

## TEN COMMANDMENTS OF CLIENT CARE

### 1 Bring them back

*"Ask clients what they want and give it to them, again and again!"*

The best source of ideas is the clients themselves – ask them! They will set the standards if you will listen to them. Give them what they want and they will come back again and again.

### 2 Underpromise and over deliver

*"Clients expect you to keep your word. Exceed it."*

Many companies, unfortunately, do not keep their promises. How many times have you waited in for a delivery that never came? It is elementary that you should be contacted if there is a delay. Clients are delighted when the service is better than expected. Don't just promise to call in for coffee – do it!

### 3 The client is king – long live the king!

*"Whatever the client asks, the answer is always YES!"*

If we make it difficult for the client or don't respond to their requests, they will go elsewhere. A firm should try to be flexible rather than have a rigid policy. Clients often recommend improvements to services and if implemented might attract even more clients. If clients complain, don't tell them that they are wrong. If you insult clients they will not return but they will tell their friends. Treat clients as you would like to be treated – like a king!

### 4 I will look after it

*"Every staff member who deals with clients should have the authority to handle complaints."*

Clients want staff to solve their problem. They don't want to be dumped to another staff member and have to start all over again. Staff in some firms are empowered to deal with client complaints on the spot. If a problem is not dealt with on the spot, it becomes more expensive the more it is passed up the line. Sometimes sending documents by courier, whether it is your fault or the clients, can retrieve a serious situation. Empower staff to make client centric decisions!

### 5 Encourage complaints

*"If your clients tell you what is wrong, you can*

*fix it."*

It may seem strange to encourage complaints but there is a considerable benefit to be gained by knowing what is causing the dissatisfaction. The complaints should not be seen as a personal attack on anyone. It may be the system that needs changing. Some firms expect everyone to answer the telephones during lunchtime. In most cases nobody does and clients complain. Perhaps a rota is needed to cover lunchtime telephone calls.

### 6 Say what you can do – not what you can't do!

*"Be positive, be confident and clients will know that they are being listened to and action will happen."*

How often do you hear: "That's not my job" or "It's not my fault"?

Clients want action and the firm that responds and takes responsibility will attract more clients. Clients don't want to hear about your difficulties.

### 7 People buy people first

*"So you must impress your clients because when they buy from the firm they get you as well."*

First impressions are vital. If you choose a company from the phone directory and their telephone manner is rude and unhelpful it is likely you will say "no thank you" and ring the next company. If the sales person doesn't impress a client, are they going to trust that company? Money invested in staff training is money well spent. Professionals must impress a potential client – they may need training (including presentation skills) to make a noticeable difference.

### 8 Clients buy benefits not features

*"You should turn the features into benefits for the client."*

Often a firm communicates using technical terms that Clients are unfamiliar with and don't see the end benefit. You should make it easy for the Clients to buy your services by telling them what's in it for them, eg. "our firm recruits non business degree graduates which gives them a different perspective on business problems and often produces interesting solutions."

### 9 Use the client's name whenever possible

*"Clients like to be recognised and their name mentioned."*

Doesn't it feel great to walk into a restaurant and the manager says "It's nice to see you, John and Sarah, would you like a table near the window?" To be greeted like this makes you feel like you are being treated like a king. Some telephone receptionists are very quick to recognise clients' voices and are able to improve the image of the firm by addressing the client by name.

### 10 It's the difference that makes a difference

*"Superior client care gives you an opportunity to differentiate your service over your competitors."*

In order for this to work clients must notice the difference and like it. Some opticians ring their clients a few days after they receive new glasses and lens to see that they are delighted with them. Some petrol station assistants clean the car windows and windscreen wipers while clients pay for their petrol. Professional firms can have significant information in the library section on their web sites to assist clients and prospects.

## HOW CAN A COMPANY IMPROVE THE LEVEL OF CLIENT CARE IT PROVIDES TO ITS CLIENTS?

### Strategy – Staff – Systems

The firm should decide that client care will make a difference. Then plan their client care strategy by identifying the different parts of the service that should be improved.

The staff should be trained and often re-trained to ensure they understand client care focus and what they have to do to improve the level of service they provide. Lastly, a system needs to be put in place to ensure that client ideas are implemented, monitored and adjusted so that clients come back and buy some more.

---

*Marc Thornton is managing director of DTA Marketing, a Dublin based marketing consultancy and client care training firm. He has written a book on marketing and client care called Winning Lifetime Customers.*

---