

CHAPTER – 10

CUSTOMER CARE

CUSTOMER CARE

Organizations need to keep their existing customers and attract new customers. Employees must be aware of business opportunities and actively look at ways of increasing revenue. A satisfied customer is an unpaid canvassing agent.

Good customer service is important to the organization because of the following reasons.

- Caring for customers means having a good reputation with existing and potential customers.
- High standards of service ensure success in the market place.
- Success in business means high revenue for the organization.
- High revenue means better rewards & perks to the employees, High rewards for employees create higher moral.



Selling is important to the organization –

- To maintain success in the market place
- To remain competitive
- To pay salaries
- Ensure economic growth.

Customer service and selling are personal skills. We have all been to shops where the staff is very pleasant but know nothing about what they are selling, or had a high degree of product knowledge but have been very unfriendly. To give good service we need a balance between technical and personal skills.

‘Telecom services’ now are essentially a business relationship, and the customer expects behaviour of a ‘telecom personnel’ that would be expected from a good salesman. A salesperson is expected to be friendly, courteous, and interested in the customer's needs. We, in DOT/BSNL, are salespersons to some extent at all levels.

If the ‘salesperson’ can give the impression of being friendly, courteous, and interested in the customer's needs, customers will generally react by being pleasant. If the

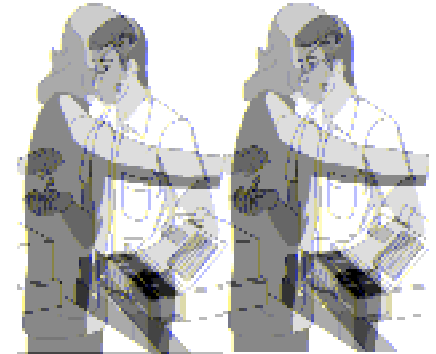
‘salesperson’ does not appear friendly, courteous, and interested in the customer's problems, the customer will probably assume the salesperson is unfriendly.

CUSTOMER CARE

The customer care is one of the most important part of any modern business activity. Customer is most important in the business. He is the cause of any business and therefore he or she deserves to be cared properly at all the times.

Our Subscribers or Customers are most important for us at all times.

- A customer is the most important person in our business.
- He is not dependent on us: we are dependent on him
- He is not an interruption in our work: he is the purpose of it.
- He is not an outsider in our business; he is part of it
- We are not doing him a favor by serving him; he is doing us a favour by giving us an opportunity to do so.



Keeping in mind these age-old words of wisdom, we need to understand and formulate our customer care.

Customer's care can be segmented into following types

Starting with the task of creating awareness of the offer by marketer among prospective customers, then making customers to retaining those customers, customer care is an integral part of the whole game. Normally it is associated with after sales, which is applicable after somebody has become a customer. We need to remember that there are many steps to be taken before one becomes a customer. These steps whether in an exhibition, promotional task or over the counter interaction customer has to be cared for! Can one issue a deceptive advertisement and still claim to be giving excellent customer care! We may define customer care as comprising of all tasks and activities by a company directed to satisfy a customer across all touch points at various stages of customer life cycle for a mutually beneficial relationship.

Approach to customer care and its impact is different at various stages of customer life cycle. The relationship begins with the first transaction. Then, the organization must be prepared to fulfill its promises, delight the customer, and plan for customer retention.

Going by the general definition, let us explore after sales customer care. This has to be ensured by two groups of people within the organization:

- **Front end**
- **Back end**

Front end:

They are the people who directly interface with the customers. They may or may not be directly responsible for ultimate rectification of fault/grievance. In general we find that maximum focus of organizations is on these people. To train them in handling customers, listen, respond with empathy, speak clear, consistent, use good body language, have proper subject knowledge etc. But more often front-end people are just an interface between the actual care people (back end) and the customer. Imagine, a customer asking call center representative about the latest mobile bill only to be told that fresh data has not been uploaded in the server. A customer asking when his/her complaint will be addressed, may be told that the issue is being looked into by experts (back end people) no feedback available to be passed on. In such a scenario, it is the front-end people who face the music not the back end, those responsible for the cause. Sometimes empowerment is needed at the front end to respond in the demanding situation. BSNL has the concept of Account Managers or Customer Relationship managers (CRMs) to take care of group of customers and providing them a single window interface.

