



How To Close An Account

business customers customer experience customer retention

Summary: Closing an account is never fun. But, doing it the right way could earn you points with the customer.

Americans sure sit around a lot. Consider that 70% say they hate sitting at work, yet 86% do so all day. In fact, people sit about 13 hours each day in total, between work, watching TV, driving around or using the phone/computer.

When it comes to banking, you can expect more lively action from customers and staff, particularly when someone says they are thinking about closing their account.

While it may seem logical, experts say the wrong way to approach this is to ramp up the pressure to get an explanation. Sure you want to make amends and solve any potential problem, but this might not be the time to do so.

Instead, research finds perhaps a better way to handle this type of situation is to train staff to be as nice and helpful as they can, when closing an account. Be sure to ask whether there are any scheduled electronic payments or automatic deposits the person should change too. In so doing, the tone shifts and you might engender their appreciation. If they believe that you do have their best interest at heart, perhaps they may even reconsider switching.

Once the customer sees that your team is genuinely interested, it may be a good point to inquire politely why they are closing the account and whether your bank can improve the situation. This subtle shift shows you care about the relationship and not just the transaction.

Of course, the customer response will dictate where to go from there. If they are vague or don't really want to talk about it - don't push. Employees should just continue to make polite conversation and the person should appreciate their tact.

But, all of this doesn't mean that you can't continue to find ways to learn if anything went wrong. We are only talking about the approach here. One way to find out more is to change the venue from a public and possibly emotionally-charged situation for the customer to something calmer.

Some banks have found success in subsequently mailing or emailing the person a survey asking how they can improve the customer experience. Here, be sure to let them know they can remain anonymous, if they want to provide specifics.

Still other banks employ a third-party market research firm with professionals skilled in appropriately probing people to find root causes of issues bubbling just below the surface.

Another trick is to keep track of the reasons why customers close accounts. This will help your teams not only to find ways to rectify situations, but also to see if there are any trends you can move to fix on a larger scale.

For those customers who seem open to still talking to you, consider notifying them that you appreciate what they told you, listened to their concerns, and have taken specific steps to remedy the problem. After all, people usually respond well when they feel they have been heard.

You never know where the next opportunity will surface with a customer, but working to turn even bad experiences into better or good ones can pay dividends down the road, so it is worth the second effort.

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