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# A SIMPLE GUIDE TO CUSTOMER SERVICE

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A handbook for managers  
by Chris Gadd



*"It's nice to be important, but it is more important to be nice." – John Cassis*

*"There is only one boss – the customer. And he or she can fire everybody in the company, from the chairman on down, simply by spending his or her money somewhere else." – Sam Walton, founder of Walmart*

## **Contents**

About the author.....	1
Introduction.....	2
How this guide can help you.....	4
The importance of good customer service.....	5
Communication.....	7
Body language.....	9
The use of computers in customer service.....	15
Communication between staff members.....	16
Attention.....	18
Listening to your staff.....	20
Dealing with complaints.....	21
Identify and investigate the problem.....	22
Receiving feedback.....	25
Knowledge.....	27
Mystery Shoppers.....	30
Understanding your customers.....	34

Analysing the results of your survey.....	40
Arranging staff training.....	41
Customer service roleplay.....	44
Telephone roleplay.....	46
TripAdvisor and other review websites.....	47
Conclusion.....	50

### **About the author**

Chris Gadd has worked in the catering industry for over thirty years. The majority of this time has been spent front of house, interacting with customers.

## Introduction

I decided to write this guide in order to pass on the lessons I have learned during my thirty years of customer service experience and to help managers – and their staff – excel in this competitive, demanding, and rewarding industry.

One of my main goals throughout my career has been repeat business. Seeing the same faces return for visit after visit, feeling confident in the service they would receive and recommending the business to their friends, has been incredibly gratifying.

Over the course of my career, my personality has been commented upon almost as much as my service skills. Although this cannot be taught, some lessons in prudent decision-making and building your employees' confidence – as well as a bit of common sense – will help you deliver excellent service to your customers, no matter what industry you work in.

My guiding principle is an often-repeated axiom: treat people the way you would like to be treated. A

familiar lesson, and one that is central to providing excellent customer service, but one that we often forget to implement in our daily lives. It applies to life generally, but is especially relevant when you work in a customer-facing role – if you keep this basic principle in mind then you won't go far wrong.

## **How this guide can help you**

Although I have worked mainly in catering and hospitality, this guide is not focussed on that industry alone. The guidance and lessons are universal and designed to benefit any customer-facing business.

The purpose of this guide is to help you as a manager understand the principles of good customer service, so that you can deliver effective training to your staff and ensure every customer takes notice of the excellent service you provide.

The guide details the key qualities that you want to develop in your staff – and exemplify yourself – in order to benefit your business, as well as tried and tested methods for getting the best out of your staff, dealing with tricky situations, and learning how to delight your customers.



## **The importance of good customer service**

*“The customer is always right – sometimes confused, sometimes misinformed, occasionally rude, and often stubborn, frequently changeable and sometimes downright stupid – but never wrong.”*  
– Dr Alan Zimmerman

Good customer service can have positive effects on almost every aspect of your business. If you can provide an attentive and efficient service you will:

1. Delight your customers
2. See an increase in repeat business
3. Increase your revenue
4. Lift staff morale
5. Enjoy a good reputation as a business
6. See an increase in new customers
7. See your business featured in reputable publications

However, achieving this is easier said than done. And just one incidence of poor customer service can

undo a lot of hard work very quickly. It is therefore important that you ensure that your staff is well-equipped to deal with any eventuality.

## Communication

Communication is probably the most important skill in your customer service toolkit. Good communication creates a positive first impression, ensures that staff and customers are on the same page, and is a vital part of defusing negative situations too.

During my time working for a large hotel chain, I attended an in-depth course about the importance of effective communication, and I have since distilled what I learned into four simple rules that are easy to teach and remember:

**Every time you see a guest, smile and offer an appropriate hospitality comment.**

**Speak to every guest with an enthusiastic tone and courteous manner.**

**Try to answer questions and act upon requests as promptly as possible.**

**Ensure that the client is aware that you are doing everything you can to assist them.**

This simple set of rules will ensure that your customers feel welcomed and respected and help your business to thrive. Good rapport with clients and efficient service are key to securing repeat business and steady revenue.

