

## first direct - Brief

# Using customer services to position a business

## Introduction

**first direct** is a part of the HSBC bank. It provides a range of banking services such as current accounts and insurance. As a service provider, **first direct** seeks to give good customer service to win and keep customers. All banks offer current and savings accounts. It can be hard to tell them apart. **first direct** is a telephone and online bank and has been the leading online bank for 20 years. **first direct**'s call centres operate 24/7. This service helps the bank to stand out from competitors.

## What is customer service?

Customer service is the service provided to customers before, during and after purchase. It can build or break relationships with customers. Good customer service takes time to achieve and needs investment to keep standards high. However, it benefits both customers and the business. **first direct**'s mission is 'pioneering amazing service'. Its focus is on quality. As an online bank with no high street branches, its personal service prevents it from being 'faceless'. To maintain high standards, **first direct** finds out what customers expect. It then builds this into its services. For instance, it aims to deal with complaints promptly and fairly.

## Customer expectations

**first direct** customers know what they want from banking services. They have views on how these should be delivered. **first direct** carries out market research to find out what its customers think. The feedback is used to improve services. For instance, it contacts new customers to see what they think of the service and product. This primary research helps to provide data on how the bank's services are seen by its customers.



## Meeting customer needs

As an online bank, the key to meeting customer needs is good communication. This makes **first direct**'s people central to the customer service function. Training and development add value to a job. **first direct** aims to be a destination employer. This means employees think of it as a job for life. They can use the knowledge they gain over time to provide better service. As people are so important to **first direct**'s service, the bank chooses new employees for their skills and personality. They receive training and coaching to help them deliver the brand's service values. **first direct**'s website also meets customer needs because it is easy to use. **first direct** regularly looks for areas to make improvements to the website. It has a first class security system and a platform for iPhone banking.

**first direct** invests in staff training and processes. Its good customer service gives **first direct** a unique place in the market. Good customer service can reduce costs and produce happy customers. These stay with the bank longer and recommend it to others. There are also fewer complaints, which can be costly to deal with.

## Conclusion

**first direct** is committed to high levels of customer service. To keep those high standards during very busy times, it puts its current customers first. By looking after its customers and focusing on service and communication, it has built up a loyal customer base. It has also built a unique and strong position in the banking industry.

