

Video Transcript

5 Qualities of Great Customer Service Managers by Customers That Stick

Customer service is by its nature a firefighting activity but customer experience requires proactive strategy and execution. Great managers make sure those two are not too far out of balance.

What are the qualities of a great customer service manager? Those who manage customer facing teams need a broad range of not only qualities, but skills. They need to be great at motivating, coaching, and managing their team's, and they have to be ready to jump into the fray to handle the issues that their teams can't solve and to work with the customers that their teams can't satisfy. To be a customer service manager is to be part manager and part super service rep. They need those same characteristics that their reps need and then another skill set on top of that. A great customer service manager can be the difference between a team that creates hero class customer experiences and one that gets by with minimal effort and unremarkable results. When looking for a customer service manager these five qualities should be at the top of any list of criteria you use.

1. Number one: Customer centric attitude. When I deliver customer service workshops and trainings one of the most difficult questions I ask clients is this one, "Is your manager the most customer centric person on the team?" If the answer is no, then I immediately know they have a problem. If your manager doesn't put your customers at the center of everything they do your team won't either.
2. Number two: Powerful communicator. Nothing's more important to customer service than communication, right, of course. For managers, communication skills are the bedrock upon which their relationships with their team's, their persuasiveness with their superiors, and their interactions with customers are based. Managers need to be able to communicate effectively with their teams and to tailor their communication to different personalities and communication styles. Managers must have the ability to influence the stakeholders above them in the organization if they want to ensure their team has adequate resources and can operate with the breathing space needed to manage, to strategy, instead of to checklist. What customer service managers don't just get to manage, they often have to do. In customer service, when the going gets tough, the manager gets going. Managers are often called in to handle the most difficult customer service situations when their frontline teams can't and they need powerful communication skills to navigate these challenging situations.
3. Number three: Empathy to burn. Communication might be the most important skill in customer service but empathy is the most important word. Great managers have it by

the bucketful and besides the empathy needed to solve the difficult customer service situations that managers are often called on to resolve and put these crucial to managing teams. Great managers are able to empathize with the challenges their teams face on the frontlines. I understand how hard it is to recover when a customer yells, how frustrating it is to be shackled by outdated or illogical policies, and how impossible jobs can be when teams are under-resourced.

4. Number four: The master of priorities. A good manager knows how to help their team focus its energy and balance their team's time spent delivering customer experiences with the time spent reacting to customer service issues. Many businesses struggle with this balance and great customer service managers have the prioritization skills and organizational skills to make sure that the important is not completely subsumed by the urgent, to make sure the fires of the day don't engulf the team's entire focus. Customer service is by its nature a firefighting activity, but customer experience requires proactive strategy and execution. Great managers make sure those two are not too far out of balance.
5. Number five: Motivator. Good managers know how to motivate themselves and motivate their teams. They know how to create a culture that doesn't wait for things to happen but that proactively makes them happen. They know how to instill this ethic in their team's. Great managers try harder themselves and inspire their teams to always be looking for how they can make a difference for their customers, their colleagues, and the organization.

OK, hiring the right customer service manager can never be reduced to a simple checklist. The ideal candidate will be a good cultural fit, will understand the job and the industry, and will have the hard skills necessary to manage to organizational goals. However, if you look for the five qualities we just discussed both in your applicants and when evaluating internal promotions, you'll find that you can stack the deck for success and give your team the leader it needs to support your organization's customer experience mission.

Well, I'm Adam Toporek and you can find me at customersthatstick.com where we help you win with experience.

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