Back end:

Majority of the work force of a company falls in this category especially in service sector. Proper skills, knowledge is must for this category to ensure prompt handling of complaints. Here internal marketing is the key to successful customer care. Internal marketing includes public relations efforts aimed at employees who have contact with the ultimate consumer or who have a direct effect on the consumer's satisfaction. In essence, internal marketing suggests treating employees similar to customers—delight them with surprises, plan to retain them, and train them in how to care for customers appropriately.

Customer Care for whom:

Should a company treat all customer's alike? Should they plan customer care for customers or consumers? Often these terms are used interchangeably. Customer is one who has direct relationship with the seller whereas consumer may or may not have direct

relationship. For state electricity authority customer is one who subscribes to the electric connection, whereas all members of house consume electricity. In telecom, for example you take a landline for your home, while you are the customer, you as well as your family are consumers of landline service. In landline, consumers are in general significantly higher than the number of customers, whereas mobile has almost matching number of customers and consumers. Also the manpower is limited. Given the time constraint, should one utilize the time for attending complaint of high paying customer (CIC) or an average one? This dimension calls for categorization of customers on the basis of their present and future value to the company. Concept of customer lifetime value (LTV) helps here.

Technology for Customer Care:

Nowadays technology is available to support humans in providing superior customer care. Customer relationship management software, IVRS, call centers, database management systems, networking of offices offering faster communication for better response. The least a customer expects is the consistency across all the touch points of the company. Expectations of modern customers are:

- Customer wants all queries to be solved at one place. – Single Window Concept.
- Customer wants all queries to be solved over phone itself. (Call center)
- Customer wants they should get consistency. (Across all touch points)
- Customer wants the information should be available on fingertips. (IVRS)
- Customer wants Service to be provided at their doorsteps.

Important BSNL call center numbers are:

- For basic services including broadband services:1500 (toll free number)
- For GSM Mobile services: 9400024365 (toll free number).
- For Broadband &Internet services:1800-424-1600 (toll free number).
- For MPLS & Other Data services: 1800-425-1957 (toll free number).

How much to spend on Customer Care:

Customer is the king, He is our bread and butter. Customer is always right. These are the phrases often quoted in this field. Up to what extent company should serve the customer. One cannot expect a company to invest unlimited amount on customer care i.e. without linking it with the returns. For example, a mobile service provider would certainly

optimize opening of outlets, regulate supply of SIMs, recharge coupons, erection of new cell sites etc, even if it means loosing few customer at odd hours or in select areas so long cost benefit ratio is in favour of company. One cannot open unlimited IVR channels or call center seats just to ensure no call is lost unless situation demands so.

Regulatory dimension of Telecom Customer care:

While each telecom operator would certainly take care of customers as per business sense; the growing market, constrained supply, operators inclination to cut down costs in wake of low margin tariffs do disturb the customer care balance which would have existed in a market driven economy. In India, Telecom Regulatory Authority has defined the quality of service benchmarks to be adhered by all telecom operators. Every quarter TRAI releases quality of service report in respect of all service providers on its website www.trai.gov.in

Customer care portal for handling requests from customers online

BSNL has launched online customer care portal (internet based) for receipt of various types of requests/complaints of the customers. The customer care portal is being implemented progressively in all circles.

The following types of services will be offered through portal:-

- i. Basic telephone services including WLL:- Application for NTC, Shift of telephone, change of tariff plan etc.
- ii. Add-on facilities- Requests for provision/withdrawal of Hot line, hunting, call transfer, three party conferencing, STD/ISD, Provision/re-setting, SMS facility, CUG etc.
- iii. Cell One services:- Application for new Cell One connection, duplicate bills of Cell One connection, provision/withdrawal of add on facilities on Cell One connection, change of tariff plan, change of address etc.
- iv. IN Services:- Application for free phone, universal access number etc.
- v. Leased line :-Registration for service
- vi. ISDN/Broadband services:- Application for new connection, change of tariff plan, shift etc.
- vii. Complaint handling:- Select categories of complaints regarding basic telephones including WLL, ISDN, Broadband, IN services like faults, excess metering complaints etc.

