

Tips to improve your customer communication

How do you communicate with your present or potential customers or clients? Whether you do it successfully can mean a difference to your bottom line.

Provide the information requested. Yes it sounds self evident, but so many times businesses dance around a question without an answer. For instance, I recently requested costs to create a pdf form from a virtual assistant. There was a whole lot of emails back and forth: just what type of form, how long, with logo or without, etc. And never a quote. I can't do business with someone who can't provide an estimate for me.

Be realistic. Often, people think that if they say something is going to take a couple of days when it really takes a week the customer will sign up. But if the job actually takes longer you will risk angering your customer. For instance, if you are a service provider and you can't fit someone for two weeks, say so. Don't say that you can possibly squeeze a customer in just because that is his/her timetable. If you can't accommodate something, you will end up with an unhappy customer

Don't sugarcoat bad news. If you need to cancel or the price has gone up, say it quickly and directly.

Apologize if warranted, but say what you will do to fix it. Apologies are all fine and good, but not sufficient. Most people don't care if you are sorry that you screwed up, they want to know how you are going to make it better.

Don't make excuses. The dog ate my homework didn't fly in grade school and will certainly not fly in the face of a customer relationship and yet how many times do you hear excuses from service providers? I am having my floors done and

the service provider underestimated the time it would take his crew, but he keeps telling me it is because they weren't able to work on the weekend. That is an excuse and it doesn't fly.

Be timely. If you say you are going to call a customer, call! If there is going to be a problem, call your customer sooner rather than later. Don't let your customer call you with something you said you would get.

Be pleasant. Again, it seems self-evident. Just today I called my auto insurance company. I had a change to make, and the woman who helped me was really pleasant. It made the transaction easy. It left a good impression.

Anything you would add? What works best for you?