

How to Turn Customer Support Calls into Revenue

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How Customer Support Can Boost Retention and Growth

Clearly, the sales game's goal should not be strictly acquiring new customers. It should also be retention and growth. Given this reality, companies should no longer view customer support as a cost center. It can generate revenues and profits if companies approach it in a more customer-centric way.

When customers call in for support, for example, the goal is not to get them off the phone as quickly as possible. There's a fine line between problems and opportunities and any interaction with the customer should be viewed as a chance to learn about them, develop the relationship and foster growth. Here's how reps should handle these calls.

- **Resolve the Problem**

First, of course, you need to help customers resolve the problem about which

they called. So your representative must ask open-ended questions and listen carefully to the customer's responses. Although the rep may be able to address the issue without selling more products or services, don't rule out the possibility of an additional sale or upgrade.

For example, Software as a Service (SaaS) solutions are available in different packages, such as Basic, Professional and Enterprise. The customer who has a basic marketing automation solution may call because they are finding email marketing consumes too much time. They can resolve this issue by moving up to the Professional package which includes sophisticated lead nurturing.

Often, there are several ways to address an issue. If so, you can discuss each of the alternatives with the customer and the pros and cons. Having options puts them in the driver's seat, with a choice as to the next step.

- **Seek to Offer Increased Value**

Now the rep is the hero because they've resolved the customer's problem. So they can take the call a step further. The rep should talk with the customer about challenges they face in their business. To make this conversation as productive as possible, train your reps to play a consultative role, enabling them to provide valuable solutions.

The consultative role starts with asking questions and listening actively. A good way to ensure reps are listening (rather than thinking about the next thing they're going to say) is to have them take notes. They should respond in a way that *shows* they are listening, perhaps by paraphrasing what the customer said. In this way, they ensure they understood the customer's challenges and can provide feedback.

Now they have the information they need to upsell and cross-sell the customer on complementary products and services. When they talk about their recommendations, they can do so with more credibility because they can state the reasons for their suggestions. In the process, they can evoke interest, and are likely to be able to motivate the customer to buy without being pushy.

Perhaps the rep discovers that the client is losing track of their leads once they hand them over to sales. Learning this might provide an opportunity for cross-

selling a customer relationship management (CRM) package.

If it's not appropriate for the support representative to delve too deeply into a product sale, another option is to set up an appointment for a sales professional to discuss it further.

As they focus on pursuing new leads, marketers cannot afford to take existing customers for granted. They need to change their attitude toward their customer service and support centers. **When customers call, it's an opportunity to deepen the relationship and foster retention.** Approached correctly, a support call may also be an opening for new sales and revenues.

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