

The reality of sales today is people are skeptical of companies and sales reps. They don't care about your vision or data, they want to hear what your customers have to say. They're not waiting for you to share carefully crafted case studies. They're reading about you online -- now. And if what they find isn't flattering, you won't be able to close.

In fact, a 2018 HubSpot survey showed 77% of respondents research brands before they engage with them. In a similar survey, 90% of respondents said they were more likely to purchase *more* if a company provided excellent customer service.

[Learn more about Service Hub.](#)

The same respondents were also more likely to make additional purchases if the company provided excellent customer service.

So, what does that mean for salespeople? It means you can close more deals and make more money if your company's digital footprint is good. And in today's economy, that starts with great reviews from fantastic customer service.

Instead of considering sales and service as two differentiated cycles, build each team's processes as if they were one motion -- the singular lifecycle of the customer.

To do this, it's important to understand how much customer service affects your quota. As noted above -- even before they reach out to you -- prospects are reading customer reviews and forming their own opinions about your company.

Bad customer service (which includes how you treat clients after the close), will be reflected online and hurt your ability to close deals and make quota.

Similarly, if you close deals that churn quickly due to misaligned expectations or a bad match, this also affects your quota -- especially if your company implements a "clawback" provision in your commission plan, like the one HubSpot CEO Brian Halligan recommends below.

So, how do you make customer service part of the fabric of your sales team? Here are a few strategies.

How Reps Can Become Exceptional at Customer Service

1. Close deals that won't churn

This one stings a little. You know you shouldn't close deals that will just churn in just a few months. But sometimes that quota's looming, the good deals are stalling, and you've got a car payment to make. I get it, but resist the urge to close bad deals.

Instead, set realistic expectations early. Be honest with your prospects about how and *if* your product/service can meet their needs. And be willing to walk away from a deal if you know it won't be a long-term fit for either company.

Your quota might suffer now but your career won't suffer later. And, if you're a sales manager, consider disincentivizing closing deals with a high likelihood of churn.

HubSpot CEO Brian Halligan recalls when the company instituted a "clawback" provision into the commission plan. He remembers, "The goal was that if a rep sold a customer that churned within the first six months, the commission we paid to the rep would be 'clawed back.'"

A second term was included stating a rep couldn't be promoted if their overall retention rate was below 70%. "Two things happened," Halligan says. "First, the math got better. Instead of a 2.5X return on the investment of acquiring a new customer, we now enjoy a 5X return."

	<i>Before</i>	<i>After</i>
Customer Retention	65%	~82%
Revenue Retention	70%	~100%
CAC	\$10k	\$11k*
LTV	\$25k	\$52k*
Reps	x	~10x

Image

source: [ThinkGrowth.org](https://thinkgrowth.org)

Second, these numbers encouraged rapid, sustainable growth for HubSpot and its reps. HubSpot Director of Sales Dan Tyre says, "Slamming deals through can potentially damage your reputation and create a churn risk.

Don't take a quick win today that will hurt you in the long run." Whether you're a rep attempting to decrease churn or a manager trying to incentivize healthy deals, don't

take the quick win. Build a foundation for growth, success, and scale.

To hold yourself accountable to selling deals that won't churn, HubSpot Customer Success Manager Blake Toder advocates for a weekly customer service report card shared across teams. He says, "Choosing the right medium is critical because sales reps are notoriously guarded with their time. Since they spend most of their day in their inbox, my team chose email."

Check out a mock-up of Toder's email report card for sales below, and ask your customer service team if they'd be willing to implement a similar process.



Image source: [HubSpot Service Blog](#)

Closing deals that won't churn also means you'll have more customers ready for upsell or cross-sell in the future. The investment in service is really a late-stage way of qualifying existing customers for revenue opportunities down the line -- from you *and* your company.

2. Build a great relationship with customer service

Yep. Sales reps have got to show their customer service team how much they care. Sit in on their calls, volunteer to answer support tickets for an afternoon, and talk to them about their biggest pain points.

Learn what your customer's challenges are, so you can start solving for them the day they become a prospect. The more connected you are to your service team, the more connected you are to your customers and your prospects.

You might even pick up helpful tips for your own sales calls. For example, support reps are trained never to say, *"I don't know."* After all, that's not a helpful phrase for a customer in need. Instead, they repeat the question and commit to finding a resolution as soon as possible. Salespeople can employ a similar reply when faced with tricky questions mid-demo.

If a prospect asks whether your portal offers two-factor authentication, you might say, *"Does our portal offer two-factor authentication? That's a great question. I'll check with our product team and get you an answer by tomorrow morning."*

You've offered actionable next steps and a deadline. Because of that, the prospect will feel grateful instead of annoyed, and you'll maintain your status as a trusted advisor -- despite not knowing the answer.

3. Check in with new customers early and often

It's a good idea to check with customers a few weeks and months after the close. Ask if your product/service is living up to their expectations. And find out if there's anything you can help with. If they share an implementation problem, take a proactive stance and be the first line of defense.

Don't reply with, *"Well, your customer service rep should be able to help you with that."* Instead, offer, *"I'm sorry you're having trouble with that. Let me see if I can help. If not, I'll find someone who can and keep you updated every step of the way."* This shows your customer they're more than just a number to you and your company.

Often, new customers feel cast aside once they sign the contract. Don't wait for there to be an issue before offering to help or reach out to their service rep. The first step to renewal and upsell is ensuring the smooth transition from happy prospect to happy customer.

HubSpot [Service Blog](#) Editor Sophia Bernazzani says, "If your prospects and customers get a constant, positive reminder of your company each time they use your advice and recommendations, your company will become known as a helpful, remarkable organization that customers want to do business with."

Just make sure to loop in their customer service rep on issues that arise and steps you're taking to help. And, as with your customers, don't wait until there's an issue to reach out.

HubSpot Product Marketer and former Customer Service Rep Marcus Andrews says, "Talk to customer service once a week. Grab coffee with your key account managers and keep a pulse on how they're doing with big accounts."

Andrews also recommends offering help before it's asked for. He says, "When I worked on the service team, it was nice to have a rep rescue clients facing a challenge. Salespeople aren't in the weeds, so it's sometimes easier for them to reset frustrated clients."

4. Cultivate advocates

Encourage leadership to build programs and services that cultivate advocates of your product and company. Word of mouth is the modern salesperson's best friend. It'll pay dividends in referrals and great reviews. It also sets your company up for success through less churn and a stronger reputation.

Lisa Leahy, VP of sales at Bolstra [says](#), "You should convey what you expect of your customer -- that ultimately, if you deliver on your promises, they will not just pay their invoices, but also become an advocate for you."

She continues, "If the sales team candidly frames these expectations clearly during the sales process, it makes it much easier for the customer team to ask for them down the road."

Brand advocates start with a great product/service, but the lifeblood is strong customer service and an exceptional customer experience. Foster programs and people who think about how to make this better for your customer and make them a vital part of your organization.

To do this, once again, it's important for sales and success reps and leadership to meet regularly to discuss customer service, retention, and advocacy.

Today's customers are your best sales reps. Cultivate these relationships, ensure they're successful, and you'll close more deals.