To avail any services through the customer care portal, a customer is first required to register by giving required details after which a user name and password shall be allotted. He/She can enter into the portal using this user name and password where the list of services that can be availed will be displayed. However, certain types of requests require validation of the subscriber to ensure that the request is from the bonafide customer only.

When customer asks for any service requiring validation, such as add-on facility on existing phone, he/she shall be asked to enter telephone number and unique ID. A customer who is already validated can proceed further by logging in using his/her user ID. However, when a customer who is not yet validated asks for any service requiring validation, a pop up screen shall be presented with advice to make a call to call centre number '1500' from his/her telephone to get activation code for his/her telephone account on the portal.

On calling the call center, a screen shall be displayed to the Call Centre agent to search for any username or telephone number and see the details of registration of the customer. CLI of the telephone shall also be available to the agent. After confirmation based on the CLI and Customer's unique ID, an alpha numeric activation code shall be randomly generated and displayed to the call centre agent. When the agent is satisfied that the caller is a bona fide customer, he will link the activation code with the user account and telephone number in the database by clicking a button. Agent will also tell the activation code to the customer which he/she shall fill in the customer care portal to activate account of the particular telephone number. In case of Mobile phone, the activation code can be sent through SMS to the person.

Application for all services offered through customer care portal (like new telephone connection, shift of basic telephone, change of tariff plan etc), along with associated instructions for filling up the form and the list of documents required to be attached for a particular service, shall be available online on the customer care portal.

The following procedure shall be followed for handling requests through customer care portal:-

A. New Basic Telephone Connection Including WLL:-

- a) The customer will fill-up all the details online for applying for a new basic telephone connection including WLL (F) and submit the completed application form by clicking the mouse at "finish" prompt.

- b) As soon as a 'print' command is given, complete application form with all the details duly filled in along with instructions and documents required can be printed. The customer will be able to take the print out either instantaneously or by logging-in later. The customer will sign the hard copy, paste a photograph at the given space and enclose all the documents required.
- c) On the basis of on-line request received in the portal, on line OB shall be issued immediately by the system without any human intervention and transmitted to DE(OD)/SDE(OD) as well as DE/SDE(ID) for execution within given time frame, with special remarks to DE/SDE(OD) to get the hard copy of application and documents collected from the applicant at the time of installation of telephone in areas 'on demand'.
- d) The JTO(OD) shall visit the premises, preferably after ascertaining the validity of the subscriber on the telephone number given by him, if any, along with a new instrument, the set of telephone directory and hard copy of the application form (which can be got filled up and signed in case subscriber has not taken a print out of the application). He will collect the signed copy of the application form of the subscriber along with all requisite documents and get the internal and external fittings completed then and there.
- e) Thereafter, JTO(OD) will furnish the report on-line of receipt of the application form of the subscriber and completion of outdoor work, with details of u/g cable pair, whether internal wiring arranged by the customer or provided by BSNL, details of instrument etc to DE/SDE(ID). Thereafter, DE/SDE(ID) will get the test of the out door line done on the clip board through JTO(MDF).
- f) If the line is found to be O.K. by JTO(MDF), the DE/SDE(ID) will allot the indicator number and NE number and activate the number from the exchange. Thereafter JTO(MDF) will complete the jump ring on MDF. DE/SDE(ID) will then check by ringing up the number to ascertain that the telephone is working fine.

- g) If the line is not found to be O.K on test on the clip board, JTO(MDF) will intimate DE/SDE(OD) along with details of the fault noticed for corrective action.
- h) The signed application form collected from the subscriber along with documents shall be forwarded, under receipt, by JTO(OD) to the Commercial officer for maintaining the records and the Commercial officer shall complete the required details for enabling AO[TR] for raising the bills and DE[Directory] for updating the directory information data.
- i) The excuse such as non availability of the customer at the premises should not normally be accepted and it shall be the duty of JTO(OD) to ensure that all formalities at the customer's end are completed. DE(OD) will personally monitor each case to ensure timely provision.
- j) In areas which are not on demand or where it is not feasible to get the application and documents collected personally through BSNL's representative due to any reasons, the customer may be advised to submit the hard copy along with requisite documents at any of the customer service centres within SSA and get a receipt thereof. He may also send these documents by registered post to the concerned Commercial Officer of the SSA, whose address shall be available online.
- k) There are no registration charges prescribed for new basic telephone connections in areas which are 'on demand' and as such no payments are required at the time of registration through portal/physical provisioning of the telephone in such areas.

