



» CASE STUDY

# CUSTOMER SERVICE DRIVES CUSTOMER RETENTION

A lot has changed in the way we do business – social media, email, chat and other communications innovations have opened up multiple channels through which companies can engage with their customers – and multiple channels through which customer's can rate service providers. But with all the change, some things have remained the same – when a customer has a problem or a need, they want to talk to a person. And that person had better be courteous, attentive and empathetic. If they're not, the customer will look elsewhere. So says a recent report on customer expectations by American Express.

## How Can You Address The Problem Of Leaking Customers?

A determination to provide that level of customer experience is what drove one national consumer services company to contact ASLAN. Their goal – to realize double digit improvements in customer retention by elevating the quality of interactions between customers and service representatives. That would in itself be a challenging goal – but how do you perform on that initiative when there are nearly 1000 service representatives

in over 700 locations nationwide. How can you possibly maintain any level of consistent quality with such a widespread rep force? One thing was certain—it would require more than workshops.

ASLAN's co-founder Tab Norris was one of the senior consultants on the project. "We've worked with projects of this scope many times over the years – though I'll admit the degree to which this rep force was distributed is greater than what we typically see. We knew that success was going to be largely determined by two factors. First, service representatives would need to be equipped with practical, true-to-life skills that they could use in real customer interactions – they didn't sell widgets so widget illustrations would not connect. Theory has its place but this kind of project would require very practical tools reps could use in their day-to-day routine. Second – there would have to be a culture and process for ongoing coaching. This kind of change wasn't going to happen in a one or two day off-site workshop. Managers would have to be trained and equipped to continue the training initiative after the workshops were over."

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### The Solution

Over a 90 day period, each rep and manager was trained in a new approach to interacting with customers. They learned skills to help them take the lead in conversations by communicating an other-centered objective. They were specifically equipped to address some of the most common customer concerns. They learned to ask about and listen for customer's unstated needs and most importantly, they learned skills to help them interact with customers as real people and not as just the next call in the day.

Along with the training for reps, managers went through ASLAN's Catalyst program. They were taught skills to help them

effectively coach the reps on their team. They learned to assess reps relative skill levels in each of the competency areas covered in the workshops – diagnosing reps skill mastery. And they were provided with resources including exercises that they could prescribe for reps to help build and improve skill areas where gaps were observed – developing reps skill level. Finally, they (sales managers) were evaluated on their coaching skills and certified by ASLAN coaching consultants.

### How Did It All Turn Out?

You'll recall that the goal for the initiative was to realize double digit improvements in customer retention – or to put it another way a double digit reduction in churn. With growing

customer acquisition costs, the cost of churn ( $\text{Churn Rate \%} \times \text{Total Number of Customers} \times \text{Customer Acquisition Cost}$ ) can be a heavy cost for a business.

As a result of the ASLAN training initiative coupled with a well executed follow up process of sales coaching, the client was able to realize a 50% reduction in churn – significantly higher than they had projected.

### Bottom Line

The Consumer Services initiative was so successful that ASLAN was subsequently hired to launch what turned out to be an equally successful initiative with the company's Business Services division.



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Since 1996, ASLAN has been helping companies improve the quality of their customer service interactions and as a result improve customer experience. Whether with individual consumers or B2B customers, those improvements have driven two key measures – increased top line revenue as customers are helped to identify additional product/solution needs and improved margin as CSRs are equipped to more effectively defend price. ASLAN's customer service solutions have been used by industry leaders like American Home Shield, Williams Sonoma, Nautilus, Harland, Deluxe, FedEx, AAA and many more.

**For information on ASLAN and our full range of solutions contact us:**



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