



Decide how you will treat your business customers

Good customer service makes a business successful. Whether you are a sole trader or you employ staff your business can benefit from good customer service. Satisfied customers are more likely to use your business again.

This involves making sure that you:

1. work out how you will give your customers what they want
2. plan how each part of your business will deal with customers
3. monitor and improve your relationship with customers

What you need to do

- identify the aims and targets for reaching, dealing with and retaining customers
- check what level of service your competitors offer
- identify how you can improve the way you treat your customers and if you can offer them any additional services
- decide how you will treat your customers in all parts of your business
- make sure your plans meet all of the laws and regulations required
- work out who is responsible for different parts of customer service and explain to them what they need to do
- identify any training that people need to help them deal effectively with customers
- decide how you will capture feedback from customers to help improve your service to customers
- decide how you will explain to customers what level of service they can expect
- decide how you will deal with complaints from customers
- explain to people involved in customer service what you expect them to do
- decide how and when you will check that your customer service is meeting its aims and targets and benefiting your business



What you need to know and understand

Customer needs and expectations

- why it is important to keep your business focused on the needs of your customers
- how to check what your customers need and if your business is meeting their needs
- how customer experience is influenced by the way service is delivered
- what information you can get from customers, how you can get it and how you can check that it is reliable and up to date

Customer service

- what your customers' rights are and how these rights limit what you can do for customers
- how to explain customer care requirements to staff
- why it is important to train, monitor and appraise staff on customer care
- how to take action to correct anything that is going wrong with your customer service
- how you can improve your service to customers. (For example by changing opening hours, changing your returns policy or changing the way you treat customers.)
- what extra services you might be able to offer your customers and their costs and benefits
- how to find out how your new or improved service will affect your customers
- how service improvements affect the balance between overall customer satisfaction, the costs of providing service and regulatory requirements



Law and regulations

- the specific aspects of legislation and regulations that affect the way the products or services you deal with can be delivered to your customers about health and safety, data protection, equal opportunities and disability discrimination
- how to check that your policy meets all the laws and regulations that apply (for example, Trade Descriptions Act 1968, Unfair Contract Terms Act 1977, Sale of Goods Act 1979, Consumer Protection Act 1987, Sale and Supply of Goods Act 1994, Unfair Terms in Consumer Contracts Regulations 1994)
- industry, business and professional codes of practice and ethical standards that affect the way the products or services you deal with can be delivered to your customers

Communication

- why it is important to communicate clearly with customers
- how to communicate in a clear, polite, confident way with customers and why this is important

