

How Customer Relationship Management Can Make or Break a Nonprofit

Customer Care - One Secret to Nonprofit Success

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Who do you want to be? The nonprofit version of Comcast or Zappos?

Arizona State University, in a [study about customer service rage](#), found that satisfied customers tell 10 to 16 people about their good experience.

But, a customer who is dissatisfied tells his or her story to 28 people.

Customer relationship management is just as crucial for nonprofit organizations as for any other type of business. It might be even more complex.

Who are your customers? And what do they want?

The People Who Use Your Services

Whether your nonprofit charges for its services or you give them away, how you treat your "customers" is crucial.

And they want what any customer does: easy access, personal interaction, solutions for their problems, fast response to their requests and needs, and a heartfelt thank you for their participation.

Serving your clients, users, participants, students--whatever you call them--is your organization's reason for existing.

Do you have policies in place that guarantee that your employees, volunteers, teachers, trainers, deliverers, program managers all treat your clients with respect and respond to them rapidly?

We all know what we expect when it comes to customer service.

It's the difference we see every day in our life transactions, such as walking into a store and having someone come up and ask if they can help you.

It's the difference between waiting in line at a checkout counter because all the others are closed, and that bank where the line is only reaches three people when another window opens.

Even if your services are "free," don't doubt that the the people who use those services deserve and want good customer relations. The one person you ignore could be a future friend or a donor lost.

Your Volunteers

All nonprofits depend in good measure on volunteers. They help make your services possible, and they are the [most likely supporters of your cause](#). People who volunteer and have a [happy experience](#) tend to be your best donors.

What do they want? Easy access. Suitable jobs. Respect for their abilities. A thank you for their help. Good training. Opportunities to learn and add to their skills. Friendship and social interaction.

An unfortunate volunteer experience is a nightmare for the person who came in good faith to your nonprofit to offer a hand.

Your Donors

Donors are those who give money or assets to your cause.

A donor might be someone who leaves your organization a million dollars in [his or her will](#), or it could be that person who donated \$10 [online](#).

Donors are [foundations](#) that give you [grants](#), and corporations that [sponsor](#) your [events](#).

They are the people who give their clothing and furniture and books to your thrift store and the lawyer who contributes pro bono services to help keep you in business.

All donors want to be appreciated and thanked. And the quicker, the better. They also want to be able to find the right person to talk to when they have a problem, or they want to set up a scholarship fund, or partner for a [cause-marketing](#) campaign.

Donors want to know how their donation made a difference in a life, and that you spent their money wisely.

They want to be [thanked](#). They wish to hear from you on a regular basis but not every day. They want to hear good news stories as well as about dire needs, and they want to be able to give in a [multitude of ways](#) that are convenient and quick.

Make improving your relationships an organizational goal. Start by thinking about all of your "customers" and what they might want.

So, do you want to be Comcast or Zappos?