Display these rules prominently in your communal staff areas to ensure they are always front-of-mind.

## Body language

Non-verbal cues can tell you as much - if not more - about a person's mood than what they say.

Similarly, the way your staff carry themselves when interacting with customers is just as important as what they say and how they handle the situation.

Positive body language looks professional and helps build a good rapport between customers and staff, whereas negative body language looks lazy and unprofessional. Please see the examples below.

<b>Positive body language</b>	<b>Negative body language</b>
Smiling	Appearing visibly bored or annoyed
Eye contact	Eyes wandering; looking at another task
Standing up straight	Slouching
Holding your arms at your side	Fidgeting, arms folded; hands in pockets

Actively listening; showing that you care and are interested	Looking bored and looking away
Giving people their personal space	Leaning in and standing too close
Mirroring someone's body language	Aggressive gestures; pointing fingers

As you can see from this chart, we don't even need to speak to show how much or how little we care about a conversation. Our body language says it all.

The three most important things to remember when teaching staff about body language are eye contact, posture and tone of voice.

With the exception of some cultures, **eye contact** is a crucial part of a respectful conversation. Making eye contact with a customer reassures them that they have your full attention and makes them feel listened to. It also helps them have confidence in your responses, as maintaining eye contact when

you are speaking to a customer conveys assertiveness and conviction.

When dealing with someone who has a complaint, you should properly introduce yourself, offering a handshake if it feels appropriate. Once you have greeted them, it is of the utmost importance that you maintain eye contact with the customer. This reassures them that you are listening to their grievance and taking it seriously.

Looking away suggests to the customer that you are not listening and don't care about what they are trying to say. This could escalate a routine enquiry or minor complaint into something more serious as they will feel offended and lose trust in your establishment.

Good **posture** is another way we can communicate without opening our mouths. A friendly, open and confident demeanour will make a customer feel comfortable approaching you and put them at ease throughout your conversation.

It may seem so simple that it doesn't need saying, but standing up straight – even if you're behind a bar or counter – is essential. Always greet people by standing up if you are working behind a desk. When you're sitting down, crossing your legs and folding your arms can make you appear defensive and unapproachable. If customers don't feel comfortable approaching you, queries or complaints will go unresolved – potentially leading to negative reviews.

When talking to a customer, mirroring their body language – as long as they aren't too upset or angry – is generally a good idea and will make them feel at ease. When indicating something or giving directions, open gestures with the hands look more professional than pointing with your finger, which is considered rude in some cultures. It is also worth remembering that, even if you know the customer, there might be someone looking on who does not.

Our posture and the way we present ourselves determine how people perceive us - it is much easier to form a good first impression than it is to rectify a bad one. Make it clear to your staff that slouching,



leaning, and standing with their arms folded is not acceptable and remember to lead by example, always demonstrating good posture and a welcoming demeanour yourself.

When speaking to customers, a friendly **tone of voice**, will make them feel welcome and valued. It will also make your life easier as the more approachable you are, the less hostile the customer is likely to be. People have a natural tendency to mirror the person they're interacting with. When dealing with complaints, a friendly voice and attentive manner will help defuse the situation from the outset. Your tone of voice is especially important when your main interaction with customers is over the telephone, as you won't be able to create a positive first impression using eye contact or posture.

It goes without saying that offensive language or a negative tone of voice is a bad idea in any customer service situation and you should have a zero-tolerance policy on rudeness.

Patience is imperative when dealing with customers – especially on the telephone. Remember that a system or situation that is very familiar to you might be challenging for others. This is especially relevant when interacting with older customers. A good tip is to ensure that all customer-facing staff are well-versed in using and discussing the product or service you provide, so that they can give detailed step-by-step instructions to a customer over the phone if necessary.

It is often said that customers remember bad experiences more than good ones. However, our body language and tone of voice can create a good impression and make the customer feel special, hopefully leading to a positive experience that will be passed on as a recommendation.

