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**ИИМ**      **Инфокомный менеджмент**  
**ИИМ.16**   **Customer Service In Context: Do Unto Others... (Обслуживание клиентов в контексте: поступай с другими ...)**

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# ИИМ.16

We all know, without a shadow of a doubt, that without customers there simply is no business – you will cease to exist (from an organizational perspective, of course!). The customer *is* King, but believe it or not, clients aren't as hard to win over as you might think... if you put customer service in context.

What most companies don't realize (or acknowledge) is that Customer Service is the best, most economical marketing they will ever get. Despite this fact, it is a consistently under-recognized, underutilized asset for 99% of the organizations out there. Much to most organizations' dismay, they consistently lose revenue due to poor customer encounters and never understand why.

The truth is, if customer service does not permeate through every corner of your company, you stand to lose a great deal. Customer service is not defined by your call center or post-sales support – it is defined by the totality of how your clients **experience** your company across the board. It was once a concern that a dissatisfied customer would tell 7 people of their unacceptable experience – Today, word of an unpleasant encounter anywhere within the company might reach 7 million people with a single keystroke! *Is that a risk you are willing to take?*

The other side of that coin? “Raving Fans” can be your biggest advocates and your most significant sources of business growth! People listen and trust what their friends, family and colleagues say about how they are treated more than any paid advertising you can find. When done right, customer service is the best sales tool you have! Why? Because people invest in people – **PEOPLE** are your greatest asset!

Personalization is an expectation. How a client is spoken to on the phone, greeted by the receptionist, treated during their visit to the warehouse, or during an operations review – the quality of the connections they experience and how they feel after interaction with any representative of your company – will determine your level of success... or failure. Every single point of contact, in every crevice of your organization, matters. Each interaction will determine whether the customer will return – or not.

A widely quoted statistic gets to the heart of the value proposition behind customer service: The cost of acquiring a new customer is five times that of retaining an existing customer. For businesses that succeed by forming lasting relationships with their customers, the disparity is even greater. *Where do you think your Leadership Development dollars are best spent?*

Good customer service is essentially a variation on the golden rule: **Do Unto Others As You Would Have Done Unto Yourself**. Make sure every person in the

organization is well prepared to excel at exceeding the same expectations they would have if they were the customer. The basics will never change: If people believe that they are known, treated with respect, listened to and remembered by every person in your organization, they will develop a very strong attachment to your company.

As a leader, great customer service begins with you. Simply put, the most inspiring leadership is by example. If you are enthusiastic and courteous, your people are far more likely to follow your example. It is a matter of creating a company culture of service – towards both internal and external customers. In addition to leading by example, you will also need to:

1. **Codify Customer Service** – people need to know what is expected of them:
  - Develop 5-10 service principles that define how a customer should be treated
  - Emphasize different aspects of the values during every meeting
  - Have employees sign off on customer service values.
  - Evaluate employees based on the values they have agreed to & incent them to embrace them.
  - Offer educational means of advancing your customer service precepts: written materials, verbal instruction, mentors, coaching and on-the-job examples should all be part of the change (or reinforcement) in organizational culture.
2. **Emphasize Employees Are Customers Too:**
  - When people are treated as valuable assets (as clients should be) they are more willing to go the extra mile because they know they are appreciated as an important part of the team.
3. **Create Customer Advocates:**
  - Incent your people to do exceptional acts of service for the customer. In turn, provide a way for customers to report those acts of kindness or helpfulness – everyone wins!
4. **Build Trust** - Give employees ways to get involved:
  - Provide programs with incentives for employees who identify and share cost saving opportunities with the customer.

- Create ways for them to extend relationships, build partnerships or increase revenue.

5. **Promote Active Listening** - An important aspect of retaining customers is communication. The best salespeople spend 80 percent of their time listening:

- Provide instruction on how to ask open-ended questions to elicit a customer's needs and wants in any situation... and then how to **actively** listen to the customer's response.
- Use the information to understand the customer's needs and wants and leverage it to further the relationship.

6. **Embrace The Five A's** – In the event of a challenging situation, make sure every person in your organization knows to:

- Acknowledge the problem.
- Apologize, even if they think they're right.
- Accept responsibility.
- Adjust the situation & fix the problem.
- Assure the customer that you will follow through... and DO IT.

One of the biggest misnomers in business is that customer service is a function of the call center – nothing could be further from the truth. In today's ever-changing, competitive marketplace your employees (all of them) can be your greatest asset... or your greatest liability. By preparing **ALL** employees to interact and build relationships with customers, you can only be setting yourself up for success.

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