



How Does Your Customer Service Rate?

Assess how well your organization delivers a quality customer service experience

This assessment examines the 5 essential tenets of customer service to help identify the areas where your business needs improvement. Following completion of this assessment, you should have a more clear understanding of your current customer service situation, along with some ideas for taking the first steps to improve it.

1. Hiring: Who Are The Right People?

One of the most critical skills in creating a service culture and driving excellent customer experience depends on the people you hire. The goals of any company should be to hire people who aren't afraid to stand out, to "shine" by going the extra mile. Unfortunately, most systems are set up to hire those who fit in. The result we often get is mediocrity.

Hire the best, smartest, shining people available regardless of previous experience. Hire for attitude, train for skills. Don't continue the status quo, take a step forward. If you currently have people who don't fit this description in customer service positions, train them or remove them.

Assessing Hiring: Questions to Consider	Yes	No
Do you specifically screen candidates on whether they like helping and working with people?		
Do you hire people who are interested in improving their life and the lives of those around them?		
Do you have people who are not afraid to go "outside the box" to serve the customer?		

Hiring the right people is essential to implementing quality customer service. In his book, *Achieving Excellence Through Customer Service*, John Tschohl explains, "Hire people who are possible to motivate. Hire people-oriented employees and teach them how to implement your professional service program. Hire people who are naturally endowed with positive service attitudes and values. They can be trained in service techniques."

2. Social Economy: The Service Strategy for This Millennium

Social media is dramatically changing the landscape of customer service - and for your benefit! However, if you don't understand social media and the social economy, you could lose the value of your company in just seconds.



The reason is simple: customers today are more likely to trust a recommendation from a friend or family member than to trust advertisements they see or hear. So if a friend leaves a scathing review on Facebook about a negative experience they had with your company - and their friend sees it - there's an excellent chance that friend will never do business with your company. On top of that, there are potentially thousands or more users who will see that review - think about if it was shared exponentially! This influences their decisions to do business, or not, with your company.

Reversely, people will ask on social media for recommendations for a good company and post great experiences that they have with your firm. When that happens, your service culture becomes a selling tool to increase your customers and your sales!

Speed, empowerment and service recovery (see below) are even more important in the social economy we have today.

Assessing Social Economy: Questions to Consider	Yes	No
Do you have a service recovery system and culture in place?		
Do your employees have the power to address concerns through social media?		
Are your systems designed for efficiency, not pushing responsibility on to other parties?		
Do you actively monitor and participate on social media with your customers?		

As the use of social media continues to rise, the speed at which people interact and share their experiences has greatly increased. While it's not necessarily "fair", a few negative reviews online can very quickly influence many readers about your company. Our entry level start-up program, [*Exceptional Service*](#), is your answer for sharpening service skills to dominate the social economy.

3. Speed: Creating a Breakaway Customer Experience Based on Speed

Culturally and socially speaking, it is not in human nature to think and act with speed. Even with established deadlines, we tend to wait until the last moment to complete our tasks. If it's due Friday morning, we often wait until Thursday to finish. If we have 10 hours to complete a task, we'll complete it in exactly 10 hours, not any less.

So how do we dramatically reduce the amount of time it takes to complete a task? Customers today value speed. They are busier than ever and don't like to wait for the things they need and want. Speed begins with a "do it fast, do it now and do it right" attitude.



Assessing Your Speed: Questions to Consider	Yes	No
Do you have an employee-driven, a best practices or a recommendation program that seeks streamline processes?		
Is there a culture of continuous improvement at your organization?		
Is an employee encouraged to suggest improvements?		
Can employees improve a process themselves?		

It is imperative that company processes and procedures are designed to speed up service to the customer. Many companies have bulky requirements and procedures that only frustrate customers and employees. Employees who perform procedures daily are the ones best qualified to improve those processes.

How can your business improve speed and grow more effectively? Imagine if your staff had the principle of speed instilled in their actions every day - not just doing things fast, but also doing them right. Think about how your customers will feel when any issue is met with urgency and care.

4. Empowerment: A Way of Life

Empowerment is essential to creating a service culture. Without empowerment, there is no chance you'll become a service leader or stand out from your competition. John Tschohl explains, "Empowerment is giving employees the authority to do whatever it takes, on the spot, to take care of a customer to that customer's satisfaction." Read that again: *whatever it takes...on the spot...to take care of a customer*. So ask yourself, is your workforce empowered?

Assessing Empowerment: Questions to Consider	Yes	No
Do employees have latitude on ensuring customer satisfaction? (Or are there very specific policies for what can/cannot be done?)		
Do you praise or recognize employees that go “above and beyond” in service of the customer?		

Believe it or not, getting your staff to make great, on-the-spot decisions to best serve the customer is not easy. They know what needs to be done but often won't do it, out of fear. To them, the risk outweighs the reward. The risk of potentially being reprimanded or even losing their job for doing something outside the box requires that employees be consistently encouraged to use their sound judgment to always act in favor of serving a customer.



Just imagine what you could do with an entire workforce of empowered employees who understand the big picture of business success and the importance of empowerment.

Learn more about [Empowerment](#) with John Tschohl's book.

5. Service Recovery: Frontline Path to Quality Service

Good service recovery takes place at the frontline or it doesn't happen at all. It's about taking a customer from hell to heaven in 60 seconds or less. About creating an experience so remarkable that people feel compelled to talk about it. (Remember social media?)

The four steps to service recovery are:

1. Act quickly
2. Take Responsibility
3. Be Empowered
4. Compensate

When service recovery becomes a way of life in your company, customers are loyal for life.

Assessing Service Recovery: Questions to Consider	Yes	No
When customers have an issue, can employees resolve it within 5 minutes, leaving the customer satisfied, and without bumping the issue to a supervisor?		
Is the customer always right?		
Are employees empowered "to do the right thing" for your customers?		

Let's face it, sometimes things happen that were not supposed to happen. How your staff deals with those occurrences makes a BIG difference on repeat sales, company perception and overall customer experience. We've seen the social media disasters when companies don't handle issues with grace, speed and responsibility. Likewise, we all hear about the companies that do - the stories that get told and retold, that now live in our collective "social" conscience.

Being a master of service recovery will be one of the best initiatives that you undertake in terms of the impact on your company's reputation and public persona. And that *will* affect your bottom line.



Thank you for your commitment to exploring customer service quality in your organization. The more "yes" answers you have on this assessment, the higher your quality of customer service will score. Take the time to analyze any "no" answers above and make plans to correct those areas asap. Need more information and tools on Speed, Empowerment, Service Recovery and other helpful programs? Want more assistance in determining your company's reputation and customer service score? Just contact Kathy@insightyoucanuse.com

Check out our [blog](#) on customer service strategy and suggestions and be sure to contact us if you have any questions.

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The above assessment was adapted with permission from Service Quality Institute and John Tschohl.