## **The use of computers in customer service**

It is all well and good explaining how to communicate effectively face-to-face but, in this day and age, a lot of workplace communication is carried out via email.

This can be quick, efficient, and benefit us all – when used correctly. However, it is easy to slip into bad habits when speaking via email, as the customer isn't present in the same way. Ensure that your staff maintain a degree of formality when they email customers as over-familiarity is a common pitfall. It is also important to spell-check any external communication before you send it, as well as check it over generally to make sure it contains all the information the client needs.

If you have to place an order online for a customer, it's always good practice to double-check before you send it. Pressing an extra number could end up being a total disaster.

## **Communication between staff**

The benefits of clear communication with customers are obvious: a positive interaction leads to repeat business, positive reviews, word-of-mouth recommendations, and, ultimately, more revenue for your business. However, effective communication between staff members is just as important to the future of your business.

A weekly staff meeting is a good habit to get into. This will give staff the opportunity to ask questions and pool their knowledge. It also gives managers the opportunity to deliver short training sessions and take note of any breakdown in communication. You will be amazed by what slips through the cracks – in even the best of teams – and these weekly check-ins help keep everyone on the same page and allow you to spot issues before they are raised by a customer.

## **Take the example of Mr Jones**

Mr Jones always gets a 10% discount because he has been a loyal customer for years. John is a new member of staff and no one thought to tell him about the discount. John thinks Mr Jones is making this up and, rather than going to check with another member of staff, he refuses to honour the discount. Mr Jones is understandably upset, so he leaves and decides to take his business elsewhere.

There were two breakdowns of communication in this instance: John hadn't been informed about the discount and he hadn't received thorough communication training either. He didn't represent the business well when he was speaking to Mr Jones and he didn't think to ask another staff member for help. However, this isn't entirely John's fault, as he should have been taught how to handle the situation appropriately and been informed by a manager or another staff member about the discount.

## **Attention**

When communicating with a customer, either in a face-to-face setting or over the phone, they are likely to be requesting information, a service, or placing an order. In these situations, listening carefully is just as important as communicating clearly.

When taking an order, it is good practice to get into the habit of reading the details back to the customer and asking for them for confirmation. This ensures that they get exactly what they want, without error or delay. Once the order has been confirmed, keep a record of it – no matter how good your memory is – so that you (or someone else) can refer back to it if necessary.

The more precise you are from the offset, the more likely you are to have a satisfied customer at the end of the interaction. No matter how polite and friendly you are, your customer won't be impressed if they don't get what they asked for, so it's worth taking

some extra time at the beginning to save time later on.

Listening attentively whilst dealing with a complaint is also a very important skill. It's easy to become distracted, thinking about how you will respond and rectify the situation, but you need to make sure that you've collected all the relevant information before you can do anything. The information that you receive when a customer is annoyed might be slightly exaggerated and will require a careful ear to sort fact from fiction. If possible, try to make a note of pertinent details as you go.

## **Listening to your staff**

A manager who is too quick to criticise – without listening to all sides of a story – will alienate their staff and may end up inconveniencing the customer too.

Your staff are your eyes and ears – and your representatives – when it comes to the daily running of your business and they are an extremely valuable asset if you take the time to foster good relations.

When staff feel listened to they are more invested in doing the best job they can and feel empowered to handle unfamiliar situations with confidence.



## **Dealing with complaints**

Handling complaints is an unpleasant, but necessary, part of customer service. It's something that you hope you won't have to do it very often, but it's wise to prepare for the worst while hoping for the best.

It's important for your staff to feel confident that they can reach a resolution that works for the customer and for your business. Make sure that every member of your staff is aware of your company's policy on customer complaints so that they can implement the following steps politely but assertively:

1. Don't answer back or argue
2. Be calm
3. Be consistent
4. Show sympathy where appropriate
5. Be fair
6. Take your time to review the situation
7. Conclude the situation decisively

## **Identify and investigate the problem**

You need to make sure that you and your staff deal with the problem quickly and quietly so as not to inconvenience the customer or bring the issue to the attention of all your other customers. Where possible, take the customer aside so you can give them your full attention and discuss the problem openly but discreetly – you never know, the customer may be embarrassed by their complaint too.

