



Increasing the Value of True Customer Service

What do you think may be one of the most important aspects of attempting to solidify a growth-oriented future for most any Contract Manufacturing Company?

We have done the research for you. Here are the results.

After having surveyed over 300 manufacturing customer service professionals, a recent report was filed and published by **The Salesforce Research Team** titled *"Connected Manufacturing Service Report."* Results showed that 74% of manufacturing executives believe that their "service" will be a primary source of profits within the next decade. And in their second annual "State of Service" report, **81% of customer service teams say that the service they provide has the largest impact on how customers perceive their brand.**

Below are just a few of the most important manufacturing customer service trends revealed in this research, along with several other insights related to the discipline of Customer Service in Manufacturing.

1. Technology has made it easier than ever for manufacturing buyers to take their business elsewhere.

Customers, who are also consumers, are more empowered and connected than ever. And those consumers are increasingly taking the same high

expectations into their professional lives. This shift is sending ripples through the manufacturing industry. Eighty-two percent of business buyers say technology has made it easier than ever to take their business elsewhere, meaning that long-term customer loyalty is increasingly difficult to earn. What this means is that manufacturers have an unprecedented opportunity to understand their end customers. Those who succeed will be well-positioned to build deeper relationships with their end customers, understanding their needs and subsequently finding opportunities to up-sell within their existing customer base.



2. To win and keep customers, manufacturers are prioritizing deeper customer relationships.

Manufacturers have rigorously collected data on internal metrics to operate more efficiently, driving down costs and improving margins. While internal data collection remains important, it is not moving the needle to help manufacturers understand their end customers and grow their businesses. This is beginning to change; 71% of manufacturing service teams say they've become more focused on creating deeper customer relationships over the past 12–18 months. And 63% also say they have increased focus on personalizing service interactions.

3. Sixty-nine percent of manufacturers plan to increase their service (sales and marketing) budgets over the next two years.

Many manufacturers can no longer rely solely on the quality of their products to win work. Over half (52%) of manufacturing executives with service oversight say their company has an increasingly difficult time competing based on product (and/or capability) differentiation. Among that same group, 86% believe the “customer experience” is a key competitive differentiator. As a result, 69% of manufacturers (and 80% of top-performing manufacturers) plan to increase their service (sales) and marketing budgets over the next two years.

4. Manufacturers partner sales and service to grow their business.

In the manufacturing sector, perhaps no two departments demand alignment quite like sales and service. Manufacturers with a complete view of the customer — one that business users can easily access — set their sales and service teams up for success. With that complete view of the customer, more than two-thirds of manufacturing service teams say they identify opportunities and proactively alert sales, helping to boost the bottom line.

5. Manufacturers are delivering faster, smarter service with new technologies like IoT and AI.

Forward-thinking manufacturers are already investigating how artificial intelligence (AI) can apply across their business — from helping service agents anticipate customer needs to setting up connected devices for self-diagnosis. These connected customers have high expectations of what manufacturers will be doing with AI in the future; 73% of business buyers expect that, by 2020, companies will provide products that can self-diagnose issues and automatically order replacement parts or service.

6. Manufacturers will begin to understand that their “brand” needs to be defined, consistently communicated and show proof through actual accountability.

Every customer is a consumer. We all place a “perceived value” on most every brand we see as a viable candidate for purchase. Manufacturers, as a vital part of their service offering, must create a value statement that surrounds their brand. This is done with careful attention to consistent messaging, a solid web presence, continuous mentions of their successes within trade journals and relationship-building published materials, sponsorships and the like. This effort is ongoing, no matter the state of the economy or if profits are sky-high. In the retail world,



this is often known as Public Relations Planning and Execution, in the B2B world, it is customer relationship building. If knowledge is power, then power starts with positive perception. Build your brand and never be afraid to let customers know how good you are, they may never know otherwise.



Within the arena surrounding the building and expansion of **Customer Service** and solidifying brand recognition within manufacturing companies, the sometimes obvious mentions need to be readdressed for good measure.

These include:

On-Time Deliveries

Orders will be processed and delivered according to the schedule promised to the customer, accompanied with clear, accurate shipping and billing information.

Prompt and Accurate Response

All inquiries should be handled with a spirit of urgency to ensure that pricing, inventory, or process information is delivered to the appropriate person.

Easy Business Transactions

Processes, procedures, and a style of doing business will be developed to ensure optimum efficiency for the customer. Find ways to make doing business with customers easier, while always striving to be friendly.

Proactive Communication

Make sure that customers are updated with accurate information concerning the status of their orders.

