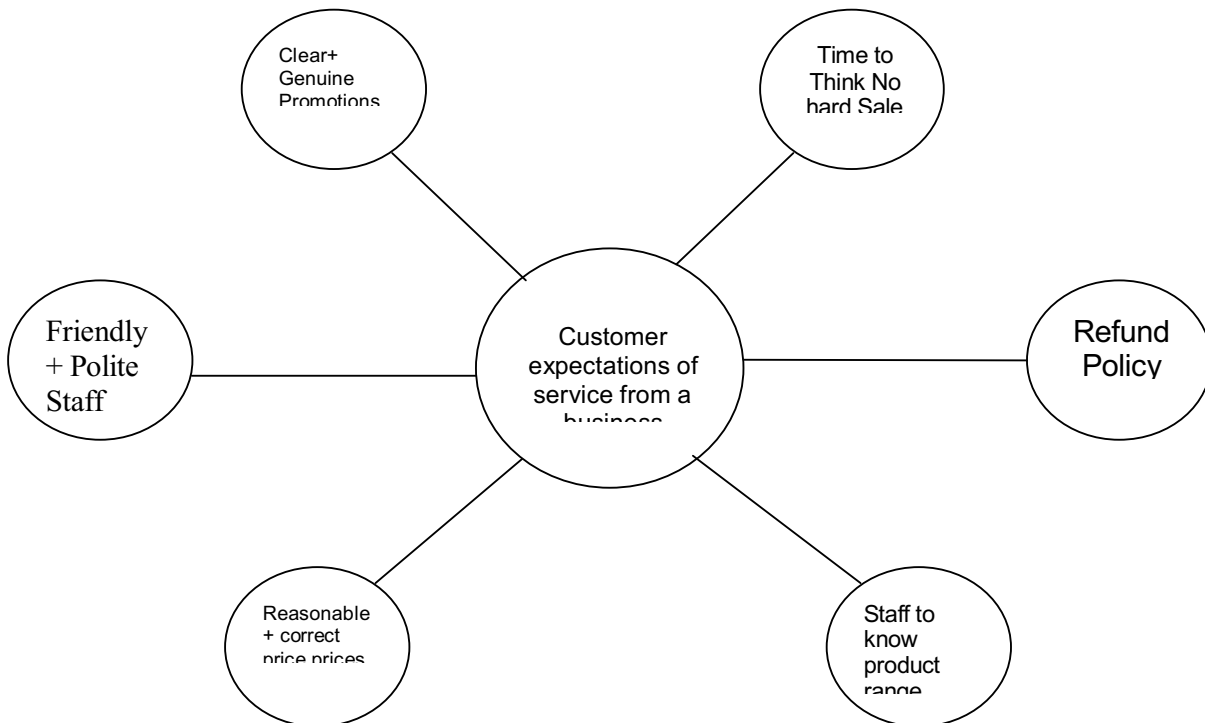


Customer Service

Customer service (also known as Client Service) is the provision of service to customers before, during and after a purchase of goods or services. Includes advice, assistance, range of goods, quality of goods and after sales care.

What customers expect from a business – examples of good customer service



Why are customers important?

Customers are important because they provide the main source of income. Happy customers “promote” the business and also rep eat business. If a customer is unhappy then they will tell others that the business is bad and then you lose potential customers.

Who are the NIC customers?

The NIC’S customers are mainly ice skaters, Panthers Ice Hockey team fans, Professional skaters and concert viewers. They are important because they bring in the most income for the NIC .

What does the NIC offer to their customers?

The NIC offer disabled access and seating, 2 rinks for professional and non professional skaters, Choice of shows and a wide range of food and good facilities.

I am now going to consider the 3 main groups of customers in greater detail and say what they expect in terms of service, whether those expectations are met and improvements the NIC could make:

The Nottingham Panthers:

The Panthers expect the changing facilities to be clean, for there to be Lockers and Clothes hooks for them to hang their clothes. They expect showers, storage space, clean toilets and medical attention if they need it.