You will need to listen carefully, ask the right questions, discover exactly what happened, and work out how this can be resolved.

The way you handle a complaint is as important to the customer as the outcome of the situation. If you listen, then quickly and graciously own up to any mistakes made on your part and offer to make it up to the customer in some way, the customer is more likely to remember the final, more positive outcome than the original issue. Therefore you will have

turned a negative situation into a positive one. If staff don't have a positive and apologetic attitude, the customer will leave reflecting on the problem and your failure to resolve it.

However, one of the sticking points of handling customer complaints is that some people will exaggerate a problem in order to try and profit from the situation. This is a very awkward scenario for you to encounter – staff and managers alike.

You will certainly be familiar with the phrase **“The customer is always right”** – it has been repeated so often that we no longer think to challenge it, but I think it needs careful qualification and should not be applied as a blanket rule.

It is very common for customers to be misinformed about a situation or, less frequently, for them to deliberately try and deceive staff in order to get a discount, refund, or some other benefit.

People like myself who have worked in customer-facing roles for many years have good instincts

about these people – this is why it is so important to trust and listen to your staff. I have dealt with complaints on many occasions where, after talking to my staff, it has become apparent that the customer has told a very biased version of events in order to make some personal gain.

As a manager, it is then a matter of your discretion whether you refuse to pander to this customer or whether – to prevent further escalation – you give them a refund or discount. Though it might seem terribly unfair, these people do often get their way when they make these exaggerated complaints as they are the sort of people who will readily write to head office or leave a negative TripAdvisor review.

## **Receiving feedback**

We all have different personalities and strengths. Some are more confident than others, for example, but having a mixture of personalities on your staff is a strength, not a weakness. They can all learn from each other. Naturally confident team members can also tend to be opinionated and a little domineering – they can learn the value of listening and thinking before speaking from quieter team members. Conversely, a shy member of staff can learn how to appear more confident from a bolder colleague.

Some workers, who might be diligent and conscientious in all other areas, are just not good at taking feedback. These are the people you need to work closely with when you are providing training on handling complaints. Try to work with them one-on-one to improve their technique. Talk to them quietly and explain that it would be best if they find someone else to deal with customer complaints for a while. Then ask them to observe and learn from their colleague's technique. Once they have

observed for a while, they can begin to handle complaints with another staff member present for reassurance (who can intervene if necessary).

Remember, handling complaints graciously and effectively will do nothing but improve your reputation and make your business the one to use.

## Knowledge

When it comes to sales and customer service, it is no good being friendly, courteous, and attentive if you do not know your business and its product. If you don't ensure that your staff have a thorough knowledge of your business, you are setting yourself up to fail.

As well as being able to answer any question a customer throws at you, the biggest advantage detailed knowledge can give you is confidence.

Using the catering industry as an example, here are some simple examples:

**Receptionists** should be familiar with every room type, whether they have showers or baths, the location of every room, which facilities can be found in the room, and check and check out times. It is also helpful if reception staff know how to use the facilities in the rooms e.g. how the television works and how the lights work.

**Restaurant** staff should know the menu back to front and be able to answer any questions that customers have about food or drinks. When an indecisive customer ask for a recommendation, the last thing they want to hear is “everything” – this is a cop out and suggests their server isn’t familiar with the menu. Asking a question as simple as, “How hungry are you today?” would be a start.

It’s also very important that restaurant staff are equipped to deal with any special dietary requests. Allergies of all sorts are very common and the wrong food could not only be an unpleasant mistake, but could be fatal. Any customer with a particular allergy will be able to tell you what they cannot eat. If at any time you cannot guarantee that a dish doesn’t contain that ingredient, then it must not be risked. Vegetarians, vegans, and religious dietary requirements are also common and your staff should be equipped with answers to these questions too.



