

How to grow your company and keep a high level of customer service at the same time

Customers are as demanding ever - they want everything more quickly and for less money, as well as wanting to buy from a personable company that remembers their name and how old their children are. For small companies, delivering this level of customer engagement is straightforward because they have a relatively small customer base, while large organisations have huge IT budgets to track all this information centrally. But for fast growing medium-sized companies, continuing to deliver the personal service that has been so core to their business while growing the company at the same fast pace is a somewhat elusive exercise.

By combining the latest high-tech tools with some comfortingly 'low-tech' methods, we at Easynet Connect aim to deliver both personal customer interaction whenever needed, as well as consistent levels of service - all while continuing to grow the company during a downturn. Here's some advice for other SMEs looking to do the same.

Centralise as much information as possible

Using technology to bolster customer service is a no-brainer, but it is only effective if everyone has access to it at the same time. This ensures consistency and reduces waste as everyone is singing from the same hymn sheet.

Listen to your customers AND your staff

It is important to speak to your customers regularly, but even more so if you intend to rollout a new system or process that may directly affect your interaction them. Get their feedback so you know what your priorities should be. Also, if you intend to build a new customer service platform and expect everyone to use it, you must also speak to your staff. They will have the insight needed to make the platform work best, and being part of the process from the outset will mean they're more likely to use it.

Remember: People are personable

The only way to be a truly personable company is to use people. All the technology in the world will count for nothing if your customers cannot speak to a human being when they need to. Alternative methods of contact (email, live chat etc.) are very convenient alternatives, but someone should always be available on the phone.

Be proactive

Don't always wait for feedback to come to you in the form of complaints. Monitor the service you provide to your clients. As an ISP, Easynet Connect can monitor its network 24/7 to ensure that faults are spotted and dealt with quickly. In addition to providing every customer with their own named account manager who will speak to them on a regular basis, senior management also takes the time to speak to every single customer directly at least twice a year.

Utilise the cost saving benefits of online software

We recently built a unique Customer Relationship Management (CRM) platform from tried-and-tested 'cloud' platforms. Offering the functionality of large CRM systems (previously the reserve of big business) but at significantly lower cost, online or 'cloud' software is a real breakthrough for small-to-medium businesses. Almost all business software is now available in some form or another online, ranging from basic free services all the way up to comprehensive paid-for platforms, so they represent a real opportunity to save money while improving service.

Most importantly: Remember where you came from

Most small businesses have grown because of good customer service. If this is key to your business, determine exactly which service you're famous for and focus on it. Never lose sight of why customers chose you over your competitors in the first place. If you lose this, then you could be in a very difficult situation indeed.