Customer-Centric Approach

Every good contract manufacturing company is purposeful at placing the focus and importance on its customers. This should be reflective in how phone calls are answered or how you speak with people in person, as well as on websites and through testimonials and reviews from past customers. Every good company is focused on how they can better serve their customer; it often shows in a curiously silent way...through repeat business.

First Class Machinists & Staff

Apart from the actual machinery, a high quality contract manufacturing company should be equipped with top notch machinists and staff. From the front desk and customer service team to the machinists running the parts, every part of the team should be trained, equipped and visibly on top of their game from initial engagement to the delivery confirmation.

Expert Educators

What often sets one contract manufacturing company apart from another is the emphasis on education. A company that places importance, time and resources on educating their customers (and prospective customers) is more readily viewed as a reliable, a thought-leader within the industry. For example, this type of company would be one that provides educational downloads such as White Papers, informative blog articles and videos, providing information beyond the norm to the public, building their brand and assisting in securing themselves as a known and respected player in the industry.

Approved and Certified.

Notes to Manufacturing Customers in Relation to Building Service and Trust between You and Your Manufacturing Partner.

This element may be obvious to some, but it is the single most important aspect to ensuring your parts and projects are handled properly from quote to delivery - Certifications. The ISO Certification in particular, ensures that any project will be handled with honesty, integrity and precision. Contract manufacturers should have the proper certifications in-place, which assist to protect customers and build greater trust and customer service, often resulting in ongoing relationships.

What Is ISO 9001 Certification?

Standardizing processes ultimately lead to better productivity and overall safety on the manufacturing floor, and ISO Certification sets the worldwide benchmark for that level of standardization.

ISO 9001 is a widely used standard for quality Certification, but also one of the most stringent. This standard ensures that every aspect of a contract manufacturer's business is well-run, including key processes, management roles and responsibilities, documentation, customer satisfaction, employee training, production, service and internal audits.

ISO Certification requires contract manufacturing companies to constantly review, improve and document most every process in their facility, giving you the assurance that their company is running at the highest standard possible and, ultimately, that they are protecting their reputation with customers.

How ISO Certification Benefits

Customer Service Goals:

When you choose a contract manufacturer with an ISO 9001 Certification, you know you are hiring an effective, efficient organization. Any potential manufacturer might claim those qualities, but ISO Certification guarantees the highest level of customer service, safety and order fulfillment speed.

The most important feature of ISO 9001 Certification compels a contract manufacturer to focus on continuous improvement in customer service and satisfaction. An ISO 9001 Certified business must continually monitor customer feedback for opportunities to improve customer service and process quality.

Being ISO Certified means a contract manufacturing partner must focus on these other key areas, as well:

- Refine, streamline and document all manufacturing services and processes.
- Improve the consistency of operations in everything from the office to the production floor.
- Keep management and employees focused on quality production and delivery.
- Improve efficiency, reduce waste and save money wherever possible — all to stand by the commitment to maintain Price Point Continuity.
- Strengthen overall company performance and continually bolster employee morale.

Why ISO Certification Is Not The Only Factor To Consider.

ISO 9001 Certification is an extremely important metric to consider when selecting a contract manufacturer, but also evaluate two other related factors surrounding the Certification itself.

First, ask your potential manufacturer whether their most recent ISO Certification Audit had any reported findings that needed correction. Just because a business is ISO 9001 Certified doesn't mean they've rightfully maintained that status since their last Audit — and an unscrupulous business might be hiding the fact that their Certification is in jeopardy.

Look for a contract manufacturer who is open and honest about their ISO Certification and has a history of positive Audit results, not one who's Certification is tenuous. If the potential vendor isn't honest and upfront, you need to find a different outsourced manufacturing partner who communicates with you using an open-book policy.

Second, while it's certainly a strong indicator of quality, an ISO 9001 Certification should only be part of a much longer and larger history of quality manufacturing and production at that company. Look for a contract manufacturer with a history of quality manufacturing and who has an established ISO 9001 Certification.

Final Notes.

While this White Paper attempts to highlight certain aspects of enhancing Customer Relationships within the manufacturing process, it is by no means the end-all or a definitive statement of assessments.

We at United Scientific are the first to admit, obtaining greater amounts of perceived worth from every customer we serve, is an ongoing, forever endeavor.

We accept that improvement in all areas of our customer's experience with us is a consistent driving force. By enhancing our understanding of the needs and expectations of every customer, any hurdles we clear toward achieving greater and more positive brand awareness, is an extremely worthy pursuit.

