



47 Educating customers

What is customer education?

Customer education is all about giving your customers an opportunity to learn more about your products or services. The more people understand about the value they could receive, the more likely they are to buy. The degree to which a potential customer needs to appreciate the context within which the product or service they are purchasing exists will vary. Offering customer education can be a very good way of getting those potential customers to put their hands up and say 'I'm interested in what you have to offer'. For some businesses, education can be the first step in the sales process. Many buyers spend some time researching for information before they are ready to choose a supplier.

Why is it important?

People may willingly pay more for most products or services as long as they understand and appreciate the value they're receiving. Not knowing, not being aware or not understanding can slow up the buying process.

Sometimes an idea or information provided by a business can stimulate a desire to buy.

Many of your potential clients certainly do not know as much about your service as you do and it may be that they don't fully understand and appreciate

- how it could benefit them
- how it works
- the opportunities that exist
- how you can help avoid problems
- how to maximise the benefits once they have used your service
- the full level of service they can expect from you.

The more people understand and appreciate how a product or service can benefit or improve their life or their business, the more they'll want it and the more closely connected they'll become to you if you help them to find this out.

Your challenge

Your challenge will be to make yourself aware of what a customer needs to know. You will also need to choose the best and most effective method of delivering that information.

How can you educate your customers?

There are a number of ways in which you can do this:

- Write articles
- Give demonstrations
- Run talks
- Offer training or awareness days
- Offer samples
- Write a book
- Free consultations
- Frequently asked questions on your website or brochure
- Information CD
- Tele-seminars or teleconferences
- Online demonstrations or presentations
- Exhibitions

If your customer education is presented in a relevant and interesting way it will attract more people.

Real life examples

A company providing online human resource software runs teleconferences and consultant development days. These are both free services and are designed to provide enough business stimulation and ideas to generate a desire to use the software.

One of our most successful customer education projects has been running a series of talks and writing a number of articles featuring appropriate case studies. One very popular talk was entitled 'How to create a memorable brand,' as well as offering a fun and educational evening for potential customers, also stimulated an interest in our branding service.

A solar energy company who wished to convert customers who used conventional home heating services to solar power recognised that education would be a vital element in the sales process, as the benefits of solar power are largely unknown. One of the methods chosen to do this was a mobile showroom along with some well presented information on their website.

Many property and financial investment companies use educational seminars as a first step in their sales process.

CUSTOMER EDUCATION – SPECIAL RESPONSE CHECKLIST

- ▶ How do you currently educate your customers?
- ▶ What don't your customers know about you?
- ▶ What do you think they need to know in order to buy?
- ▶ Find out from your customers by asking what questions they have.
- ▶ Consider the best way to deliver that information to them.
- ▶ Be creative in your approaches.
- ▶ Consider how much detail they need.
- ▶ Monitor how well whatever you choose to do works.
- ▶ When you provide education, create a system that allows you to capture customers' details. Keep a record of that customer information.
- ▶ Make sure that you create a follow up continued education process.

How to use this information

Use this information to make a plan to improve the education of your customers. You may find more ideas about how you can do this as you read the sections on newsletters, events, conferences, article writing and exhibiting at conferences.

***Think educate and attract those hungry for
knowledge and ideas***