When it comes to knowledge of the wine list, most people know what they like and very rarely drink anything else. However, sometimes people are in the mood for something a little different – particularly if they're celebrating or dining with a client – and they will ask their server for a recommendation. Providing staff with some brief tasting notes – or even just encouraging them to read the labels on bottles – so they are aware which white wines are dry and which are sweet, for example, will help them make recommendations to customers. However, encourage them to ask someone else rather than guess if they aren't sure. No customer can expect you to know their tastes.

All staff should know the location of facilities like toilets, baby changing and disabled access.

## **Mystery Shoppers**

I have already highlighted the ways that we can use our skills to make sure that we give our guests and customers great service. Of course, we go about our working day and hope that we are consistently friendly and thorough, paying attention to every detail to ensure that the customer is completely satisfied. But, to make sure this happens, we need to be on our toes all the time. This is where a mystery shopper can be very useful for your business. A mystery shopper is a person employed to visit a shop or restaurant and assess the quality of their goods or services.

Lots of household names use this tool and it is surprising how effective it is. Tim Martin, founder of the hugely popular pub chain J D Wetherspoons, swears by this method of ensuring excellence from his staff and spends at least two days a week visiting pubs all over the country. Although he doesn't hide his identity from his staff, he behaves like a normal customer, ordering drinks and chatting with staff.

Key areas that mystery shoppers always comment on:

1. Demeanour of the staff. They should be friendly, approachable, and not delay in acknowledging clients.
2. Eye contact and body language from staff
3. Staff members' knowledge of products
4. Whether they received the service they asked for
5. Attention to detail
6. Compliance with the procedures that your business has set out as their standards.

When you hire a mystery shopper, you can brief them on anything to which you would like them to pay particular attention.

The mystery shopper, if they are doing their job correctly, should come and go without anyone guessing who they are. They will then file a report detailing their feedback which will be passed on to your business.

The report will highlight what they thought was excellent, as well as any bad habits they spotted. They might also include either a name or a brief description of the person who served them. This then gives you an opportunity to think about any staff training that may be required.

Some companies might let you know a window of time in which to expect the visit. However, as stated above, if the shopper is doing their job correctly then they will not be noticed and, if your staff are doing *their* jobs to a high standard, it shouldn't matter when the shopper visits.

It is sensible not to inform staff of the visit, or to use the same mystery shopper too frequently, as then staff could recognise them and modify their behaviour. The service should, of course, be excellent at all times but, if they are too focussed on the mystery shopper, their concentration could slip regarding other guests.

## **Understanding your customers**

Now that you have an in-depth knowledge of the most important customer service skills, it is time to think about how you and your employees will practice those skills every day. Having a clear idea of where your business excels and which areas need some work will help you take your business to the next level.

In order to deliver better service to your customers, you need to understand them. You need to understand their priorities and irritations as customers, as well as their current feelings about your business. Once you have a clearer idea of what motivates your customers, you will be able to provide training for your staff that is tailored to your business.

The best way to understand your customer base is to ask them what they think in the form of a survey or feedback form. Provided you ask the right questions, a survey will deliver detailed feedback on

areas where your business excels, and areas in need of improvement. It will also makes your customers feel listened to and valued – a benefit that should not be underestimated.

It's important to design survey questions that are clear and relevant to the service you provide, and to present them in a format that is easy for your customers to access.

If you have a business that already uses guest comment forms then you could use these to ask your customer base for their opinions. If you work in telecommunications you could ask for feedback at the end of a phone call, and there are lots of free survey-building websites that make collecting data simple if you mainly interact with clients via email.

Here are some example questions:

### **Telephone customer service**

- Was the telephone answered promptly?  
(Yes/No)

- Did you feel that the staff member understood your request? (Yes/No)
- Did you feel satisfied with the outcome of the conversation? (Yes/No)
- How would you rate your conversation overall, on a scale of 1 to 5? (1 - poor, 5 - excellent)
- Would you recommend this service/product to a friend?
- If your answer is no, why not?

