

The 4 'R's of customer service

As a developer of people and organisations since 1982 I have maintained a 'customer care' file since the early days. When I first started looking for, and finding plenty of new material and ideas I began working on the theme 'beyond customer care', as I wanted to find ways of getting organisations *genuinely* customer-focused.

This led to the creation of my 4 'R's of true customer service model:

Recruitment (of customers)

Retention

(Service) Recovery

Retrieval

For the past six years, whilst doing everything else, I have steadily worked on this, and have been seeking organisations grown up enough to accept the challenge of the four 'R's model... guess what no takers yet!

How much is spent and wasted on front line customer care training?

Well you know as well as I do... the 4 'R's model isn't for the frontliners, it's on their behalf, and the customers' too. The four 'r's needs very senior managers to look harder at themselves than seems to feel comfortable - take a look at the small selection of material posted here and you will see what I mean - especially the 40 diagnostic questions.

In summary, the 4 'R's are these:

Recruitment:

Are you acquiring the right sort of customer? Is there a specific strategy for this? Who are the 'right' customers anyway? Is there consensus on this? What about the 'wrong' sort? How many of these have you? How do you know? Is too much money and effort put into new customer acquisition and not enough elsewhere?

Retention:

Do you know your annual customer turnover by value or volume? If not, shouldn't you? What targets should be set and monitored concerning customer retention? Are you keeping the right or the wrong sort of customer? How can you find out? What would be the effect on profitability of even a little more retention of key customers?

Recovery:

What are your service recovery strategies? How do you put right what goes wrong? Does your Chief Executive personally get first hand, the feedback customers provide? Do you consider a complaint a gift? Are you complaint friendly? What do customers think? Are you really aware of the destructive effects of unresolved customer dissatisfaction?

Retrieval:

Do you give up lapsed customers as lost? What is a lapsed customer anyway? What if you targeted, with individual responsibility, the retrieval of key 'lost' customers? How much more cost effective is it for you to keep, and retrieve than acquire new customers? Have you the will to take on the hard lessons a genuine retrieval effort will require?

If this challenge interests you, do get in touch – in the meantime make sure you see my 40 questions that develop these four themes.