

Monthly Newswire

Welcome to our monthly newswire. We hope you enjoy reading this newsletter and find it useful.

September 2021

Customer Service in a Digital World

As commerce has moved online, customer service has had to evolve.

Some of the best businesses used to stand out with their attention to detail, personal touch and ties with people in the community. With the increasing shift to online business models, customer service has shifted to live chat, social media and 24/7 email helpdesks.

Customer service has always been about connecting with people. Listening to your customers is still key, it's just that customers want to engage with businesses on social media or via instant messaging. Invest some time in researching which social media platforms or messaging apps are used by your customers. Twitter or WhatsApp may not be your thing but if your customers are there, you need to be there too.

Avoid standard automated email replies. Customers who buy online are more tech savvy than ever before and they really value personal, meaningful interactions. Try to respond to their messages or emails on the same day or at least within 24 hours. Putting an extra effort into your customer interactions will go a long way and will help you to build trust.

Demographics are shifting – Millennial and Generation Z customers now outnumber Baby Boomers. Millennials and Generation Z want self-service options, speed of service and a platform that uses mobile devices and social media. In their view, a customer service model that requires going to a shop or speaking with someone on the phone between certain hours of the day is clunky and old fashioned.

As such, automation is more important than ever before - whether that is through the use of chat bots, AI or online customer service agents who operate across different time zones, in order to cover more hours of the day. The good news for small and medium sized businesses is that a lot of these customer service functions can be outsourced to third party providers.

Try to put yourself in your customers shoes. Spend a day as a customer of your firm. Try dialing the helpline - do you end up on hold or in an endless cycle of options and menus? What happens if you email the firm with a query - do you get a helpful response within 24 hours? Try to complete a purchase online or on the phone and note any sticking points that you could try to improve in your sales process.

The shift to doing business online, coupled with changes in consumer expectations have moved the bar in terms of what good customer service looks like. The best way to adapt your customer service model for a digital world is to try it out for yourself and keep looking for ways to improve.

Work From Anywhere Policies

The pandemic proved that many of us could do our jobs from literally anywhere. So how should a business manage this?

These days we hear more and more about "digital nomads". These are people who have embraced technology in a way that allows them to work while travelling across the world. They are different to remote workers, who tend to stay in one place and pop in and out of the office, while working from home a lot of the time.

Digital nomads tend to travel and explore different countries while working from a laptop with a Wi-Fi connection.

Managing employees who are digital nomads can leave businesses open to a range of regulatory and legal risks and that is why it is important to have a robust policy in place, if you intend to employ these types of workers.



A work from anywhere policy could provide your employees with the opportunity to spend some of their time working overseas. Offering such flexibility could help to reduce office costs for the business and would offer an attractive value proposition to employees.

However, working from anywhere could create potential tax issues for employees who could end up with personal income tax filing obligations in the various countries in which they have worked. Employees would need to take steps to manage this and employers would need to ensure that they have adequate controls in place in order to avoid exposing the firm to corporation tax or additional regulatory requirements depending on where the work is actually carried out.

Your firm would also need to put an appropriate IT security policy in place, to avoid potential cyber security issues.

If your firm is serious about implementing a work from anywhere policy, it would be worth taking both UK advice and advice in the jurisdiction that the employee will be working in for a period of time. Your firm may also consider allowing employees to work from certain jurisdictions only, in order to avoid creating tax issues.

If employees want to spend longer periods of time working overseas, it may be worth considering a different type of employment relationship such as a consultancy agreement rather than employing the individual directly.

Top Communication Tips to Help You Build Trust

Good communication skills are key if you want to succeed in business.

The key to being an excellent communicator is being able to make each and every person you talk to feel like the most important person in the world. This sounds like a lofty ambition but it is true of some of the most successful people of our time – from Richard Branson through to Elon Musk or Jack Ma. They all have one thing in common – they have an ability to make people feel like the absolute centre of their attention.

Good communicators tend to speak relatively slowly, so that everybody who is listening can keep up. You can use a pause to emphasise particular points, too. This gives your audience time to process and retain what you have just said. Try to use relatively simple language and avoid technical acronyms or jargon. At best, some people will not know what you are talking about. At worst, you risk irritating people who dislike technical jargon. The key outcome to aim for is that anyone can listen to you and understand what it is you have said.

Some of the best communicators, particularly in business, are the ones who embrace humour. People enjoy the company of individuals who don't take themselves too seriously. If you want to share a joke, try to do so at your own expense. For example, talk about your failure to understand a new piece of technology or fashion trend. A self-deprecating style tends to be engaging and disarming for your audience. Laughing makes people feel good and can help your audience connect with you.

Even with our current dependence on video chats, Skype, Zoom, Teams, etc. it is important to talk with your hands and facial expressions as well as your voice. Turn the camera on, change your expression or wave your hand to emphasize a key point and use body language to reinforce what you are saying. Whether you are speaking to one person or presenting to 50 people, give them your undivided attention - this is the first step towards winning them over and is the basis for respectful, as well as effective, communication.

Thank your audience (even if it is just one person you are communicating with). Thank them for their time and if they ask a question, thank them for that too. Finally, if you say that you will follow up on something, make sure that you deliver on that follow up. Whether it is an email, forwarding a report or offering to make an introduction, become known as the person who follows up and delivers what you said you would deliver.

Useful Health and Wellbeing Apps

It's been a stressful year for all of us. Here are some of the best health and wellbeing apps which can help you to restore your focus, motivation and productivity.

Nike Training Club

This is a free app which offers a range of at-home workouts and nutrition guides designed to keep you in tip top condition. Nike is one of the biggest names in fitness and the Nike Training Club app offers more than 185 free workouts including yoga, interval training (HIIT), strength and endurance routines. The app includes a range of workouts that you can do depending on the space and equipment that you have available to you. If you don't have any fitness equipment, there is also a range of body weight only workouts available.



MyFitnessPal

This is another free app and it is designed to help you manage your diet more effectively. MyFitnessPal analyses the nutritional elements of the foods that you eat and can even provide recipes with your favourite ingredients. The app allows users to set goals such as maintenance, weight loss, etc.

Headspace

Headspace is a mental health app which helps to guide users through meditation and mindfulness exercises. The app is designed to help with stress management, focus and sleep. It gives users access to guided meditations which are geared towards specific goals.

The app provides spoken word exercises which are designed to be used for around 10 minutes per day. New users can enjoy a 10 session "trial pack" for free. After that, the app costs £9.99 per month or £74.99 per year.