

**There is a revolution brewing. For the first time, the impact of positive behavioural change gives customer service the opportunity to secure a place not only on the board's agenda, but firmly at the heart of the organisation. But why has this taken so long to achieve?**

Companies spend £billions a year on sales and marketing collateral to attract and acquire new customers. Quite rightly, sales are seen as a profit centre, and the return on any investment can be measured in terms of new customers and revenue generated.

Unfortunately, the same cannot be said for customer service, often seen as an unavoidable but begrudged cost for any business in the fight to retain customers. However, as customer satisfaction and therefore customer retention is central to the long-term survival, profitability and growth of any business, doesn't customer service deserve the recognition it sorely lacks?

And what about the role that excellent customer service plays in customer acquisition? Some businesses have created their organisation's entire ethos

around excellent customer service, for which 'sales through service' has become the lifeblood of their operation.

Time to define customer service excellence. At Huthwaite, we believe in and promote the philosophy of Living Sales™. This centres on everyone in the organisation appreciating their part in supporting the sales process and considering how their behaviour impacts on the company's bottom line.

There's no better example of the value of this approach than in customer service and in the ability of a highly skilled customer service professional. This professional will not only add value every time they come into contact with a customer, but often they will actually create value.

To achieve customer service excellence for today's high-maintenance customer, organisations need to realise it's as much about giving the customer what they haven't yet asked for as what they have.

It's not a case of waving a magic wand, it's a functional and

deliverable set of skills and behaviours that can be trained, learned and practiced.

The bottom line therefore, both literally and metaphorically, is that customer service can, and must, be seen as a positive income generator for businesses, rather than written off as a general running cost.

With the right kind of training and investment, customer service will deliver a significant and quantifiable return by delivering 'sales through service'. Customer service should no longer be seen as separate, but as an integral part of a company's sales development strategy. It must show that the company is putting sales at the heart of business.

With so many saturated marketplaces and today's difficult financial climate, customer acquisition and retention is harder and more important than ever. Customer service excellence is no longer seen as a 'nice to have'; but as essential to making individual organisations stand out from the crowd and key to making your business succeed.

# PUTTING CUSTOMER SERVICE FIRMLY IN THE BOARDROOM

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We'd certainly welcome both feedback and suggestions for future issues. Perhaps you'd like to write an article for us or there's a certain topic you'd like us to explore? Whatever your thoughts, please share them with us: [info@huthwaite.co.uk](mailto:info@huthwaite.co.uk) or on +44 (0) 1709 710081.

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