or price
commitment	a promise or a firm decision to do something
communication channels	a system or method that is used for communicating with customers, e.g. face to face, phone calls, email etc.
conduct a survey	to organise and do an investigation of the opinions, behaviour, etc. of customers, which is usually done by asking them questions
content assets	any piece of content representing a brand, for example, a blog post that a business uses in service of a greater marketing goal
convincing	able to make one believe that something is true or right
CRM	Customer relationship management
crucial	extremely important or necessary
customer base	all the people who buy or use a particular product or service
customer experience	what it is like for a customer to buy a particular product or service, for example, how easy or pleasant it is
customer relations	the state of the relationship between a company and its customers
customer retention	the action of keeping customers rather than losing them
customer service	the help and advice that a company gives people who buy or use its products or services

customer support	a service provided by a company that helps customers
deliver	to provide
deliver on	to do something that has been promised
discount	an amount of money that is taken off the usual cost of something
emphasis	special importance that is given to something
encourage	to make something more likely to happen
ensure	to make sure that something happens or is definite
exceptional	unusually good
experience	what it is like for a customer to use a service
extras	something that is added when a customer pays for goods or a service
feedback	advice, criticism or information about how good or useful something or somebody's work is
foster	to encourage something to develop
genuinely	truly; in a way that is exactly what it appears to be and is not artificial
goal	an aim
guide	to direct or influence somebody's behaviour or the development of something
handle	to deal with
incentivise	to make someone want to do something
induce	to persuade someone to do something
informed decision	a decision or judgement based on an understanding of the facts of a situation
initial purchase	first-time act of buying something
insightful	showing a clear understanding of a complicated problem or situation
interactions	the act of communicating with customers
invaluable	extremely useful
invested	putting money into something in order to get an advantage
likely	probable to happen
live chat	means of communication for visitors of website where assistance from customer support agents or bots is provided
long-term	continuing a long time into the future
loyalty	the quality of customers of being constant in their support of a business
loyalty programme	a marketing strategy designed to encourage customers to continue to shop at or use the services of a business
meaningful	serious and important
milestone	an important event in the development or history of something
needs	the things a customer must have for a satisfactory life
onboarding	the process of teaching new customers the value of a product or service
order	a request for goods made by a customer
overall	including everything or everyone; in total
place	to give, put
place emphasis	to give special importance to something
preference	a thing that is liked better or best by a customer
promotion	activities done in order to increase the sales of a product or service; a set of advertisements for a particular product or service
prospect	a person regarded as likely to succeed or as a potential customer
provide service	to give customers in hotels, restaurants, and shops the help and advice they need
query	a question, often one expressing doubt about something or looking for information
referral programme	the system of directing someone to a different place
reignite	to motivate something happen again
repeat business	the fact of a customer's buying goods or services at a shop again
resolve	to solve or end a problem
retarget	to change the direction
roadmap	a plan for how to achieve something
segmentation	the division of something into smaller parts
service	the act of dealing with customers in a shop, restaurant, or hotel by taking their orders, showing or selling them goods, etc.

social media listening	the monitoring of a brand's social media channels for any customer feedback and direct mentions of the brand
support	to give or be ready to give help to customers if they need it
tailor	to adjust something to suit a particular need or situation
top-notch <i>infml</i>	excellent; of the highest quality
track	to follow
trackable	capable of being tracked and followed
ultimately	finally, in the end
upselling	the practice of offering other or better goods or services to a customer who is already buying something
whitepapers	sales and marketing documents used to make or persuade potential customers to learn more about a particular product
workflow	the order of the stages in a particular process

	Customer complaints and tips to solve them + Exercises and Listening
accounting error	a mistake on a financial statement which happens by accident
accessible	able to be reached or easily obtained
appreciated	highly valued
arm	to provide somebody with something
asset	a thing of value, especially property, that a person or company owns, which can be used or sold to pay debts
businesslike	working in an efficient and organised way and not wasting time or thinking about personal things
chatbot	a computer programme designed to have a conversation with a human being, especially over the internet
collected	showing control over one's feelings
commitment	the desire to work hard and give energy and time to a job or an activity
deal with	to take appropriate action in a particular situation
diffuse	to make something less noticeable or weaker
efficient	working well and quickly
empower	to give someone official authority or the freedom to do something
experience	a situation that affects somebody's feelings
favourably	in a way that is positive and shows a good opinion of somebody/something
grievance	a complaint or a strong feeling of having been treated unfairly
handle	to deal with a situation
handling	the way a company deals with or treats a situation
honest	not hiding the truth about something
impersonal	having no friendly human feelings or atmosphere; making a customer feel unimportant
inconvenience	an annoying problem or situation, especially one that forces a customer to make an extra effort to do something
indifferent	having or showing no interest in somebody/something
inefficient	not doing a job well and not making the best use of time and money
integrity	the quality of being honest and having strong moral principles
invoice	a list of goods that have been sold, work that has been done, etc., showing what a customer must pay
knowledgeable	knowing a lot
laid-back	calm and relaxed; seeming not to worry about anything
late delivery	the act of taking goods to customer with a delay
lodge	to make a formal statement about something to a public organisation or authority
measured	controlled
overcharge	make somebody pay too much for something
overdue	not paid by the required or expected time
paramount	more important than anything else
passionate	having or showing strong feelings of enthusiasm for something or belief in something

promptly	quickly, without delay
recovery	improvement
reflective	showing active listening
refund	an amount of money that is given back because a customer is not happy with a product or service
replacement	a thing that replaces something, especially because the first thing is broken
resolution	the act of solving or ending a problem or difficulty
searchable	easy to search for and find
service recovery	the process of restoring customer satisfaction and trust after a service failure
short-staffed	having fewer members of staff than a company needs or usually has
singing someone's praises	to speak very highly of something or someone
strive	to try very hard to do something or to make something happen, especially for a long time or against difficulties
subtract	to take a number or an amount away from another number or amount, the symbol for this is –
supplier	a company that provides goods or services to another company
sympathetically	in a way that is kind to somebody who is hurt or sad, and that shows that a company understands and cares about their problems
tackle	to try to deal with something
temperamental	with often changing mood quickly
transactional	focusing on the process of buying or selling, rather than being emotional
troubleshooting	discovering why something does not work effectively and making suggestions about how to improve it
unobtrusive	not attracting unnecessary attention
upfront	speaking or behaving in a way which makes intentions and beliefs clear
upset	unhappy, angry