### **Retail and hospitality customer service**

- How long did you wait to be acknowledged?
- How long, after being acknowledged, did you wait to be served?
- Were the staff who served you courteous and polite? (Yes/No)
- How would you rate the presentation of our staff, on a scale of 1 to 5? (1 - poor, 5 - excellent)

- How satisfied were you overall with your experience today, on a scale of 1 to 5? (1 - poor, 5 - excellent)
- Would you recommend this service/product/venue to a friend?
- If your answer is no, why not?

### **Providing customers with a product or service**

- Was your order taken accurately?
- Was the staff member you spoke to polite and friendly?
- Did you receive the product or service that you ordered promptly?
- Were you satisfied with the outcome?
- Could they have improved what was required in either time, standard for instance?
- If what you received was unsatisfactory did you feel your comments were handled well?
- Would you recommend?
- Why would not recommend if applicable?



These are just a few example questions – use them as a starting point to design a survey that is tailored to your company. Remember to make the questions easily answerable when designing your own survey. This prevents your customers from abandoning the survey halfway through and also provides you with much more useful responses. Lots of open-ended questions might provide you with very specific feedback, but they will make it hard to collate your results.

Often people do not need a survey form in order to make a complaint, but only rarely will people who received excellent service take the time to contact the business. In order to get a more comprehensive look at an average visit – as opposed to only hearing about either very bad or very good experiences – some companies offer an incentive to customers who provide feedback on their visit, for example, entry into a prize draw.

## **Analysing the results of your survey**

When you examine the results of your survey, you will be able to see how your staff are performing overall, how your customers feel about the business, and, hopefully, receive some positive feedback that you can pass on to your team.

Once you've gathered together all the results of your survey, you will also have a better understanding of the quality of the service your business provides and you will be able to use this information to identify areas for improvement and supplement the training in this guide with real-life examples.

The next section of the guide will take you through some training and learning exercises, which I have used to great effect over the course of my career.

## **Arranging staff training**

Once you have collected as much data as possible from your customers, arrange a staff training day or session for all of your staff – however long their service. The aim of these training days is to pool knowledge and ensure every staff member feels as though they're part of a wider support network so, whether they're a new hire or a seasoned professional, everyone should attend.

You can then facilitate group discussions about the results of your customer survey and run through some simple training exercises to ensure that everyone on your staff is delivering consistently excellent service to your customers.

First, discuss all of the comments that have been made by your customers - both good and bad - and encourage your staff to think of reasons why particular comments have been made, as well as ideas on how to improve. This session will not only make everyone aware of what has been done well

and what needs to change, but it will help your team feel a sense of ownership over the improvement strategies, as they will be based on their own ideas. For this exercise, I'd advise you to omit any comments that mention particular staff members by name. Calling them out in a group setting is not a productive way to have this conversation and will just make them feel defensive. If necessary, keep a list of any comments which mention specific staff members on a separate piece of paper, you can always speak to them privately at another time if you feel it's necessary.

Then, task your team with creating a list of the positive results that great customer service can have and then another list of the negative effects of poor customer service. Once they have finished brainstorming, discuss these lists in relation to your own business: Does your business suffer from any of these negative effects? What benefits has good customer service brought to your business?

Ask your staff what kind of behaviour - both positive and negative - attracts their attention when they are

customers elsewhere. This is a great jumping-off point for a conversation about how good customer service can define an experience, and allows you to explore ways in which you could go the extra mile for your customers.

## **Customer service roleplay**

Role playing customer service scenarios gets your staff solving problems, communicating with one another, and will also develop their confidence. Additionally, it also allows you, the opportunity to closely observe how your team members deal with certain situations, in order to identify what you need to work on as a team.

Come up with a few hypothetical customer situations – make them as tricky as you can – and then pair up your staff members. Assign one the role of customer and the other the role of staff member and encourage them to resolve their role play scenario calmly and effectively. Then reverse the roles.

