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"We engineer the quality of your success"

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Tips To Improve Your Customer Service Plan

During economic downturns, many businesses relied on cost reductions as their strategy for survival. In our last month's article "*Where Will You Get Your Next Sale?*", PQA suggested an alternative strategy.

PQA outlined a 5-step Customer Service Plan on how a business can increase their sales and profitability. Focus on your current customers for expanded sales **NOW!**

To continue your Customer Service Plan, PQA suggests the following:

- Don't put off getting started. Your current customer base is critical for both survival and growth. Develop a method to re-discover customer needs, focus your resources on your customers, respond to their needs, deliver results, and build credibility.
- Your best source of information about your customers' behaviours and needs are your own employees.
- Customer Service Planning is a team effort. Participation from all other departments will yield a greater understanding of customers' needs and enable you to respond with more specific and meaningful product and service solutions.
- Establish more formal means for obtaining input from your customers to determine their needs.
- Each prioritized customer situation should be transformed into a project with budgets, personnel responsible for tasks, scheduled start and end dates.

ISO 9000 - What Is It?

The ISO 9000 Series of quality standards were first published in 1987, by the International Standards Organization (ISO) in Geneva, Switzerland.

Today, over 100 countries have adopted the ISO series as their National Standards. Canada adopted the ISO 9000 Standards in 1991.

Basically, the ISO Standards require a company to:

- Document the company's systems
- Follow the systems
- Measure how well it is working
- Review and improve the systems

The ultimate goal of ISO 9000 is to establish a prevention culture where potential problems are identified and avoided before they occur.

The ISO 9000 Series of Standards are organized into two categories:

1. GUIDANCE standards identify how to interpret and apply quality management and quality system elements. There are currently eight standards in this category, with additional ones being added each year.

Examples include:

- ISO 9000-2 Guidelines for the application of ISO 9001, 9002, and 9003
- ISO 9004-2 Quality management guidelines for Service.
- ISO 9004-4 Quality management

guidelines for Quality Improvement.

2. CONFORMANCE standards are models of quality assurance systems. They identify the types of activities which must be undertaken throughout the company to provide confidence that the quality requirements of a product or service will be met.

These are the standards to which you become registered.

There are three standards in this category:

- ISO 9001 is the most comprehensive standard. It is for companies which are involved with both the design and manufacture of a product or service. It covers all stages of a product life cycle, from design through to servicing.
- ISO 9002 is the same as 9001 except it does not cover the design stage. It is for companies which manufacture to their customer's design.
- ISO 9003 is the least comprehensive. It is for companies that need to show conformance at final inspection and test only, and distribution companies.

These Standards provide the foundation on which you can build your quality management and quality assurance systems. Ultimately you will achieve a high level of success and customer satisfaction.

Quotable Quotes

"The philosophy of '*QUALITY COSTS LESS*' means improving quality and reducing cost. If you reduce the cost, you reduce the price, thereby delivering a greater value to the customer."

"The customer of the '90s is more discerning than any customer in history as far as demanding value, not price. The bitterness of poor quality lasts long after the sweetness of low price has gone."

- David Glass, Walmart Stores Inc.

CEO from 1988 to present. President from 1984 to 1988.