



Podcast Transcript

Podcasts in the learning to lead from the ground up series are provided by Sapphire Training and Consulting, LLC – dedicated to helping organizations mine the leaders of tomorrow from the followers of today. Information on this strategy is available at www.following2leading.com.

This topic is titled Leadership and the Customer Experience

In today's economic environment, customer service is more important than ever. With fewer consumers each spending less money, every dollar spent can be critical to the bottom line of any organization. What is your organization's customer service standard given the slowdown in consumer spending? Have you, as a leader in the organization, been engaged in understanding the level of customer service your front line employees are delivering in order to keep you competitive in your industry? If you have not checked in on your employees, maybe you should.

While this is a busy time for organizational leaders trying to keep all of the balls in the air, customer service should be an area to keep an eye on. Here are some areas on which leaders should focus:

1. How many customer complaints do you have today compared to a year ago? If complaints are up, even by the smallest margin, it is important to perform some analysis to understand what the consumer issues are and what can be done to alleviate future complaints.
2. How many clients have left your organization since this time last year? The old adage is that it is harder to get a new customer than it is to keep a existing one, so organizations need to focus on why people are leaving. There is a chance the cause could be the lack of customer service.
3. What are consumers saying about your organization on the social media sites? Many organizations have begun to monitor these sites for customer complaints. Keep in mind that when a statement is posted about poor customer service, the information has gone out to tens of thousands of consumers. In the end this kind of negative publicity could keep an organization from gaining new customers in the future.
4. What types of quality controls do you have in place to monitor customer service? Organizations that routinely monitor customer interfacing phone calls and e-mails have a better opportunity to find gaps in poor customer service before it ever happens.
5. What training do you provide to your employees to ensure they are delivering the customer service you expect? Leaders must expect to spend training dollars each year on refresher training classes that focus on customer service. Excellent customer service does not come from a onetime training session given when the employees begin in their positions.

Leaders in an organization should not be shy about calling up a customer that has sent in a complaint to discuss and understand his or her concerns. Consumers want to hear from leaders, and it demonstrates your commitment to resolving the issue. If leaders do not invest the time to call customers and understand the customer service trend in their own organization, consumers may determine that the organization is apathetic about the service they deliver. In a global economy where increasing market



share is more difficult, ask yourself how important delivering excellent customer service is to your organization.

Using our philosophy of learning to lead from the ground up, it is important to remember that all employees of an organization regardless of their title or position are responsible for delivering excellent customer service and as such, should remember that the customers they serve will evaluate their actions. When leaders measure the quality of customer service delivered by their employees, they are demonstrating their commitment to the organization and its customers. Think through what you want you want your customer service delivery to look like and then make sure others are following through.

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