



## **Are You the Customer's First Call?**

**By Dennis Sommer, Founder and CEO, Executive Business Advisers  
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*How would you like to run a software sales organization that didn't need marketing? Customers call you 24 hours a day nonstop, more business than you can handle and no need for a marketing budget. This can happen when you are the customer's first call or what I call a 'Household Name' (a person/business that everyone thinks of when they have a serious problem that must be fixed). Are you that person or business?*

If you are in need of investment help, does the name Charles Schwab and Peter Block come to mind? Do you think of Tom Peters and Stephen Covey when you are having management issues? If you are having real-estate development issues, does the name Donald Trump come to mind? You get my point. Do you think any of these business professionals really need to market their businesses? I don't think so. How different would your business be if your name first comes to mind when your customer needs help? When you think about it, becoming a 'Household Name' should be your highest business priority.

Let's take a look at how you can become a 'Household Name' in the software industry.

### **Superior Customer Service**

Good companies provide quality customer service. Once you become their client, they will handle your issues quickly and professionally. The difference between a good company and a 'Household Name' is that the latter focuses on customer service even before a client becomes a client. By focusing on customer service from the first initial phone call or client meeting, you can eliminate customer complaints instead of reacting to them once they occur.

Follow these 6 tips for superior customer service:

#### **Focus on the Customer**

A 'Household Name' always provides superior customer service. Household Names focus on the customer instead of themselves and their business. The focus on great customer service turns satisfied customers into lifelong loyal customers.

#### **Positive Attitude**

A positive attitude, focused attention and commitment to resolving customer complaints will have a huge impact on customer satisfaction and the likelihood your customer will buy from you again and again.

#### **Offer a Guarantee**

Guarantee your offering and stand by it. Offer an unconditional money-back guarantee on all products and services.

## **Focus on the Customer's Goal**

Help customers achieve their goals, not yours. Your goals will be exceeded when you help customers solve their problems.

## **Recommend Other Solutions**

Have the best interest of the customer in mind. Try to bring a customer with a problem together with an offering that helps them solve it. If you don't have the exact solution they require, recommend other business solutions that could help them.

## **It's Okay to Disagree**

Customers are not 'always' right. Disagree with a customer, in a polite professional manner, in order to help them make a better decision.

## **Strong Communication**

Take a moment and think about a 'Household Name' in your industry. Do they rattle off statistics, techno jargon and other mumbo jumbo that could only be understood by a NASA scientist? Do they go on forever lecturing you on incomprehensible topics and you never have a chance to talk? Most likely your answer is, "No."

A 'Household Name' has the ability to sit down and listen to clients. Then, a 'Household Name' translates a very complex solution into terms that a six-year old can understand. They keep it simple.

A 'Household Name' focuses on improving written, verbal and listening skills. When dealing with customers you must become the master communicator.

Follow these 5 tips for building strong communication.

## **Communicate Your Value**

Always tell your customer why they should buy/use your solution. Use plain English (no technical terminology) and describe the benefits. Example: 'Produce a widget in ½ the time' or 'Services are performed in ½ the time and at ½ the cost.'

## **Listen Naively**

Listen naively instead of defending and debating. Keeping an open, unbiased mind and allowing the customer to talk provides valuable information that you can address in the future.

## **Tell a Story**

Customers will better understand information if told as a story. Instead of showing numbers, statistics and technical points, tell them a story about customer experiences with the offering, how they used it and the value they received.

## **Use Simple Language**

You have a 50% greater chance of success by translating raw data into simple words, knowledge and wisdom that customers can use to make smart decisions. Turn raw data into a story.

## **Demonstrate Your Solution**

Highlight and demonstrate how easy your solution is to use.

## **Tremendous Knowledge**

Would you hire a professional or purchase a solution from someone who didn't take the time to learn about his or her industry or products? Would you have confidence in his or her solution? I didn't think so. So what impression do you leave with your customers? 'Household Names' not only become the expert in their own solutions, they also become an expert on their competitors and the customer's industry.

Follow these 4 tips for building tremendous knowledge:

### **Allocate Your Time**

Spend 60% of your time with customers, 20% learning more about your offering and tradecraft and 20% on other business needs like management and administration.

### **Know Thy Competitor**

No one should know more about your offering and your competitor's offerings than you. Build confidence by knowing both, both the technical specifications and their applications.

### **Know Thy Industry**

Learn more about your industry. The more you read and learn, the greater your likelihood to be among the first to identify meaningful solutions.

### **Talk about Your Competition**

Learn to talk more about your competition, what the customers like and what they dislike.

### **Build Strong Relationships**

A big portion of my work with clients focuses on improving sales by improving their relationship with the customer. In this fast-paced world, many professionals and organizations are so focused on short-term goals; they have forgotten one of the most important success factors. People buy relationships not products. It's hard to focus on the customer when you are dealing with monthly quota goals, internal politics, investors, organizational changes and the overflow of email and voice-mail requests requiring immediate responses. Unfortunately, if you ignore your customer, they won't be a customer for long.

Connecting with customers on a personal and professional level will build a strong customer relationship turning them into lifetime loyal customers.

Follow these 7 tips for building strong relationships:

### **Reduce Customer Stress**

The easier it is for customers to do business with you, the greater their likelihood of repurchasing. For example, make the selling process as easy as possible. A long, complex selling process will turn off customers and drive them to your competitors.

### **Pay Attention to Detail**

Customers make a direct connection between attention to detail and competence. Pay attention to such details as spelling, what you say, out of place items, grooming or dress.

## Do a Road Show

Do a 20-customer road show twice a year. Nothing beats going into the field and meeting customers face-to-face to better understand what they need and show them what you have to offer.

## Over Deliver

Create a pattern of dependability by making small promises and over delivering on results.

## Be Honest

Be an honest adviser. Present both the strengths and weaknesses of your offering. It is better for the customer to learn about your weaknesses now than to discover them later.

## Stay Upbeat

Keep your tone upbeat. Make a point to elevate the moods of people around you. Hearing your name should lift their mood.

## Be Likeable

Customers prefer to buy from people they like. Being likeable is as simple as helping customers feel happy, relaxed, and even feel good about themselves.

Are you ready to go beyond marketing and become a 'Household Name'?

Are you prepared to become a leader in your industry?

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*Dennis Sommer is Founder and CEO of Executive Business Advisers, a management consulting firm specializing in sales and profit improvement. He helps companies take their performance to the next level by finding new ways to maximize sales and profit growth. Dennis helps them align their strategy, financials, marketing and sales into one focused-revenue generation process. He is a highly sought after CEO adviser, sales and marketing specialist, speaker and author. Dennis has started two successful growth-focused companies and held executive positions in sales, business development and operations. For article feedback, contact Dennis at [dennis@dennissommer.com](mailto:dennis@dennissommer.com)*

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