

## Straight Talking

By **PHIL GREEN** CBS



### Is anybody listening?

*With National Customer Service Week approaching, Phil Green, MD of participating company CBS looks at why customer service is more important than ever.*

National Customer Service Week is invaluable in bringing attention to the need to focus on customer requirements. For every company that gets it right, there are a dozen more that fail to make the grade. One of the more positive aspects of the current recession is that it has forced companies to look closely at the quality of service they provide in order to survive.

Good customer service is not about expensive training courses or sending someone birthday cards and the odd promotional mouse mat. Despite technological advances and changing business practices, the basic principles remain the same as they always were:

- Do what you say you will do
- Deliver what you promised

Having said that, keeping customers satisfied does require a degree of ongoing planning. At CBS, we recently employed an external consultant to work with us in further integrating key business processes – from sales through design to logistics – aimed at raising our service performance score from 80% to 95% plus. The result is an approach which ensures consistent performance to ISO9001 standards and which puts the customer first at every stage of their journey.

Whatever the processes you put in place, people are a key ingredient. Important factors to be considered are:

#### **Company Ethos**

It is important to get total employee buy-in to the process – be prepared for a complete culture change within the organisation.

#### **Leading by Example**

Change must come from the very top. It is important to show staff how things should be done and to explain the rationale behind it. Ensure any criticism you give is constructive.

#### **Invest in your staff and their welfare**

Everyone works better when they know where they fit in. Make sure your staff understand what their role is and be flexible - loyalty works both ways. The end result will be a committed and motivated workforce.

#### **Delegate**

Delegation enables clients to get to know your staff better. It also provides employees with a challenge and gives them the power to control their own development. You won't always get the right fit, but by trying people in different roles, you demonstrate your interest in them as individuals.

#### **Don't keep your customers in the dark**

Even in the best organisations, things do go wrong occasionally. Mistakes should be used as an opportunity to evaluate and improve your service offering. Ongoing communication is the key. Be prepared to intercede personally if your customers are not happy – it shows how much you value them.

How will you know when you have got it right? Lengthy surveys shouldn't be necessary. It will be easy to judge how you are doing by the number of compliments – and the absence of complaints! CBS specialises in office interior design, spaceplanning, refurbishment, relocation and supply of office furniture and seating.

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