

## ➤ The importance of excellent customer service

### Introduction

Portakabin hires and sells buildings. It deals in both permanent buildings and those that can be moved. It is the leading brand in its market. The market contains strong rivals, so it has to work hard to stay as market leader. Clients include hospitals, schools, government, and other firms.

Its mission statement shows its aim. It is:

*'To provide peace of mind for our customers across Europe through quality buildings and services'.*

This case study looks at how it keeps its edge over rivals through good customer service.

### What is customer service?

Customer service is what happens at the points where client and business meet.

It consists of:

- \* information
- \* advice
- \* convenience
- \* after sales service.

Portakabin has Customer Charters for its clients. These set out the high levels of service that customers can expect. Good service levels must be seen at all stages during the process of buying or hiring a building.

### Why is customer service important?

It is vital to keep customers happy. Keeping clients makes sense as it costs as much to gain one new client as to keep five current ones. Portakabin has many rivals. If it does not keep clients happy, they will go elsewhere. It aims, therefore, to provide 'legendary' customer service. Its customers will be:

- \* *internal* - staff and departments within the business that rely on each other
- \* *external* - clients who hire or buy buildings.

Good service to clients is built on good internal service. Each department contributes to this, and each department has its own customer charter. For clients, the company provides a promise that sets it apart from its rivals. Its service levels promise buildings on time and on budget, with full guarantees and certification.

### Market research

Market research is used to find out if clients are happy. Portakabin asked clients what made them return and the top answer was the quality of the experience. The company has also interviewed almost all of its clients. They are asked to rate service on a scale of 1 to 10. Improved service is shown by the average scores going up over four years from 8.2 to 9. Individual comments show where really good service has happened. These are used to reward good service.

**Improving customer service**

Portakabin is keen to improve service levels even further. Good service is given a high profile in the company. It is published in the staff booklet and in the monthly magazine. It also includes comments and praise from clients. The re-launched Customer Charters show clients that the company is still seeking to improve service.

**Conclusion**

Portakabin is in a highly competitive market. It must therefore show that it is better than its rivals. It does this by using data and feedback to improve its service levels. With 'legendary' service it will remain a success and keep its place as market leader.