

## 5 THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT



# CUSTOMER SERVICE

From first impression to problem-solving and everything in between, quality customer service is essential for building loyalty and trust in your business. As a small business owner, you can create a competitive advantage by prioritizing customer service to help ensure repeat business and valuable word-of-mouth advertising.

**Here are five customer service best practices to implement for success.**

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## 1. HIRE FOR CUSTOMER SERVICE SKILLS — AND EMPOWER YOUR EMPLOYEES TO USE THEM.

Great customer service starts with great employees — they are indeed the key to success. While hiring friendly, approachable people for customer-facing positions is always essential, these are not the only traits you should look for in a potential employee. Because customer service interactions are often the result of an issue — a malfunctioning product, a billing error, or a delayed shipping status, for example — listening and problem-solving skills, as well as creativity, have become vital competencies.



**Hiring is only the first step.** To inspire quality service, model it by ensuring you and other managers always treat your employees the way you want them to treat the customers. The experts at Synchrony suggest creating a culture of empowerment so your employees know they can make a difference when it comes to customer care.



**Synchrony experts advise training employees as close to their start date as possible and providing additional learning opportunities as policies and procedures evolve.**

## 2. PRIORITIZE TRAINING TO TAKE YOUR CUSTOMER SERVICE TO THE NEXT LEVEL.

In addition to leading by example, quality training can help you empower your employees to provide excellent customer service. For example, Synchrony provides up to eight weeks of training for its customer service agents before they interact with customers. The amount of time and resources you have to dedicate to training will depend on the nature of your business, but it's an essential piece of the puzzle.

Depending on your resources and budget, you can hire a third-party customer service trainer to work with your employees, purchase online training courses like [LinkedIn Learning](#),<sup>1</sup> or **take advantage of free online resources to create your own training program.**<sup>2</sup> Remember, you are the best training resource for your employees, so be sure to share any new products, policies, or procedures right away.

### 3. REGULARLY EVALUATE YOUR CUSTOMER SERVICE.

Training doesn't have to stop at the end of an e-learning course or role-playing activity. Consistent evaluation of customer interactions allows you to provide your employees with valuable on-the-job coaching, which can help reinforce hypothetical concepts learned in training.

**Synchrony uses various indicators to evaluate the customer service experience, from the speed with which a representative answered the phone to the customer feedback provided by survey response at the end of the call.**

While there are many high-tech tools on the market to measure customer interactions, you can gather feedback for your evaluations using email, comment cards, or simply observing the exchange yourself.



However you choose to evaluate your customer service, the experts at Synchrony recommend sharing the feedback with your employee. Discuss what went well and what could be improved, and offer any additional tools or training that will help empower them in their next customer interaction. It's also crucial to evaluate the interaction for your own continuous improvement process — what can you learn about hiring, training, or policies and procedures for the future?

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### 4. NEVER STOP COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR CUSTOMERS.



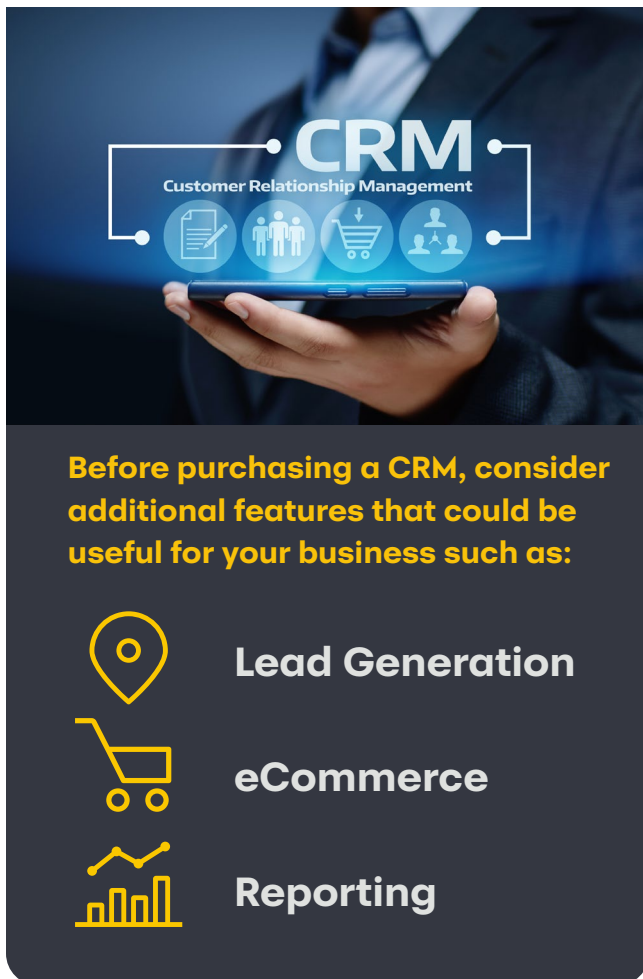
**Create opportunities to engage with your customers and show them you're committed to outstanding customer service.**

The evaluation process creates opportunities to engage with your customers and show them you're committed to outstanding customer service. When you ask customers for feedback on employees, products, services, and more for continuous improvement, you can help build rapport and loyalty.

To take your customer service a step further and help distinguish your small business from your competitors, get to know your customers, then use that knowledge to offer a more personalized experience. It can be as simple as remembering your customer's name and using it to welcome them back to your business.

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## 5. UTILIZE TOOLS AND RESOURCES TO HELP PROVIDE OUTSTANDING CUSTOMER SERVICE.

Another way to improve communication and provide customized service for your customers is to invest in customer relationship management (CRM) software, like **Salesforce, Capsule, Vtiger, and more.**<sup>3</sup> Today's CRM software is multifunctional but was **created to facilitate better customer communication and service.**<sup>4</sup> A CRM allows you to store contact information, capture demographics and purchase behavior, and log customer interactions all in one place, giving you and your employees the benefit of “remembering” all the relevant information the customer has shared over the course of doing business with you. Leveraging a CRM can be very affordable — **many providers have plans for around \$25 per month,**<sup>5</sup> and can help you offer better customer service, create upsell opportunities, nurture prospects, and increase overall sales for your small business.

Keep ease of implementation and employee training in mind when comparing systems, and look for something that integrates with the software you're already using. When you've created a short list of CRM options, take advantage of free trials offered by most CRM providers, so you can truly find what works best for your small business.

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For more information or to connect with an expert, contact us at [synchronyconnect@synchrony.com](mailto:synchronyconnect@synchrony.com).

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<sup>1</sup> **Customer Service**, LinkedIn Learning. 2022

<sup>2</sup> Decker, Allie. (2021). **The Ultimate Guide to Training for Customer Service & Support**. Hubspot.

<sup>3</sup> Rist, Oliver. (2022, February 11). **The Best Small Business CRM Software for 2022**. PC Mag.

<sup>4</sup> Kuligowski, Kiely. (2021, November 19). **11 Benefits of CRM Systems**. Business News Daily.

<sup>5</sup> **Doing Business Virtually: How to Choose and Use a CRM**, Synchrony Connect for Small Business, 2021