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## Customer Service 'Wow' vs. 'Ow'

by Lynn Hunsaker

What's the difference between 'wow' and 'ow' (as in 'ouch') service? Willingness to check for understanding. It's doing the whole job, with the customer sensing your overriding wish for his or her well-being. When you check for understanding, the customer's woes dissolve, they appreciate your wisdom, and they deem your company worthy of wonderful word-of-mouth.

### Check Your Understanding of the Customer's Plight

By the time customers contact a service professional, they've typically endured a substantial amount of time and frustration seeking a solution on their own. Scrutinize your systems, processes and habits to ensure they demonstrate you're on the customer's side. Verify your assumptions and avoid jumping to conclusions by checking for understanding:

- Minimize repetitive data requests of the customer.
- Listen carefully to the customer's problem.
- Find out what has been attempted so far.
- Record what you find out.
- Empathize with the customer's viewpoint.
- Double-check your understanding of the customer's situation:
  - Are they a novice to this type of process or technology?
  - Are they new to your company's way of doing business?
- Demonstrate patience and advocacy for the customer's plight.

### Check Your Customer's Understanding of Your Solution

Whether your solution consists of setting up a new account, solving a technical problem, resolving a misunderstanding, educating the customer, or making arrangements on the customer's behalf, once your service call is over the customer must move forward with the solution you provided. Verify the customer's assumptions by checking for understanding:

- Does the customer know what to do next?
- Does the customer understand the duration of what's next?
- Would it help to walk the customer through the next steps?
- Is the customer interpreting jargon correctly?
- If there's another technology or entity involved in next steps, what advice do you have?

### Worthy of Winning Repeat Business

When customers jump to conclusions — or when they've been served by a professional who jumped to

conclusions — the result is ‘ow’ service. Their already emotionally-charged state may escalate to wild accusations or wrapping up their business with you altogether.

On the other hand, when assumptions are verified among both parties, the result is ‘wow’ service. Willingness to check for understanding gives your customer a secure feeling that you’re his or her advocate. By doing the whole job, with patience and the customer’s well-being as your uppermost goal, ‘wow’ service gives you wonderful wins in word-of-mouth and ongoing waves of revenue.

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