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"We engineer the quality of your success"

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How To Win Back Angry Customers

Last month we identified the impact angry customers have on your business. This month we discuss how to revitalize a company's reputation and win back angry/upset customers.

Recognize Angry Customers & Acknowledge their Anger. Anger must be recognized and dealt with first, otherwise the customer won't hear what is being said. Aggressive anger is easily recognized from the tone or volume of the customer's voice, or by visible signs such as a clenched jaw, piercing eyes, pointing fingers, etc. Passive anger is more difficult to recognize because the customer outwardly appears calm but is seething underneath. Here, the customer needs help bringing the anger into the open. This is normally achieved by acknowledging the anger.

Listen To Angry Customers from the viewpoint that the company is totally responsible for what happened. Be open-minded, non-judgmental, and unbiased. Try to understand the customer's situation from his point of view. After listening, ask questions. This clarifies any misunderstandings, assures the customer you care, are genuinely interested, and want to resolve the problem.

Take Action. Find out what the customer wants. If the customer can't be given exactly what he or she wants, suggest alternatives. With the customer, determine the acceptability of the solution. Agree on a solution, then follow-up or act on it quickly.

Implementing A Program

Customer's happiness must be built into the company's long-term business plan. This involves a five-step Quality Improvement Process:

Step One: Have a plan to deal with customers' anger and to recover customers.

Step Two: Set Standards. Determine where the company stands on after-the-sale service quality and where it wants to go in terms of fulfilling promises. Set performance standards on how to listen to angry customers, especially frontline employees.

Step Three: Conduct training sessions for all staff in what anger is all about and how to deal with it effectively.

Step Four: Implement the program in four stages: plan and control the start-up of the designed and approved program; motivate, inform, and direct people; initiate the complaint handling system; compile, process, and use data from complaints and horror stories to improve products and services.

Step Five: Audit periodically to continually improve the program's effectiveness. This enables Management to make future decisions based on damage done, and weaknesses in the quality program can be targeted for improvement.

Why Companies Are Switching To ISO 9000

The global drive toward a Quality System registration has begun. Nations, regional bodies, and customers worldwide are demanding compliance to ISO 9000 Quality Standards as a means to differentiate quality companies from others in the field.

Quality products and services are key to customer satisfaction, profitability, and market leadership, and ISO 9000 is today's most leading method that guarantees a product or service will always meet the specified requirements and expectations demanded by customers.

There are three main reasons why companies are investing in ISO 9000 registration:

1. Improved Business Performance

Quality has become a corporate strategy for companies wishing to improve their overall productivity, efficiency, and profitability, at home and abroad. There is also a growing realization that continual improvements in quality are often necessary to achieve and sustain good economic performance.

2. Market Pressure

Companies are being asked by purchasers of their products and services to become registered to ISO 9000 as a pre-condition to placing a contractual purchase order.

Many large manufacturing companies, including the Big Three automakers have announced that ISO 9000 registration will be the basis for selecting their suppliers. This makes it imperative for small and medium size manufacturing companies to become registered to ISO 9000 if they are going to remain in business.

3. Critical Marketing Tool

ISO 9000 registration helps to open doors for companies by securing a competitive edge in the marketplace, and by helping companies to distinguish themselves from their non-registered competitors. In one survey, 80% of the respondents indicated that ISO 9000 registration influences their choice of suppliers.

NEXT MONTH: Benefits Of ISO 9000 Registration

ISO 9000 SEMINAR

Fanshawe College is presenting a one-day ISO 9000 seminar on May 1, 1995.

If you want to know what ISO 9000 is all about, and whether it is worth pursuing, this seminar is for you.

For additional information, contact Mike Westmoreland, Fanshawe College, at (519) 452-4195.