A lot of these expectations are met as they do have clean changing facilities and there is lockers and hooks in there for them to store their clothes/bags. They could improve the stadium for the Panthers by getting better parking for them.

The Concert viewers:

Concert viewers expect to have a good view of the concert cheap tickets and for there to be good facilities and good quality food for them.

All of these expectations are met because all of the seats have a good view of the stage the tickets are fairly priced and the facilities are new.

They could improve the NIC for the concert viewers by maybe making the concert viewers happier by maybe giving discount for regular customers of concerts or offering free drinks and food instead of making the customer pay more, this could also increase the income but also hinder the revenue because the costs would increase.

The Public Ice Skaters

Public skaters expect there to be clean facilities clean and smooth ice, these People also expect cheap prices and good quality refreshments.

These expectations are met because the ice is cleaned after every session and the facilities are new.

They could improve the ice stadium for the public skaters by having more places for people to pay to get people in faster and new skates from the skate hire.

How does good customer service benefit NIC?

Good customer service benefits the NIC because if the NIC have good customer service then this makes the customers happy If the customers are happy then they get repeat business from them and these tell others about the NIC making more business for the NIC.

Why is it important to find out the needs of your customers and their satisfaction levels?

It is important to find out the needs of your customers and their satisfaction levels so that, you can set appropriate targets for the future based on data and can monitor your success. It also helps so that you can identify problems, areas for improvement and the good areas in your business.

How do the NIC currently find out the needs of their customers?

The NIC currently find out the needs by having a customer service phone number, but this only lets them know about specific complaints which are dealt with one by one and this data isn't stored anywhere for improvement.

How should they find out the needs – Especially through the use of ICT?

The NIC should find out the needs of customers by having a comment page on their website this will do the same sort of job as the customer service number but this data will now be stored. They could also have a questionnaire saying “What are we bad at?” “What are we good at?” “is there anything else you would like to see?” that they send out and is also on their website. Other ways are they can have a person outside the NIC at the end of a concert asking a few questions and lastly they could have a small piece of paper on the seats and a pen in the concerts so people can write down their comments there and then put them into a box.

What effect will this have on the performance/profit of the NIC?

The effects on the performance/profit of the NIC is that they have loads of happy customers and with happy customers they get repeat business from those customers they have more sales by word of mouth and this all ends up with loads of profit for the NIC.

How does the NIC compete through the quality of its service?

The NIC have loads of competition such as other Ice Stadiums although there are none locally they are their direct competitors. There are also other concert venues such as The Royal theatre, The Playhouse and places in Birmingham, Sheffield and Leicester.

Finally their other competitors are other types of entertainment such as Bowling, Laser quest, Cinemas, Football and Restaurants. They compete successfully against these people because they have loads of ways of giving people information. They have a range of services like Ice skating, concerts and food. Their services are fairly priced and they have plenty of offers. They also have a brilliant location in the centre of the city this is brilliant because it is convenient for everybody because everybody can get there and look forward to excellent customer services and good facilities.

Consumer Protection

A customer is somebody who buys goods or services.

A consumer is a person who is the user of a good or service.

The customer is not always the same person as the consumer for example if a person buys a gift for his child then the person is the customer but the child is the consumer because he will use it.

Customers and Consumers need protection because they are not as financially powerful or have links to powerful people as business's. The government has provided laws to protect customers so they are not taken advantage of by business's. Lets say somebody buys a ps3 and it does not work when they get home they have a right to take it back and get a refund or exchange.

If the good is not sold as described then the customer has a right to take it back for example if a cassette player is sold as a cd player then the customer has a right to take it back as well.

Sale of Goods Act 1979

This states that goods should be sold:

'As described'

This means that the goods sold must be the same as in the description. You cannot sell someone a CD as 'Original Beatles Hits' when the CD was made by a group imitating them.

'Of satisfactory quality'

The goods must be at least of satisfactory quality and meet standard which a reasonable person would expect, given the price. In the case study the customer should not really expect a compilation of hits by original artists for £2.99, but he can expect (and did get) a CD of passable imitations.

