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# Sales Lessons from Service Quality Research

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# Sales lessons from service quality research

Obviously, people want good quality products and quality service. In general, determining what constitutes a quality product seems to be easy. However, determining what constitutes



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quality service can be more difficult.

Since customer service tends to be “in the eye of the customer,” service that seems excellent to one may seem

mediocre to others. Fortunately, over the past two decades, research has identified five specific components of service quality that seem to transcend industry and situation.

Salespeople can learn important lessons from this research.

**The first of these five components of service quality is reliability. The key to reliability is consistency and follow-through.**

Let me give you a quick personal example. Recently, I dropped by a new deli for a late lunch. Although the sign outside said “open,” several potential customers were turned away because the grill had already been turned off.

It seemed to me that a new deli would want to keep making hot sandwiches until everyone was served and the open sign was removed from the window. Perhaps it is not surprising that the deli is no longer in business.

For salespeople, the simple lesson is to follow through with all your promises and show up for your meetings on time.

**The second component of service quality is responsiveness.**

A couple of years ago, I tried out a VOIP telephone service. It was easy to sign up for the service on the company’s website. However, canceling the service required an actual telephone call. When I called to cancel, I was on hold more than two hours before I finally spoke with a “customer service” rep located in China.

Unbelievably, at the end of this conversation, the customer service rep asked if I was totally pleased with the customer service. Salespeople need to be accessible to customers before and after

the sale. In fact, your clients would probably appreciate your being even more available after the sale. That’s when problems arise.

**The third component of customer service is assurance. In other words, customers want to feel safe dealing with you.**

Once, I had a dentist friend who planned to carve out his business as the “lowest cost dentist in town.” I remember thinking I didn’t want a cut-rate dentist working in my mouth. Low cost is nice, but I think most of us would rather pay a little more for a nice smile.

What’s the lesson for salespeople? The most important thing you can sell is your own credibility.

**The fourth component of customer service is empathy.**

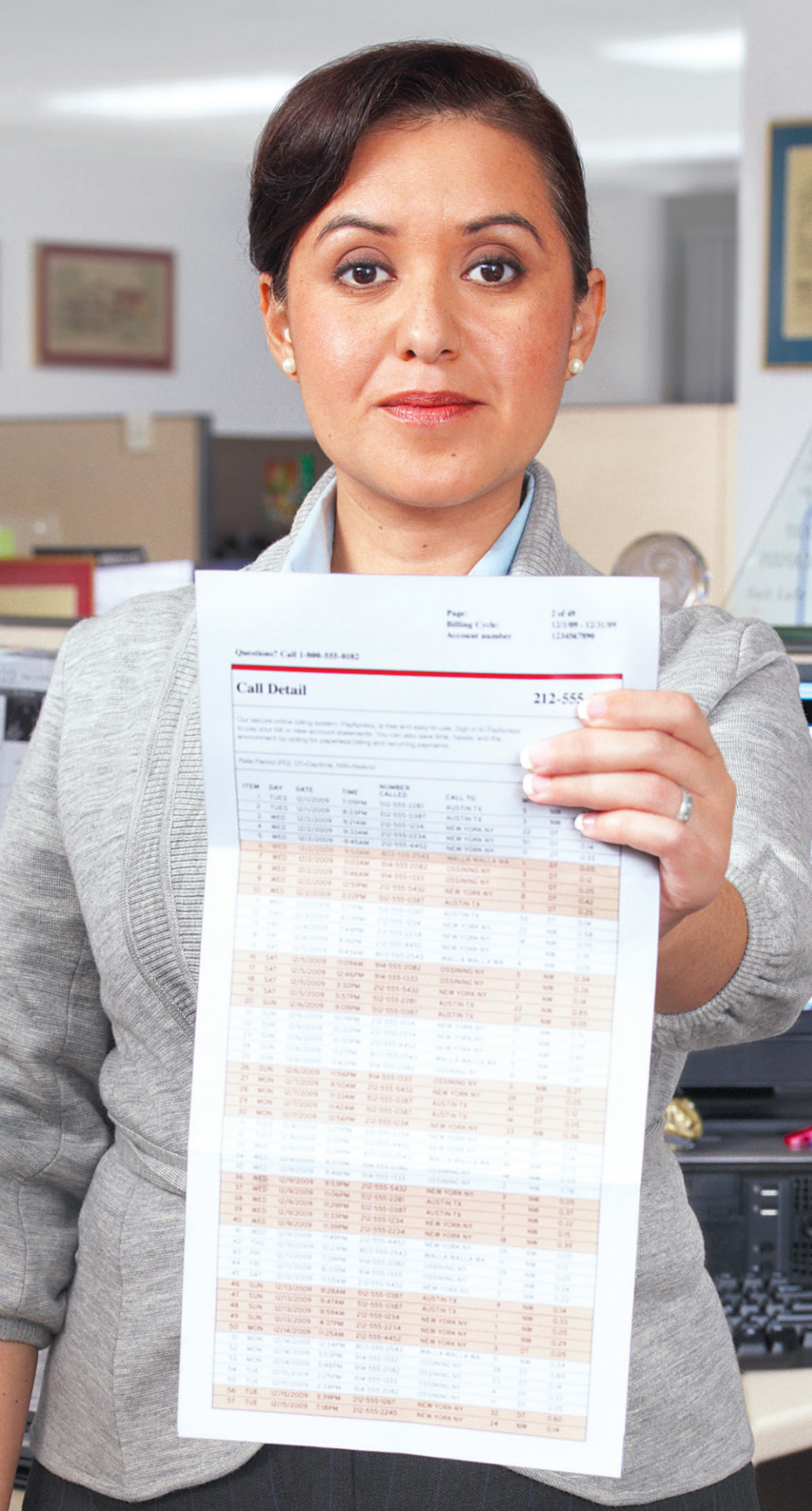
People like to deal with people who seem to care about them as individuals. For example, consider the banking industry and the strong push to be considered your “relationship” banker. Successful salespeople work to build relationships with their customers. I firmly believe that people tend to buy from people they like.

**The final component of customer service is termed “tangible aspects of service quality.” This includes anything the customer can touch, feel or see that may indicate the level of service they will receive.**

For example, I once worked with a financial consulting firm. To my amazement, the firm was out of brochures and, as a result, using poor quality copies of their brochure when presenting to potential clients.

I explained that prospects want to trust their money with successful financial planners, and every aspect of their business, including their brochures, needed to exude success. The lesson for salespeople is to make sure that every aspect of your business, including your office, your car and your attire, presents an image appropriate for your profession.

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Billing Cycle: 12/5/99 - 12/31/99  
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Use service within billing period. Prepaid service is not available for use. Sign-in to Prepaid Service prior to use. Prepaid service is not available for use. Prepaid service is not available for use. Prepaid service is not available for use. Prepaid service is not available for use.

Time Period: 12/1/2009 - 12/31/2009

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2	TUE	12/1/2009	9:30PM	212-555-0102	AUSTIN TX
3	WED	12/2/2009	9:21AM	212-555-0102	NEW YORK NY
4	WED	12/2/2009	9:21AM	212-555-0102	NEW YORK NY
5	WED	12/2/2009	9:21AM	212-555-0102	NEW YORK NY
6	WED	12/2/2009	10:34AM	212-555-0102	NEW YORK NY
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