

TARKENTON

IDEAS AT WORK

Keys to Delivering White Glove Customer Service

Takeaways

- Customer service drives customer retention
- Understand your audience's goals and experiences
- Offer different channels to meet client preferences

Whenever I'm going about my daily life looking to do business with someone, one of the most important qualities (maybe the most important quality) that I look for is what kind of service they provide. It doesn't matter whether I'm looking for new shoes, a nice dinner, or the latest gadget: my experience as a customer is top priority.

You may have heard me say before, the mission of business is to help people. That's the way I approach the businesses I run, and it's also what I look for when I'm on the other side of the table.

This article gets into our philosophy of customer service at Tarkenton, and how we make it work in a practical way. It's something that can work for any business, so look for ways you can create the kind of service and experience that customers want and deserve.



Jim Tarkenton

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Optimizing your customer service budget can be a complex process. It's tempting to measure your customer service investments by calls per hour, or dollars per contact. But this mindset can be a costly trap.

Customer expectations have changed dramatically in recent years. Trust in businesses has eroded, and the long-term costs of a bad customer experience are steep. Numerous recent studies show that brands are losing even their most loyal customers after a single negative experience.

But excellent customer service will increase customer retention rates. And in the long run, keeping your existing customers is far less expensive than finding new ones.



At Tarkenton, we strive to deliver what we call white glove customer service. White glove customer service means surpassing your clients' expectations by personalizing their service and prioritizing their needs.

Delivering white glove customer service may require a shift in strategy, along with investments in training and technology. But in today's largely digital world, companies that maintain a human element when connecting with their customers also generate brand loyalty.

Enhancing your customer service offerings doesn't need to be an overwhelming process. The following four steps can help you begin building your own white glove customer service strategy.

Step One: Understand your audience

Knowing your audience is essential to providing customer service that surpasses expectations. Ask detailed questions to learn more about your customers. What are their business goals? What matters most to them when they interact with your business?

Asking for feedback through customer surveys is one way to learn about your customers' experiences. Surveying your customers after each interaction can provide data that can help improve or enhance your customer service offerings.

Surveys and analytics are useful, but one of the most valuable and overlooked ways to improve customer service is to listen in on a few customer service calls. Most business leaders would be well served by dedicating just a couple hours per month to listening to the calls coming in and the problems being raised.



Step Two: Focus on coaching and training

Listening to calls can also reveal immediate areas for improvement in the training of your customer service reps. Training and coaching are a must for customer experience teams. Along with understanding systems, processes, products, and service offerings, team members must also have a thorough knowledge of the company's brand messaging and voice. When cultivating your customer service teams – whether during onboarding, initial training sessions, or ongoing coaching – keep your company mission at the forefront. Be sure your customer service team members consider themselves brand advocates.

Make sure your training and coaching includes a discussion about empowering every customer service rep on your team. They may not be able to solve every problem, but be clear about what they can resolve immediately, and when they need to ask a supervisor for help.

Step Three: Ensure your communications are personal, clear, and accessible

Customer service begins the first time a customer picks up the phone or visits your website. Your business may only have one chance to get it right. Personal and clear communication is vital from the first interaction.

Many customers value having a real person who cares about their experience when they contact a business. If a customer calls in, are they connected with a team member immediately? If they're placed on hold, it's important to provide them with a time frame or an update. If there is a longer than usual hold time, consider providing an automatic call back option to be mindful of your customers' time.



When customers visit your website, is your contact information easy to find? Does your website give them multiple options to communicate – for example, by phone, email, chat, or messaging?

Your website is another opportunity to reinforce the human side of your brand. Many customers appreciate learning who they're doing business with, making interactions more personalized. Consider adding a photograph of your customer service team, or using a platform that allows each rep to add their photo during a live chat.

Follow-up after every customer service interaction is essential. Even a brief email thanking the customer for calling and providing contact information if they need further assistance can go a long way in setting your company apart as a white glove experience.

Step Four: Offer multiple channels for interaction

More than ever before, people want a combination of convenient service options that also allow them to interact with a person. To meet the evolving expectations of their customers, businesses need a multi-faceted approach that includes both people and technology.

Personalized service starts with understanding how each customer wants to connect and communicate with your business. This might mean offering multilingual customer service team members or providing various communication options, from phone calls to emails to chat messaging – depending on their preferences.

For example, many businesses recognize that younger consumers, such as Gen Zers or millennials, typically prefer online customer support, such as the chat option. Meanwhile, older generations including baby boomers tend to prefer email or phone calls.

But individual customers may prefer using different channels at different times. For instance, someone who doesn't always have time for a phone call may choose email support as an alternative. Businesses need to be available on multiple channels to meet their customers' changing needs.

Along with having the right team members in place, implementing the right technology tools can elevate your customer service strategy. Leveraging software tools or platforms while keeping the human touch can enhance service offerings by saving time and making processes more efficient. For example, technology tools such as website chat features can help route customers to the correct department or a specific customer service team quickly and easily without wasting time.

Building trust with every interaction

Your customer service team members – the voices behind your phone lines -- are at the front line in building relationships and establishing trust with your customers. White glove customer service means providing outstanding experiences with every interaction. When business leaders measure customer service results by quality of interaction, rather than length of time, you will see significant benefits to your brand and your bottom line.

If you would like a fresh perspective on how to bring your customer service experience to the next level, consider partnering with Tarkenton. Schedule a call with a member of our business development team to get started.



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Cristina Valencia directs the daily operations of Tarkenton's Client Success team, ensuring the team provides outstanding service to both partners and end users to increase retention and satisfaction. By building and maintaining positive, long-term, productive relationships with the Client Success team members, she helps to make white-glove service one of our core values. Cristina joined the Tarkenton team in 2021, bringing in more than 5 years of managerial experience.