

## LEADERSHIP EFFECTIVENESS: DO YOUR POLICIES ALIENATE CUSTOMERS?

Recently, a traveling executive, “Anne,” had a piece of artwork shipped to her home in the U.S. from Italy—when it arrived, Anne was still abroad. She first attempted to change the delivery address with the American shipper, but with no success. So Anne’s mother, Sara, attempted to collect it. Sara brought with her an abundance of evidence to prove that she was authorized to receive the package. Mom brought passports, identification, the shipper’s door tag, and emails that carefully detailed every step of the artwork’s backstory, with a copy of a signed note from Anne. The shipper in Italy even called the U.S. and provided their authorization to release the package.

Despite these earnest attempts, the American shipper refused to be of any assistance and returned the piece to Italy. Instead of allowing the local associate to use logic and critical thinking, and release the package to Sara who had a plethora of documentation, they treated her like she wasn’t telling the truth and dismissed her as if she wasn’t important. Why would a world-famous shipping company create so much ill will?

Organizations need to be careful they do not adopt policies that “protect” their company while alienating their customers. Effective leaders constantly look for ways to enhance the customer experience. Policies that could make customers feel like criminals are a good way to get a reputation for poor customer service.

It is hard to imagine that excellent customer service has gone out of vogue; after all, positive word of mouth from satisfied customers is your most powerful—and cost-effective—advertising. Here are four customer service practices that will demonstrate how much you care about your valued customers:

1. Push decision-making down to the front-line level. Ensure customer service associates have the authority to resolve problems quickly. Avoid blanket policies that remove case-by-case discretion.
2. Train customer service associates to understand that their role includes empathizing with customers in addition to resolving problems.
3. Solicit customer feedback, then act on it.
4. Prioritize a corporate culture that attaches great importance to fostering excellent customer service. Equally prioritize a positive employee environment as these two are related (service-profit chain).

Maya Angelou famously said that people will forget what you said and what you did, but they never forget how you made them feel. We know that people continue to frequent businesses with poor customer service ... for a while, anyway. The businesses that lead the pack in their sector care about how their patrons are treated and always strive to ensure consistent, excellent customer experiences. Organizations with a “top-down” corporate culture fueled by a corporate mission and values—in other words, a positive, uplifting environment where people are proud to work—stand out in their industries as being ethical, easy to do business with, and desired places of employment by top talent.

*Is your customer service team doing its best to ensure an excellent customer experience? Do your customer service associates have empathy, and are they solution-oriented?*

### Additional Resources

- [Eight Tips For Providing Excellent Customer Service | forbes.com](#)
- [Businesses Lose \\$75 Billion Due To Poor Customer Service | forbes.com](#)
- [The Top 100 Most Customer-Centric Companies Of 2022 | forbes.com](#)
- [20 Large Companies Known for Having the Worst Customer Service | moneyinc.com](#)