B. Shifting of Basic Telephone

Intra exchange shift (Shifts within same exchange):-

- a) On the basis of on-line request received in the portal duly validated as per para c to e above, on line OB for local shift shall be generated by the system without any human intervention with special remarks to DE/SDE(OD) to get the hard copy of application and documents collected from the applicant at the time of shifting of telephone.

- b) The JTO(OD) shall visit the customer's premises along with hard copy of the application form (which can be got filled up and signed in case subscriber has not taken a print out of the application). He will collect the signed copy of the application form of the subscriber along with all requisite documents and get the internal and external fittings completed then and there at the new premises. He will also intimate details of the new underground cable pair and whether internal wiring arranged by the customer or provided by BSNL etc to DE/SDE(ID). Thereafter, DE/SDE(ID) through JTO(MDF) will get the test of the out door line done on the clip board.
- c) If the line is found to be O.K., the MDF jumper wire shall be shifted from old u/g cable terminal to new u/g cable terminal by JTO(MDF). DE/SDE(ID) will then check by ringing up the number to ascertain that the telephone is working fine. If the line is not found to be O.K, JTO(MDF) will intimate DE/SDE(OD) along with details of the fault noticed for corrective action.
- d) The signed application form of the subscriber with documents shall be forwarded, under receipt, by JTO(OD) to the Commercial officer for maintaining the records and the Commercial officer shall complete the required details for enabling AO[TR] for raising the bills at the new premises. JTO(OD) will also intimate DE[Directory] for updating the directory information data.

Inter exchange shifts within SDCA:-

Inter-exchange shift within same SDCA [from one exchange (exchange A) to another exchange (exchange B)] is permitted without any lock in period and can be effected immediately on payment of first bill at the old station.

On the basis of a validated request received online in the portal, two OBs – one for disconnection of telephone at the old address under shift (DS) and the other for provision of new telephone at the new address in lieu of the old connection (SE) shall be immediately issued by the system without any humane intervention in all cases where the first bill has been paid.

DS OB will be sent for execution to DE/SDE[OD], DE/SDE[ID] and AO[TR] of the old exchange (exchange A) with the instructions to DE/SDE[OD] to get the hard copy of the application collected from the subscriber's premises. In case a subscriber is vacating the

old premises immediately and it is not feasible to collect the hard copy of the application, the subscriber should be asked to submit his application with requisite documents at any of the CSCs in the area.

DE[ID] will close the connection immediately (or on a subsequent day as per the request of the subscriber if disconnection at a later date is required) and get the jumper wire removed from the MDF and record the closure meter reading (CMR). As soon as the details of CMR at the exchange 'A' are reported by DE[ID], AO[TR] will issue the bill to the subscriber at the new billing address immediately along with old outstanding, if any. Simultaneously DE[OD] will get the line and wire removed from the outdoor installation and the subscriber's premises. The subscriber will carry Customer premises equipment (CPE) along with accessories to the new address himself/herself.

On the basis of SE OB immediate action shall be taken by DE[OD]/DE[ID] of the new exchange to provide the connection at the new address following the same procedure as prescribed for new telephone connection except that the connection shall be activated on getting the clearance from old 'exchange A'.

C. New ISDN/Broadband Connection:-

Same procedure as prescribed for new basic telephone connections will apply.

D. Add-on Facilities

Change of tariff plan etc: No written requests in hard copy is required in case of change of tariff plan, provision/withdrawal/resetting of STD facility, Hot line, hunting, call transfer, call conference, CLIP etc and the requests shall be automatically acted upon by system itself without any human intervention. In case of requests for provision of ISD facility on the existing telephone, however, the subscriber shall be required to give signed copy of the form in hard copy along with self attested photograph to be collected by BSNL staff. No other document for provision of ISD facility on existing telephone is needed.