'Fit for the purpose for which they where intended'

A product should do what it is supposed to do.

A CD should play in a CD player, and umbrella should keep the rain off and a watch should keep time.

What to do if there is a problem

If any of these three above conditions is not met, the consumer is entitled to a full or partial refund, depending on how soon the fault appears, how serious it is and how quickly the matter is taken up. Note also:

- The buyer can accept a replacement, but can also insist on a refund if a replacement is not wanted**
- The buyer does not have to accept a credit note for spending on other purchases**
- A shop is not entitled to put up a notice saying No Refunds given.**

Supply of Goods and Services Act 1982

The sale of Goods and Services Act protects the consumer when a service is provided by a business.

This Act states that anyone who supplies a service – a haircut, a train journey, a holiday – must carry out the work

- With 'reasonable' care and skill
- Within a 'reasonable' time
- At a 'reasonable' price

**The problem is, how do you decide what 'reasonable' is?
Does a train have to arrive on time or just the same day?
Does it matter if the holiday apartment is next to a building site?**

The consumer is helped by standards laid down by various bodies: Trade Associations, professional bodies which keep an eye on public services. Many service businesses that believe in customer care – railway companies, for example, operate compensation schemes when services standards are not reached.

Data Protection Act 1998

The Data Protection Act regulates the use of personal information held by organisations on computer file and on paper records. Every time a consumer fills in a form from business and gives personal details, you can be sure that the information will be used for marketing purposes. The problem for the consumer about information held is that:

- It may be incorrect and misleading
- It may be passed to other organisations without the consumer knowing

The Act requires that the information be kept securely and confidentially and that the 'subject' can have access to it, for a fee.

Consumer Protection Act 1987

The Consumer Protection Act makes it a criminal offence to supply unsafe goods. 'Unsafe' means goods which are in breach of the safety regulations which apply to those goods, for example:

- Cosmetics should not contain lead or other materials harmful to health
- Electrical equipment must have safe switches and insulation
- Cars should have seat belts.

Safety standards for products are regulated by the British Standards Institute (BSI) which issues its well-known 'kite mark'.

Health and Safety at Work Act 1974

The Health and Safety at Work Act requires that an organisation maintains a healthy and safe working environment. In case of a shop or business with public access, this law protects visiting consumers who might slip on a wet floor or be injured in some way.

I will now consider how the laws above apply to the NIC

Sale of goods Act 1979

The NIC have a shop that sells Ice Skating products as well as food and drinks outlets. If any of the products are not 'as described', 'of satisfactory quality' or 'fit for the purpose', the customer could evoke their rights under the act.

E.g.

1. If someone buys some skates and they say they are a size 7 but they are a size 5 they, are not 'as described' and the person who bought them could get there money back under the Act.
2. If someone buys a burger and it is not cooked properly then it is not 'of a satisfactory quality' and the person could get their money back under the Act.

Supply of Goods and Services Act 1982

The NIC sell plenty of things such as Ice time, Skating products and fo od. So the products need to be sold with 'reasonable' care and skill, within a 'reasonable' time and at a 'reasonable' price.

E.g.

- 1.The employees need to have 'reasonable' care and skill to sell the products this means they need to be considerate to the customers and need to know how to use the equipment such as the till.
- 2.The products need to be sold within a 'reasonable' time so the shops need to be open when the Ice stadium is, not when the rest of the Ice Stadium is closed
- 3.The Products also need to be sold at a 'reasonable' price

Data Protection Act 1998

The NIC have loads of information from their customers when people fill in he forms to order tickets for concerts. So this information needs to be kept confidentially

E.g.

1. A customer who gives their phone number, email address or house address expect the information to be kept safely and confidentially and that it will not be passed to any third parties and that they will only use the information to let the customers know about their purchase.

Consumer Protection Act 1987

The NIC sells a lot of goods like skates, food and drinks and under the Consumer Protection Act all the goods sold needs to be safe

E.g.

