

Challenges Of International Customer Service

More and more businesses operate internationally, especially those who sell mainly on the Internet. After all, why limit yourself to only a domestic market when there's an entire globe of potential customers out there? There is just one problem, however. Every successful company needs to offer good customer service in order to stick around for the long term. When only catering to one language and one market, that's not too difficult, but when doing business on a global scale it becomes vastly more complex.

To start with, it is a must to keep customer service open so customers in all target countries can reach it during the day. That can pose a challenge if the various target markets are located in different time zones, in which case it may actually be best to keep customer service open 24/7. That way it won't matter where the customer is located; they'll still be able to get in touch with customer service at a time that's convenient for them.

Another issue is language. While people from many countries are able to understand English, they may not be comfortable communicating with customer service in it. For those markets it may make sense to hire customer service rep who speaks the native language, in order to better serve to those customers. It is also imperative to offer a translated version of the website itself.

Finally, business culture is different in different parts of the world, which may cause unexpected problems when trying to cater to many target countries with the same customer service strategies, routines and policies. That's why it may be a good idea to consult with a specialist from each target country, just to make sure everything is handled according to customer expectations.

Because of all these challenges it is an absolute must to conduct thorough market research before moving into a new territory, or you risk opening a can of worms that will only cause problems for your business and not provide much in return. Usually it's a good idea to look at what others in your field are doing in that particular country - if they seem to have a good handle on things you can look to them for inspiration. It may also be a good idea to do a "soft launch" in that country as a test, perhaps with a limited website and product offering, so you're not risking too much if it doesn't work out.