New Cell One connection:

Booking of a new Cell One connection shall also be done through customer care portal on line and the subscriber will take a print out of the application form. Printed and signed application will then be got collected through DSA who will also give a certificate of having verified and seen the subscriber personally as per norms already prescribed.

E. IN Services:-

Requests for new IN services shall be handled in the same way as basic telephone connections.

F. Leased lines:-

Registration for provision of leased line or augmentation of an existing network shall also be accepted online and the requests for the same shall be processed in the same manner as new telephone connection. In case of leased lines/network a hard copy of the application along with network diagram and other documents shall also be got collected through BSNL representative/DSA within 24 hrs and provision should be ensured within 7 days of receipt of application positively.

G. Complaint handling:-

For booking complaint through the portal, only drop down menu is to be provided in the forms for selecting the nature of complaint as far as possible (text box may also have to be given for Cell One and Broad Band services because of varying natures of problems which may occur). No hard copy of the complaint is required to be submitted.

The compliance at each stage will be reported on line in the customer care portal and the customer will be able to track movement of his request/complaint and its present status.

The DGM concerned of the area shall be able to access status of all the pending cases of provision/shift of telephone and provision/withdrawal of add-on facility (pending for more than 5 days for NTC/2 days for shift and 20 hrs for provision and withdrawal of add-on facility) or any other type of request received in the portal, the present status etc and will ensure that the service is provided without any delay within the time limit prescribed by TRAI (7 days for NTC/3 days for shift and 24 hrs for provision/withdrawal of add-on facility etc) In case of any delay, he will take appropriate action as deemed fit to get the work completed. He will also be able to get statistical information like the total number of cases pending beyond prescribed time limit, oldest pending cases etc

Details of all the cases pending beyond the prescribed time limit (7 days for NTC, 3 days for shifts and 24 hrs for provision/ withdrawal of add-on facility etc) shall also be available online to the SSA head for taking appropriate action.

H. Consumer Grievances Redressal Mechanism

BSNL has a well structured and multilayered Public Grievances Redressal Mechanism including Dispute Resolution Mechanism. The Public Redressal setup in BSNL has been introduced right from the Corporate Office to SSA (Secondary Switching Area) levels. Subscribers having complaints or grievances can interact with the organization through the following for Public Grievance / Dispute settlements: -

- i. Complaints are being booked on "198". This Toll Free Service of booking complaints are available in every telephone system. Grievances can be booked on "1094"(for Circle Office) or "1095" (for District Office). This special Toll Free Service has been introduced by BSNL for booking public grievances.
- ii. Subscribers can approach BSNL officers at any time in office.
- iii. Public Grievance Officers are available right from Corporate Office to SSA (Secondary Switching Area) level. The complainant can approach these officers in person or through written complaints or communicate through e-mail or contact on telephones,
- iv. Special attention is being given to holding meetings with consumer organizations.
- v. Customer Service Centers have been opened

Open House Session:

Complaints/suggestions of general nature as regard to improving the telecom services in the area are discussed in the Open House Sessions. The basic idea of conducting such Open House Sessions is to establish direct channels of communications with our customers and also to enable the telecom staff to appreciate and evaluate the customers difficulties and complaints from their point of view. A press notification is issued in leading newspaper to hold the Open House Session for inviting customers to attend and submit their suggestions/grievances. Subscribers are invited in a public hall. The session is presided over by Senior Officers i.e. Area GM/Area Manager. Customers are requested to place general grievances which are recorded. Replies are given on the spot. In few cases, which cannot be settled on the spot a time frame is given. Efforts are

made to settle the case within the given time frame. Written reply is sent to the customers.

Telephone Adalats:

Subscribers whose grievances remained unsettled are invited to make petitions for redressal of their grievances in Telephone Adalats. SSA(Secondary Switching Area) Level Telephone Adalats are being conducted on bimonthly periodicity and Circle level Telephone Adalats are being conducted once in three months.