1. A customer who buys a burger expects for the food to be cooked properly and that the food won't give them food poisoning

2. A customer who buys skates expect the blades to be covered with some sort of plastic cover so they are not able to cut them self.

Health and Safety at Work Act 1974

The NIC have a lot of employees and consumers and under the Health and Safety Act the environment must be safe.

1. If an employee slips on a wet floor because there are no signs then they can sue under the Health and Safety at Work Act. [This also applies to consumers]

Independent consumer organisations

Citizen's Advice Bureau

Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) is one of a network of independent charities throughout the UK that give free, confidential information and advice to help people sort out their money, legal, consumer and other problems. The aims of the Citizens Advice service are to ensure that individuals do not suffer through lack of knowledge of their rights and responsibilities or the services which are available to them. They have trained advisors which can help people write letters, make phone calls, negotiate with creditors and represent clients at tribunals and courts.

BBC Watchdog Programme

The BBC Watchdog Programme is a weekly 30-minute consumer-led television programme on BBC that investigates consumer issues on behalf of viewers, highlights consumer's rights, exposes scams and bad industry practice. The series investigates 'viewers' reports of problematic experiences with traders, retailers, and other companies around the UK. It has had great success in changing the awareness consumers have of their purchasing rights and in changing policies of companies, closing businesses down and pushing for law changes.

Consumers' Association

The Consumers' Association (Which?) is a charity, registered in England and Wales which raises awareness of trading that it believes goes against the interest of consumers. It is independent and is funded by subscription. It does not take funding from government or companies and there is no advertising in its magazines or websites. The charity offers advice on consumers' legal rights and reports on legal cases where it has fought for its members' rights. In the May, 2003 issue, for example, the back page featured a couple who won compensation from their credit card firm after purchasing a poor holiday.

Trading Standards

The Trading Standards is supported and maintained by TSI, the Trading Standards Institute. TSI aims to sustain and improve consumer protection, health and well being, together with the reinforcement of fair markets. They believe that everyone should be treated equally and not to be taken advantage of by businesses. The reason being is because businesses are powerful than the consumer financially. This consumer protection organisation is not a charity but an organisation made by the government.

How does the NIC include consumer protection laws into its day-to-day activities?

Health and Safety at Work Act 1974

The NIC complies with health & safety requirements by putting in place procedures, training and equipment to keep employees and the NIC users as safe as possible.

For example, to get their fire certificate, the NIC needed to prove that they achieved a high level of fire safety provision. They have the correct number of fire exits (they had to add another when they expanded the main arena), and ensure that the exits are kept clear at all times. During concerts, security makes sure that people are in the right place and exits are clear. They will guide people out safely if needed. They also have plenty of the appropriate fire extinguishers accessible in the building, including specific ones for kitchen fires etc.

The NIC have carried out a risk assessment for its main activities. For example, for ice hockey there was a risk that the puck could fly off the ice into the audience. To stop this risk they have had Plexi glass put in place and there is netting behind the goal to catch the puck.

Supply of Goods and Services Act 1982

The NIC complies with the supply of goods act by selling their products at a “reasonable time”, as their shops that sell the products are open when the Ice Stadium is they also have staff that work with “reasonable care and skill” when selling these products and finally the products are sold at a “reasonable price”

Sale of goods Act 1979

The NIC sell their goods:

- ‘As Described’
- ‘Of satisfactory quality’
- ‘Fit for the purpose they are intended’

Consumer Protection Act 1987

The NIC have:

- Safety criteria for goods that are sold
- Goods are Kite marked
- Goods like ice skates and pads are tested

I will now evaluate how the NIC succeeds in implementing consumer protection legislation

From doing the work above I believe that the NIC does succeed in implementing consumer protection very well because all of the laws are covered by some procedure at the NIC. As you can see the NIC does a lot for health and safety and it

seems to be well covered. From looking at the work above I cannot see any improvements the NIC could do.