

The authority
on managing
the customer
contact center

Customer Service

NEWSLETTER

Customer Focus

Xerox service effort aims to fulfill on a commitment to the customer

Xerox Corporation's service organization is made up of 16,500 people who provide online, phone, and onsite technical service for its portfolio of network printers, multi-function devices and digital copiers, and more. Xerox service and support personnel provide answers to nearly 500,000 call center inquiries and 200,000 online requests per month. With that size organization, any shift in strategic direction is going to be a major undertaking.

But beginning about four years ago, that's just what Xerox did. The goal was to have customer service be a real differentiator for the company, says Bill Steenburgh, senior vice president, Xerox Services. "The customer didn't really care whether his problem was a hardware failure, whether one of our managed services personnel onsite didn't perform his duties properly, or whether their own network wasn't good. What the customer cares about is that you made a commitment and a promise, so the vision of our organization became very simple: Deliver on the promise — upfront."

To fulfill that commitment, Xerox integrated "what were some silos in our company," says Steenburgh, "into one system and into the call centers." Now Xerox Services delivers customer self-service through a sophisticated "Web-enablement system with great knowl-

edge-sharing," a call center staffed by customer service engineers (CSEs) who are versed in a variety of product areas and disciplines and backed up by a great database, and onsite service reps who can "get in there and not only enable a break-fix solution but also work with the customer to develop solutions so that their business is better," he says. "It's not just fixing the equipment, you have to fix the customer every time."

Training provides a service foundation

Effective rep training goes a long way toward enabling Xerox to fulfill its commitment to customers. Reps get "hands-on, face-to-face training in customer relations skills, on how to use the basic tools they need to do the job — the systems — and on Xerox as a whole, so they understand the bigger picture than just the call coming in and they can put it in context," says Steenburgh.

Reps also get extensive training on the product sub-sets that they are answering calls about. The company uses a voice-recognition system to route calls — "by a customer just reading back to us a product serial number we can route them to a group

of people who are very experienced on that particular product," says Steenburgh. Not only that, but the rep also has the product sitting next to him, "the rep can talk the customer through the problem while they are looking at it

themselves and working with it," he says. "It's very extensive training."

Training on customer relations skills involves iden-

tifying different types of customer personalities and how those different personality types can "morph" under pressure. In addition, says Steenburgh, reps spend about a half-day on effective listening skills.

Even onsite reps get customer relations training. "It doesn't matter if you fix the equipment, if the customer isn't happy in the end, you haven't done your job. So I'm a big believer in soft-skills training," Steenburgh says. "We don't send people onsite who haven't had this training." They may continue to get on-the-job training, but nobody goes onsite without those fundamentals, he adds.

Xerox also believes that training for frontline supervisors is very important. "Our first-level managers are really key to making sure that every employee is developed to his full potential, so we spend a lot of time with them. In fact, in an upcoming training session for

"It doesn't matter if you fix the equipment, if the customer isn't happy in the end, you haven't done your job."

www.CustomerServiceGroup.com

Reprinted from *Customer Service Newsletter*

© 2007 Alexander Communications Group, Inc. All rights reserved.

DO NOT EDIT OR ALTER REPRINTS • REPRODUCTION NOT PERMITTED

first-level managers,” Steenburgh says, “we’re going to spend a full day on coaching skills — how to coach a person to better performance, how to correct negative performance, and how to motivate reps.” First-level managers also get ongoing leadership training, “so as we move people around, we’ve got a bench prepared.”

Keeping everyone in alignment

Besides training, another thing that Xerox works hard on is its “strategic alignment.” What that means is that the specific goals involved in that commitment to “deliver the promise” would be aligned from the CEO, through Steenburgh and his team, and right on down to the frontline rep. “That alignment comes down from the way you set up expectations at the beginning of the year. On my sheet we might be talking about gross profit, gross margin, and other high-level stuff, and when you get down to the CSE it might be their parts usage on an end-user product, but all of their goals and targets add up, mathematically, to deliver the number that we’re committed to,” says Steenburgh.

In addition, there’s a monthly review of performance commitments for everyone in the service organization “to see how we are projecting against it and to close any gaps between what we’re doing and what we’ve made commitments on,” he says.

In addition, Steenburgh does a quarterly conference call and Web-based presentation with first-level managers during which they review Xerox results, and Xerox Services performance. “We review where we are, we review our gaps, we do recognition, and then we explore a couple of strategic initiatives,” he says.

In addition, Steenburgh does regular “roundtables” with his managers that involve more of a two-way discussion. “It could be that somebody

J.D. Power recognizes Xerox’s service efforts

To validate its extensive customer service efforts both in its own eyes and in the eyes of its customers, Xerox recently went through the technical service certification process offered by J.D. Power and Associates and was cited for excellence in customer service and support and for providing “an outstanding customer service experience.” The J.D. Power audit involved evaluations of the company’s onsite, online, and phone-based customer service and included comprehensive visits to several call centers and hundreds of customer surveys.

