

SECTION E
CUSTOMER CARE

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E. 1 INTRODUCTION

The phrase "Customer Care" came into being during the early 80's but because the phrase is so ambiguous we each have a different understanding of the definition.

Many would say Customer Care is the "trendy" word for providing a good service, some would argue that it is providing a quality product, others for community support and some would say it is providing education on how to use a product to its maximum benefit.

One of the reasons that "Customer Care" is so misunderstood is the fact that all the above are correct! Real customer care is not just interested in selling the product but also advising the customer on how best to keep an item in good condition so the customer will maximise the benefit and life of the product and be appreciative of the service received.

Customers, in today's competitive marketplace, not only expect but demand quality service and speed of response. They demand to be dealt with professionally and efficiently and can afford to choose whoever can provide the best mix of product and value added services.

At nicenstripy we believe that "Customer Care" is just as important as our Marketing Strategies and Training. If everybody in the company exercises Customer Care within their sphere of operation we will be doing what everybody else talks about. **True** Customer Care will be our "leading edge" within the market place.

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Why do we include Customer Care in a marketing manual and why now?

Firstly, Customer Care is part of your marketing campaign and will definitely give you that leading edge.

Secondly before you have any contact with a customer it is vital that you and your staff deal with them correctly. Later in the manual we show methods used to attract customers to use your services and purchase your range of products, but this is the vital section as all the methods and finances used will be of no advantage unless you deal with each and every customer effectively and efficiently.

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E. 2 THE IMPORTANCE OF CUSTOMER CARE

Companies spend many thousand of pounds advertising their products and services in an attempt to become brand leader or remain on top. Much of the advertising could be wasted if the most vulnerable but vital link, that between the customer and the sales person, is not made successfully.

Research has shown that a dissatisfied customer will tell at least nine friends and associates about it. They in turn will tell others who in turn will tell more and so on.

The single most significant reason for this dissatisfaction was not necessarily whether the customer's desired service was fulfilled or not, but more the attitude with which they were treated.

Perceived indifference on the part of the office or sales person contributing to the greater part of the discontent was cited as the main reason why people did not feel they had received good value for money.

Fortunately some customers do complain when they are not satisfied and that gives us a second chance to prove our efficiency.

It is those who don't feel good about us, or, worse still, encourage others not to purchase from us in the first place that should cause us greatest concern.

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- Caring and showing you care, matters.
- Good service is what people want and are prepared to pay a premium for.
- Bad news travels fast - good news takes longer
- People are hungry for good service.

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E. 3 BENEFITS OF CUSTOMER CARE

It must be remembered that there are three "parties" involved in customer care.

For Customer Care to work effectively within the nicenstripy environment all three parties must have a real understanding of the benefits for them of offering a high level of Customer Care.

E. 3.1 BENEFITS FOR YOUR CUSTOMER

- ☺ Efficient, quality service on each and every delivery
- ☺ Respect and recognition
- ☺ Being cared for and recognised as an individual
- ☺ Being cared for as a "special" person
- ☺ Knowing they will receive what they require
- ☺ Receiving a '*pleasant experience*' from each and every visit and telephone conversation
- ☺ "No Worries" of standards of lawn cutting and lawn care

E. 3.2 BENEFITS FOR nicenstripy

- ☺ Totally satisfied customers
- ☺ Customer loyalty and goodwill
- ☺ Meeting Customers' needs for better service
- ☺ Increased sales
- ☺ Increased profits
- ☺ Good word of mouth publicity
- ☺ Increased brand awareness
- ☺ Increased market dominance

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E. 3.3 BENEFITS FOR YOU

- ☺ Customers being pleasant to you
- ☺ The satisfaction of doing a good job by using your skills and knowledge
- ☺ The satisfaction of being pleasant to people and giving them not only what they want but what they really require
- ☺ Knowing you have done your best
- ☺ More happiness, less stress
- ☺ The satisfaction of seeing the customer satisfied
- ☺ Increased sales and *profits*

**CUSTOMER
CARE
IS A
COMMERCIAL
AND
PROFITABLE
ACTIVITY**

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E. 4 CASE STUDIES IN CUSTOMER CARE

A number of leading companies have instigated "Customer Care" programmes for Senior Management and Staff alike to provide a standard of service above their competitors.

During 1988/89 British Airways invested some £8 million in training all staff and in only the "Telephone Bookings" sector they found an increase in bookings of 30% over a twelve month period. Others such as ICI and the Royal Mail have also instigated Customer Care Procedures within their operation and both found the results highly profitable.

British Telecom's profits of £3 billion in 1990/91 showed how Customer Care can really impact the bottom line. The fact they receive a complaint every 14 minutes is treated as a *benefit* not just another complaint.

Marks & Spencer saw their shares drop in value in the 1990's, attempted to close unprofitable shops in France and were heavily criticised over their outdated range of products on offer. They managed to launch a new range of products that due to the amount of 'free' publicity almost went very wrong when all branches involved were out of the 'average sizes' of their complete range before midday on the day of the launch, with a forecast 8 days before replenishment. Yet Marks & Spencer remain one of the most profitable retailers in Europe and could be described as the "perfect" case study in Customer Care.

