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In 2006, Dick Gorelick, president of consultancy Gorelick & Associates and the Graphic Arts
Sales Foundation, surveyed thousands of print buyers. The questionnaires were tailored to the
print-selling organizations, but the overall feedback enabled Gorelick and his team to identify
trends in the print-buying community.

A key result: print buyers had increased their emphasis on customer service. "The customer
service representative has assumed more credibility and importance throughout the entire
business community," Gorelick says. "Many buyers view the CSR as their impartial advocate.
They believe that CSRs can honestly represent their best interests, unlike the sales rep whose
livelihood is based on sales volume. Until several years ago, the sales rep was the employee most
often mentioned by name by survey respondents. Now, the CSR is the employee most often
mentioned by name in written comments. The ascendancy of the CSR is an important theme in
customer relationships."

But here's the problem: Few customer service departments make it a point to let their customers
know how much they offer. "The relationships that CSRs build with customers may just be the
one thing that elevates their company above the competition," says Richard Czerniawski,
managing partner of Brand Development Network International in Chicago. "Products are
interchangeable, but service is not. A good customer service rep can set his or her company apart
from other firms."

But how?

Meet with your team to distinguish what invaluable services or special skills your department
provides, and what your clients should know about you. Step back and identify the value your
team creates, and make sure every CSR can articulate those benefits.

Sit down with your sales and marketing personnel and discuss the added value you bring to the
company. Because sales reps meet face-to-face with customers, they're often your department's
best marketing arm. Make sure the sales team knows when and your team soothe an angry client,
sell a customer upgraded products, find a mistake in an order and so on. Share complimentary
emails or letters you receive from customers. The point: Coach your firm's sales reps to talk
about customer service.
Now, it's time to promote your customer service capabilities to the outside world. Here are 10 ideas for marketing your team:

1. **Find out what your customers want to know.**
   Learn what customers need, then tell them how you can meet those needs. A good way is through a client survey. Often, what clients want is different than what printers want to offer. When you know what your customers value, you can market your customer service team effectively.

2. **Join salespeople on calls.**
   Periodically visit customers on sales calls, especially top clients. This way, you'll appear proactive, rather than just "someone who deals with problems." When you're in the field, remind customers what you offer. Meanwhile, take the opportunity to compliment your sales reps and the rest of your company, presenting a unified front.

3. **Make follow-up calls after your company delivers a product.**
   Keep the call brief, asking 3-5 quick questions: Was the job delivered on time? Did we meet your requirements? Are you pleased with the quality? During the call, let clients know it's your job as a CSR to ensure they've had a positive experience with your company.

4. **Let satisfied customers do your marketing.**
   If you have letters from customers thanking you for catching a mistake, arranging a rush delivery, working on the weekend to finish a project, etc., use these testimonials on your web site and in promotional mailings. Don't underestimate the value of customers singing your praises.

5. **Mail marketing pieces regularly.**
   *Printing & Customer Care* newsletter often includes "Save the Day" stories from CSRs who went above and beyond the call of duty. You could send similar hero stories to your customers and prospects. Also, you could name a CSR of the Month and introduce that person to your client database. In addition, attach information about your customer service department to the product samples your company mails.

6. **Send a handwritten note.**
   In the age of email and the internet, a handwritten note is all the more impressive. A quick message on stationery will undoubtedly grab your customer's attention: "I enjoyed working with you, Bill, on your company's brochure. Please contact me for any other printing needs you may have. And thanks so much for your business."

7. **Use technology.**
   Handwritten notes are impressive, but don't discount the value of technology's speed and efficiency. You surely send customers emails to remind them of a delivery date or ask for more information about a file; use the medium to market yourself, too. Each email message should include a "signature file" with your name and contact information. Consider adding a tagline (one phrase or sentence) about your team's customer service mission.

8. **Let clients select a customer service ace.**
Send customer’s nomination forms to designate a CSR of the Month or Year who meet certain criteria. On the form, you can list all the valuable things CSRs do. Even customers who don't vote for a CSR will be reminded of the benefits your team provides.

9. **Educate your customers.**
The more meaningful contact you have with them, the better. One way to stay in touch—this is especially smart for companies you haven't heard from recently—is to provide them with value-added information. For example, mail a retail customer an interesting article on the economy's affect on retail sales, or email a banking customer the name of a web site you discovered on check fraud.

10. **Stay focused on the job.**
Do your job well!! Remember that the best CSRs are multi-taskers who provide fast turnaround, honesty and real solutions. If you succeed at your job, you'll be the best marketing tool your company has – and one who delivers a custom message each day.

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