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TOP TIPS FOR A CUSTOMER SERVICE CULTURE

Any small business knows that customers are key.  But how do you make sure you continually offer the very best customer service and always put your customers first? Frea O’Brien, general manager of [Customer First UK](http://www.customerfirst.org)1offers her tips to help you on your way to achieving those aims.

1. **Deliver customer experiences.** You and your employees are a living extension of your brand, so you need to bring the values to life and deliver directly to customers.
2. **Communicate clearly and effectively.** Your customers will appreciate being talked to clearly and concisely. And if you have employees, communication is key too — so that you can highlight the expectations you have and the behaviour you would like to see.
3. **Identify and anticipate customer needs.** Remember, customers don't buy products or services, they buy good feelings and solutions to problems. Most customer needs are emotional rather than logical. By identifying and anticipating these needs, you are more likely to give your customers exactly what they are after.
4. **Treat any employees well.** If you have employees, customer service isn’t just an external process. Make sure you see your employees as your internal customers — as the quality of your customer service will never exceed the quality of the people that provide it.
5. **Always measure service quality and feedback.** Listening to feedback from your customers and measuring the long-term impact of the services you deliver should be a fundamental part of your business.
6. **Establish processes that are customer friendly.** Eliminate any customer structures that are too rigid and complicated to work, and establish your company as one that is “easy to do business with”.
7. **Always go the extra mile.** It’s a well-known customer service mantra — but not one that is always upheld. Although customers may not mention it to you when extra effort has been made, they **will** notice and **will** tell other people. And of course, if no effort is made at all, they’ll definitely notice and be more likely to tell others, too!
8. **Monitor your competition.** Any business should keep close to the competition. In terms of customer service, the quality of the service you provide should at least be the same as your competition. Remember, if you’re not taking care of your customers, then **your competition will**.

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1[*Customer First UK*](http://www.customerfirst.org) *is the awarding body for Putting the Customer First ® - the National Standard for Customer Service.*