“Most customers list service among their top three considerations when making a purchasing decision,” says Bill Steenburgh, senior vice president, Xerox Services. “By having a reputable firm like J.D. Power and Associates evaluate our service approach, we can benchmark Xerox against the highest industry standards and identify additional ways to serve customers better.”

A couple of the improvements the J.D. Power audit suggested include:

- **Self-service.** “J.D. Power suggested that we could more aggressively move more of our customers to the Web,” says Steenburgh, though he adds that the company will be cautious there. “One of our differentiators is that when customers call us, they are going to get through to a live body within 30 seconds, and that person can do first- and sometimes second-level troubleshooting with you. So they helped us by saying we may have an opportunity there to drive that one a little harder, but it will be appropriately driving them — when and where it makes sense for the customer,” he adds.

- **Training.** “J.D. Power auditors suggested that we might have an opportunity to make greater use of recording tools to improve training in our call centers,” Steenburgh says. “We could record the conversations that our first- and second-level customer service engineers are having when they fix problems over the phone, and use that as part of our training to enable CSEs to do it even better in the future.”

J.D. Power also identified several best practice areas for Xerox, including managing service life cycles (“How you service a product that’s 20 years old is different from how you service a newly introduced product,” says Steenburgh), leadership training, succession planning, and use of dispatch technology, among others.

Xerox plans to renew its service certification with J.D. Power annually, not only for the improvement opportunities it might help identify, but because for Xerox and for other technology companies, “you are really not going to have any choice but to take the level of service up,” Steenburgh says. “Because for the companies that don’t take it up, there’s going to be a marked differentiation between your service delivery and that of other companies, and in the long run you will start losing market share. And once you start losing market share and revenue you start cutting costs instead of investing, and then you are on your death spiral.”

needs to vent on a particular issue and you need to work with them to understand why. Or they say, ‘Look, there’s an issue for us here, are you aware of it?’ I probably do 50 to 100 trips per year to do a roundtable in each one of our offices,” he says. “I talk a little and listen a lot.”

First-line managers are also re-

quired to meet with their CSEs on a regular basis, including spending time with those in the field. According to Steenburgh, reps get “documented feedback as an individual on the day of that visit, and feedback monthly on their performance metrics and how well they performed against them.” He adds: “You might get more visits from

your manager if your performance has ‘opportunities’ — so we can understand them and work together to correct them.”

Recognizing service commitment

One other element in Xerox’s commitment to the customer is recognition. Steenburgh says that during New York City’s recent transit strike service employees demonstrated their commitment to customers by walking to work — one walked seven miles carrying his tool bag, Steenburgh says — and by sleeping at customer sites and at Xerox parts drops. Recognition is extremely important in maintaining that level of commitment, and “I think we do it better now than we did four years ago, and I think we can do it a lot better tomorrow,” says Steenburgh.

Xerox provides formal recognition

to service people through its Peak Performance program. This is a two-level program that takes into account both objective and subjective measures, including customer feedback. Those service people who are in the top 20 percent according to these metrics are identified as Silver Award winners and receive a monetary award of \$500 to \$1000. The top five percent of service people are identified as Gold Award winners, and they take part in a one- or two-day trip to a resort location with a significant other.

Steenburgh believes that it is vital to involve those “significant others” in the program because “service is a team game.” He adds: “You can have your son’s or your daughter’s birthday planned for five o’clock, but if something goes south at a customer site, you might be there until midnight. So we want to make sure that we recog-

nize the family team that enables the heroic efforts of our reps.”

Where Steenburgh thinks he can do better is with “spot recognition” — “catching somebody doing something good and giving them instantaneous feedback, both in a verbal and a documented way.” To accomplish that, “we’re trying to put systems in place for the first-level manager. We’ve got a website where there’s a variety of letters that the manager can pick from and customize to send to the rep about the day that you visited them. Everybody likes that kind of feedback,” Steenburgh says. “But even negative feedback is a form of recognition if it’s done right, so the rep thinks, ‘Gee, you recognized what I’m doing and you’re helping me to get better.’”

Contact: Xerox Corporation, www.xerox.com. ■

Customer Service Newsletter

A publication of the Customer Service Group
712 Main Street — Suite 187B, Boonton, NJ 07005-1450

Telephone: (973) 265-2300 • Fax: (973) 402-6056 • Email: info@CustomerServiceGroup.com • Website: www.CustomerServiceGroup.com

Customer Service Newsletter® is published monthly by the Customer Service Group, which provides management and training materials for customer service executives, managers and representatives through newsletters, books and support materials.



© 2007 Alexander Communications Group, Inc. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying or otherwise, without the prior written permission of Alexander Communications Group.