



## THE IMPORTANCE OF CUSTOMER SERVICE IN PHARMACEUTICAL CONTRACT MANUFACTURING

With tightening regulations and rising costs, the pharmaceutical industry is being presented with a consistent challenge in the marketplace: Do more with less. As a result, pharma companies are reducing their internal capacities in manufacturing and R&D and are, instead, increasing their outsourcing.

More than ever, these companies are relying on external service providers to fulfill their manufacturing needs and improve their productivity. In 2016, a study from Industry Standard Research Reports revealed that life sciences companies now outsource two-thirds of their manufacturing activities to CMOs. That figure is even higher for small and mid-sized companies: up to 80% in 2015.

A good pharmaceutical CMO will solve problems, speed up time to market, increase efficiency and decrease costs. And while a large part of this effectiveness stems from choosing the right manufacturing partner with "best-fit" expertise, technology and capability, there's one important aspect of the selection process that pharmaceutical companies are increasingly fixating on: customer service.

In a time when customers are better informed and have high expectations for product quality and support, pharmaceutical companies want partners who can provide great service to ensure maximum productivity and product success.

Potential clients can be won or lost based on a CMO's ability to effectively deliver quality customer service. The same rules apply with existing clients: Financial targets, launch dates and product quality can be hit or missed based on service efficiency.

On the other hand, manufacturing businesses that understand the effects of service-oriented culture on customer experience can produce extremely valuable partnerships. So how do CMOs ensure that they're providing top-level service and, in turn, maintain lasting client relationships? Communication.





Manufacturing companies are well versed in the importance of creating a quality product that will stand the test of time. But those who do not pay close attention to the service side of their business are putting their growth at risk.

Bob Scott, President of Operations at Aphenia Pharma Solutions Inc., told Generis Group:

*"When a customer comes to [a CMO], they are looking for certain technologies, capabilities and quality requirements, but being in the [pharmaceutical industry], most of those are either very evident or expected, and [the customer] is really not buying those. They already know you have the capability. What they're buying, or what they're looking for, is a culture that drives everything around the customer service model. And the only way to achieve superior customer service is to have a culture where communication, both internal and external, is a priority."*

Aphenia, which specializes in providing quality, compliant pharmaceutical packaging and manufacturing services, has implemented a company-wide initiative called Project Interact to ensure this client satisfaction.

Engaging every employee from the top down, Project Interact enables employees to fully understand the importance of customer service. Through a significant amount of training, they are educated on how to listen, how to communicate clearly, how to keep commitments and how to hold people accountable for their work. The result? Ongoing positive feedback from clients and repeat business for the company.

This top-to-bottom initiative is one that other CMOs should take note of. As Aphenia points out, customer service involves everyone who works on an order. It's not enough to have just one account or project manager committed to client success; each person involved in a project – from top-level executives to production floor employees – should be committed to providing the best service and value possible.



Here's how other businesses in the manufacturing industry can maintain and improve their customer service and, in turn, contribute to their overall company growth and client satisfaction.

### **Maintain Customer Relationships**

Every good company is focused on how they can serve their customer better. Build and maintain relationships by putting your client first and communicating clearly and effectively.

### **Respond Quickly**

Any successful CMO/client relationship relies on timely communication to ensure maximum productivity and product quality. Even if you don't have a solution or an answer, it's important to email customers back as quickly as possible to let them know you're working on it.

### **Keep Your Promises**

A CMO may not always be able to meet customer demand — and that's okay. It's better to be upfront with a client than promise and fail to deliver.

### **Deliver the Bad News First**

If there is bad news to be delivered, get it to the customer right away so that they can react and build a solution as quickly and efficiently as possible.

### **Be Friendly**

A good contract manufacturer should be determined to place the focus on their customers. This should be reflective in how a CMO responds to emails, answers their phone and speaks to their client in person.

***Click here*** to discover how CMO and pharmaceutical company relationships can quickly break down, and what the responsibilities of the client are to ensure effective collaboration and maximum productivity.