Role play as a tool for developing customer service skills can have the following advantages:

1. Staff will be confident in handling situations when they arise in their everyday working life.
2. Less confident members of the team can practice in a relaxed situation.
3. Staff can practice their verbal and non-verbal communication skills e.g. eye contact and body language.

It's important to put all your staff at ease and let them work out how they want to handle the situation. Before they begin, ask them how they plan to deal with the problem. Do not intervene even if you think they haven't quite got the right approach. In this group learning setting mistakes are valuable as everyone can learn from them. Let them perform the role play and then discuss with the whole group what they did well and what they could have done differently. Make sure that the staff doing the role play have taken any comments on board and then let the next pair do their scenarios and follow the same process. Getting team members to comment on each other's role plays means that everyone in the room can learn from each other.

## **Telephone roleplay**

It can also be useful for staff members to carry out this roleplay exercise in the location where the situation may occur. If you're practicing face-to-face customer service, get them to stand behind a counter; if your team mainly interact with customers over the phone, set up a partition so the complainant and the staff member can't see each other and work on reading the customer's mood without visual cues.

Your whole team will soon be confident that they can handle any situation that day-to-day business operation can throw at them. However, although confidence is key, it is equally important to make sure that they know they can pass an issue over to someone with more experience if they need to. The priority is making sure that the customer gets a resolution to their problem and the more confident the person dealing with the situation the better the outcome.



## **TripAdvisor and other review websites**

In addition to your customer survey, TripAdvisor is an excellent source of information when trying to find out how your business is perceived. I'm sure most of the people reading this guide will be familiar with it and use it themselves, but, for anyone who is unfamiliar, TripAdvisor is a website which allows users to compare reviews of restaurants, hotels, and attractions, compare prices, and look for discounts or offers.

Personally, I have always used TripAdvisor as a customer in order to look for good deals and check the reputation of any new establishment I am planning to visit. The main advantage of TripAdvisor for the customer is that the vast majority of reviews are left by other customers and they provide an honest account of their experience. This allows the customer to avoid any business with bad customer service without even having to experience it themselves.

For businesses, TripAdvisor can be an excellent tool for marketing your business and, as long as the reviews are positive, can encourage lots of new customers. However it does also leave your business vulnerable to the effects of negative reviews as they are published online for all the world to see.

If you look at all the TripAdvisor comments for the average business, the good comments tend to be very short, whereas the bad ones are reported in twice the amount of detail. Everyone remembers their bad experiences and they will often go out of their way to share them. It is also likely that, if the overall experience was poor, they won't include any mention of anything that went well.

TripAdvisor reviews tend to focus on the following:

1. Value for money
2. Cleanliness
3. Ambience of venue
4. Quality of service
5. Speed of service

6. Whether the price was the same as advertised
7. Any issues with the booking or service
8. How any issues were handled
9. Whether staff were knowledgeable
10. Whether the venue was busy or crowded; whether there were enough facilities available

These are just a few of the comments that can be made and, when things don't go to plan, you'll be surprised to see the level of detail customers will include in their review!

Any negative reviews can possibly damage your business for a long time, so it is important to take steps to prevent them.

## **Conclusion**

This is a simple guide to the importance of customer service. I hope that it will be a useful tool for you and your business - whatever industry you work in.

Some of the ideas discussed in this guide are just matters of common sense and, hopefully, many of you will already have in place some of the practices that I have described. However, complacency is the true enemy of good customer service, so I hope this guide motivates you to reflect on your business and to think critically about the service that you're currently providing. If reading this guide helps you discover one area of improvement, or helps you develop your existing staff training in some way, then I will consider that a success.

Remember whatever we do and wherever we are – whether we're buying a newspaper from a corner shop, ordering a meal in a restaurant, or booking a holiday – we all want to be treated with respect.

They say that you never get a second chance at a first impression, so you have to make sure your business is getting it right every time.

Thank you for taking the time to read this guide and I wish you and your business every success for the future.