Customers are asked to give their grievances in writing with all supporting documents within stipulated period to District Complaint Officer (DCO). The concerned office to whom the case relates examines the case received by DCO and settles the case. A speaking order settling the case is communicated to the customers. For unsettled cases, a date is fixed for holding the Telephone Adalat. The customers are invited to attend the Telephone Adalat. The Adalat is presided over by General Manager of the area. The concerned officers of the Department are also called to be present in the Adalat. The full details of the case is presented to the presiding officer. The order of the presiding officer is communicated in the Adalat after hearing the arguments from both the parties.

Appellate Jurisdiction of Telephone Adalats:

Circle level adalats headed by C.G.Ms can consider the cases of the appeals against the decisions of the adalats chaired by SSA Heads. Adalats headed by SSA Heads can consider cases of excess billing which have been rejected by them as administrative heads of SSAs.

Telecom consumers Protection and Regulation of Grievances

[TRAI Regulation, 2007(3 of 2007)]

BSNL ensures prompt rectification of any fault or complaint booked through its extensive grass root level online fault restoration system (FRS). However, in case you still have your problem unsolved timely, BSNL has implemented a three tier consumer grievance redressal mechanism comprising of call centres for various services, nodal officers at SSA and Circle level and an appellate authority for deciding cases that the consumers may wish to appeal against. As a first step, you may contact our Call Centre on toll free helpline numbers given below.

- For basic services including broadband services:1500 (toll free number)
- For GSM Mobile services: 9400024365 (toll free number).
- For Broadband &Internet services:1800-424-1600 (toll free number).
- For MPLS & Other Data services: 1800-425-1957 (toll free number).

Remember, the customer is always right

A worldwide survey has revealed that customers get irritated and go against you because of competition, product or service failure only 32% of the times. 68% of customers get irritated because of the indifferent attitude of the people who deal with them.

Customer's Rights :-

1. Right of information to know status of his case, his rights, facilities, rules , regulations etc.
2. Right to get a Fair play /treatment for all customers , to avoid discrimination
3. Right to get correct quantity and quality of promised service
4. Right to Complain about malfunctioning, or faults etc., also against employees' behaviour etc.
5. Right of being heard for his cause or complaints etc. to get acknowledgement & feedback.
6. Right of being informed the decision
7. Right to appeal for any decision of employees to higher levels.

Golden Rules

- Never tell a customer that something can not be fixed or done. If a customer has a problem, it is a problem and it is your problem. The product either has to be fixed, replaced, or taken back. When you make a promise, you have to deliver.
- Never over-promise, always over-perform. This demonstrates integrity. A building contractor who promises a low estimate to get a customer's business should not jack

up the price later. Instead, he must give a fair estimate, and if the job costs less than his estimate, he should gladly pass on the savings to the customer. In this way, he will create a satisfied customer who can attest to his integrity when he bids on the next job.

- Always give every customer the same fair deal. If you sell the same product to ten people this month, make sure they all pay the same price. Otherwise, you will overcharge some of your customers to compensate for the profits you have lost on others.
- Always take care of your customer at all levels of management. No one should have to appeal to a manager if a pair of shoes doesn't fit, or a meal isn't cooked properly. Everyone should be authorized to satisfy the customer. If the problem is handled correctly at the lowest level, the problem may not require precious time of the higher officers.
- Always fix it right the first time. Nothing irritates your customers more than having to come back again and again for the same problem. The more times they return, the more costly it is for them and for your business, and the less likely they will buy from you again.

Questions:

1. “Good customer service is important to the business organizations” why?
2. What is the importance of personal skills in customer service?
3. Which are the two groups of people in an organization who ensure after sale customer care? And what is to be trained?
4. Which group of employees should have more focus on personal skills? And why?
5. Why customer “Life Time Value” (LTV) concept is important for customer care?
6. What is the benefit of single window concept to customers?
7. Name any four services offered through customer care portal of BSNL .
8. Explain briefly the consumer grievances redressal mechanism in BSNL.
9. What is the purpose of Open house session and Telecom Adalat ?
10. Write down any five customer rights.