

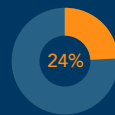
# Outsourcing Customer Care: The Path to Great Customer Experiences

Outsourcing customer care can help small and mid-size businesses deliver good customer experiences.

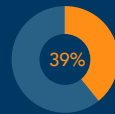
**Fact :** People buy things from people they like. If they like what you're selling -- but don't like you -- the sale is dead on arrival, Customer care isn't just important, therefore: it's essential. Market research firm Dimensional Research confirmed exactly that in 2013. It surveyed 1,046 consumers and found that customer service is the No. 1 factor impacting their trust of companies. The impact is so great, Dimensional discovered, that 62 percent and 42 percent of B2B and B2C buyers, respectively, purchased more after a good customer service experience; likewise, 66 percent and 52 percent of B2B and B2C buyers, respectively, stopped buying after a bad customer service interaction.

Clearly, a good customer experience can make a business and a bad one can break it. The difference between a good customer experience and a bad one isn't always a question of a company's character, however: it's a matter of its resources. That can put

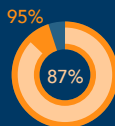
Both good and bad customer interactions are long lasting, according to Dimensional Research's report, which also found that:



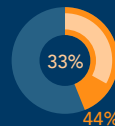
24 percent of buyers continue to engage vendors two or more years after a good experience;



39 percent of buyers continue to avoid vendors two or more years after a bad experience;



95 percent and 87 percent of buyers, respectively, share bad and good experiences with others; and



44 percent and 33 percent of buyers, respectively, share bad and good experiences with more than five people.

small and mid-sized businesses at a decided disadvantage.

By infusing your business with extra — and affordable — talent, outsourcing can help you fill the gap. Here are five questions to help you determine if it should:

## 1. Can you afford your own customer service department?

Building an in-house customer care

team is certainly possible — provided you have the capital. Potential expenses include employee compensation and benefits, customer service training, equipment and technology — not to mention real estate, overhead and administration. Remember, dedicated customer care teams will take up extra space, consume extra energy and create extra risk. Outsourcing customer care allows you to forego ancillary expenses in

favor of straight labor costs allowing you to keep your organization lean and focused on delivering value and generating revenue.

## 2. Are you neglecting core business functions?

When customer-care demands grow big, fast, they can easily overwhelm your business, forcing you and your employees to spend more and more time on customer service every day. Neglecting to do so can lead to high response times and frustrated customers, which translates to lost revenue and a bad reputation that can follow you around. Still, the more time you spend on customer care means you have less time available for other vital business functions, such as sales, marketing, or research and development. If key staff are spending more time on tactical customer-service tasks, chances are they're neglecting their real responsibilities or being underutilized. Outsourcing will free them up to return to the strategic tasks they were hired to do.

## 3. Have your employees received customer-care training?

Customer care is not an area where you can afford to improvise. Providing good customer care requires training and discipline. Employees who lack customer care training can put customer

relationships at risk as well as burn out very quickly from handling frustrated customers or high volumes of customer support requests. By contrast, outsourced customer service departments often are staffed with individuals who have been trained to deliver an excellent, consistent customer experience and who understand the both the demands and importance of providing a consistently good customer experience.

## 4. Can you deliver on customer expectations?

In today's "on-demand" world, customers have come to expect immediate gratification. These days an increasing number of customers expect customer support across channels – from email to chat and the phone. If you lack the resources to support customer needs an outsourced solution is a good way to go. Not only will it give you the capacity to meet, and even exceed, customer expectations, but it will also give you the coverage you need without the expense.

## 5. Are you growing rapidly?

Usually large or established companies can predict their customer-care needs in advance, and

have better luck building a successful customer care department over time due to their gradual growth. If you're company that is growing quickly, on the other hand, you're probably going to find it hard to estimate the volume of customer interactions you will have. This can force you to scramble to add the resources you need to keep up with expansion.

Outsourcing your customer care can give you the flexibility to scale based on your growth strategy and context. Outsourcing your customer service operations can make a lot of sense on many levels, but it's not for everyone. One instance where you may want to keep your outsourced operations in house is if your

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business is technical in nature and your customers regularly come to

you with complex queries. By keeping customer care in-house in this way, you can ensure that your customers receive correct, complete answers to their complicated questions, courtesy of the staff experts who know your business best. If inquiries are simple and predictable, on the other hand, outsourcing represents an effective, affordable path to sustainable and stellar customer service.