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Up to the late 1920's primarily opening new stores had achieved the expansion of Marks & Spencer. Since the thirties Marks & Spencer's expansion has been achieved primarily by making each store more productive and by raising sales per square foot of selling space.

(Today the standard method used by the majority of retailers in measuring "product profitability".)

The Marks & Spencer organisation has since the fifties set objectives for staff welfare - their concept being that well trained, contented staff, who are cared for by the Company will automatically care more for customers.

To this end they introduced "staff manageress's" into stores to look after the employees, to take care of personal problems and to ensure employees are treated with intelligence and compassion.

Marks & Spencer introduced a "no fuss return" programme for all its products (with the exception of food) and all complaints are dealt with promptly and courteously. They have set procedures for dealing with every eventuality where the customer is involved to minimise the "pain" for the customer.

The attitude is simply that the customer must leave the store totally satisfied (WITH A GOOD LAST IMPRESSION) at whatever cost.

But what about the profit objective?

The answer is that there has never been one.

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Obviously the company is highly profitable and highly profit conscious. But it sees profit **not** as being an *objective* but as a requirement of business, that is, not as a goal but as a need.

Profit in Marks & Spencer's view, is the RESULT of doing things right rather than the purpose of business activity.

Profitability is a measurement of how well the business discharges its functions in servicing the market and customer.

Customer Care has helped to build the Marks & Spencer organisation into one of the most profitable in the retail world.

Can you remember anybody ever complaining of how they were treated in Marks & Spencer?

There are a huge number of other company's who have found Customer Care to be a profitable exercise and we could write a book about the successes of company's who have introduced Customer Care into their marketing strategy.

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E. 5 BUILDING A CARING RELATIONSHIP

For us to continue to be successful it is necessary to build and retain goodwill. You need to ensure that when you leave your customers they feel content that you and the company have done everything possible to care for their needs.

In dealing with every customer you should take every opportunity to build on customer satisfaction and show concern for her or his needs. It is important to carry that through to and beyond the point where you say goodbye to the customer.

You need to try as hard to create the right last impression as you did for the first. You will want your customer to be left with a good impression, not only of the company but of you and your skills.

**CREATING A GOOD
LAST IMPRESSION
WILL HELP TO BUILD A
BETTER RELATIONSHIP**

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E. 6 CUSTOMER CONTACT

- i) No matter what type of day you are having
ALWAYS smile before you answer the telephone!

When you are cheerful and happy, the customer is more likely to respond to you in a positive manner.

**"A SMILE BEGETS A
SMILE"**

- ii) People have an image of nicenstripy and its service in their mind, created by advertisements they have seen, previous contacts and other information. If nicenstripy is spending money to ensure that the right image is presented and that our customers see us as a professional organisation with quality training and quality service, it is vital this image greets the customer.

**"YOU NEVER GET A
SECOND CHANCE TO
CREATE A GOOD
FIRST IMPRESSION"**

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- iii) Your presentation at point of purchase will affect sales by affecting people's attitude towards them.

“CARING FOR YOUR CUSTOMERS MEANS CARING FOR YOUR PRODUCTS/ SERVICE”!

- ☹ Spend time and talk to your customer - show that you have a real interest by making useful suggestions to HELP improve your customer's purchase, i.e. advice on how to reduce moss in the lawn (not matter if you are going to do it or advising your customer which product to purchase at the garden centre)

“TAKE CARE IN PRESENTING YOURSELF TO YOUR CUSTOMER”

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- v) The attire of our staff will affect the attitude of your customer for both you and nicenstripy. In our business we are expected to be dressed in our own corporate outfits, which should be clean and tidy (at the start of the day at least!).

**“A SMART APPEARANCE
SUGGESTS A SMART
SERVICE”**

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E. 7 CUSTOMER WAITING LISTS

Having a 'Waiting List' of customers can be very beneficial at times. Whilst we would not advocate a waiting list at the start of business as you near the need for a second/third/forth van it can be a very useful marketing tool as you can put the customer on hold until you have enough new customers to fully warrant another vehicle.

Needless to say not ALL potential customers will accept being put on a waiting list, particularly at the beginning of the season, but from June onwards it is quite acceptable to create one. You will need to judge for yourself, with each individual customer, if it might be possible to put off servicing the customer for a period of time. Some will not wait as their need is NOW whilst others will be happy to wait for a reliable, professional and caring service.

There is a benefit in terms of customer care, as what you are saying to your potential customer is . . . 'I will not drop my standards and let down my existing customers . . . but I would like **your** business'. That being the case use those words . . . honesty will often pay dividends.

The kudos of creating a waiting list of customers helps potential customers understand many of the benefits of using nicenstripy in a very positive manner!

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A sign on the mirror

**"Reflect on your
reflection :-**

**You are looking
at what
Customers will
see today"**

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