

What is really great client service?

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I've been in the client service industry my entire life. A more ubiquitous description, used across almost all industries, would be customer service. Salesforce defines customer service as “the support you offer your customers — both before and after they buy and use your products or services — that helps them have an easy and enjoyable experience with you.” I believe that all clients deserve great agencies and thus, great client service. Let's take a look at how the Salesforce definition can be modified to go from good to great. For me, it started with getting a paper route when I was 10 years old. It continued through my teens and college life with these jobs: short order cook, grocery store clerk, landscaper, and server at a Penn State bar/restaurant. This focus on customer service has followed me throughout my adult career in which I have spent the past 20+ years as part of a client service team at agencies, primarily in the pharmaceutical/healthcare space.

As a client service “professional” in all of these roles, I always wanted to go above and beyond just getting the job done — the paper gets delivered; the groceries get bagged; the lawn gets mowed; the food gets delivered; and the pharma client gets their work delivered to them on time and on budget. I look at all of this as the bare minimum — getting the job done. So, what does REALLY GREAT client service look like?

First, here at Relevate Health we hire people who are truly passionate about customer service. Yes, of course we need to make sure the candidates have the appropriate expertise and experience, but we also gravitate towards people who are seriously committed to creating great customer experiences. I believe this is something innate in certain people. It cannot be taught overnight—and maybe not at all. A true client service-focused person is energized by making others look good. They are motivated by exceeding expectations, and they are thrilled when their colleagues or clients get promoted.

Second, we continue to train, reinforce, and incentivize great client service behavior. As a client service team, we talk about anticipating client needs. If we can think a few steps ahead of our clients or partners, we are going to make their job easier. We encourage our teams to think about our clients' businesses in order to bring more value and share brand-building ideas—even when we have not been asked to do so.

So what does this look like in practice? What does GREAT look like? Bear with me while I revisit my previous jobs and share what above and beyond looked like to me:

- Paperboy — finding a dry spot to place the paper on a rainy day
- Cook — knowing a regular customer's name and their go-to meal (and that they hate mushrooms)
- Grocery store clerk — loading groceries into a car for a customer
- Landscaper — putting any tools borrowed from the customer back where you found them after mowing the yard
- Server — making things right, even when a mistake wasn't your fault

What this looks like in the industry that I love being a part of:

- Know what's important to your client—both professionally and personally
- Anticipate their needs and always be one step ahead.
- Actively listen for pain points and proactively come up with solutions (even if it's something that your company cannot address or solve).
- Surprise and delight with a new idea, an accelerated timeline, a new process, or just one of the most well-run status meetings they have experienced in a long time.

It all comes down to being the best part of your client/customer's day. We strive to be that for all of our clients, old and new. If you can find a way to do that, you will most likely secure a client for life.

