

Customer Service is Easy Money

By David Dunn

It's gone! It has disappeared! It doesn't exist anymore! "It" is customer service, or just plain service. Calling it nonexistent is a little bit of stretch, because there are still some companies that do practice this art, but there are a lot fewer than there used to be. That's sad for two reasons: Lack of service has caused the customer's shopping experience to decline dramatically, and it is also causing merchants to lose sales and lower profits. This latter fact is especially depressing because service is an area that businesses can use to increase their profits for little or no expense!

The customer is the absolute most important person in the business. The customer is why the business exists in the first place, so why not treat him like he is important? Make him feel important, like a prince, and he will continue to come back to your business, and in doing so make you more profitable. L.L. Bean, Ritz-Carlton, and other successful companies are renowned for their customer service, and it does not just happen. They work at it.

An old Chinese proverb says, "A person without a smiling face must not open a shop." Smile! Be friendly, but do so in a sincere manner. No one wants to buy from a business where the clerk is a jerk, angry, or ill-tempered. Going too far the other way is

bad also. Don't be a phony friend. Just be friendly and sincere. It really isn't that hard to do.

It has been estimated that 73 percent of customers buy for reasons other than price – they really want that personal service. So, make the experience personal. Introduce yourself. Tell them your name and get theirs, then use it. Even some of the big box stores now have their checkout clerks call the customer by the name on their credit card. People like to be called by name, but be sure to get it right!

Do not ever prejudge a customer based on his looks. First of all, everyone wants respect, regardless of his appearance. Also, that bum who just walked into the store may be a millionaire. You never know. I know a very wealthy farmer who happens to like to work on his own equipment whenever he can. Wearing dirty clothes, he went to the local Ford dealer to buy a new Lincoln, which he did every year. The new salesman didn't know him and tried repeatedly to steer him to an economy model without letting him into the expensive Lincoln. The rich farmer left angry, went directly across the street, and bought a Cadillac – with cash. That new salesman no longer works there.

A service oriented business often uses three words: Please and Thank You. Believe it or not, these common courtesies are not heard much in today's business world. However, they are very important to the customers. Use them and do so sincerely.

Stanley Marcus of Neiman Marcus Department Stores says, "The dollar bills the customer gets from the tellers in four banks are the same . . . what is different is the tellers." How true. Your business can be



different by delivering incredible customer service. Work on it, think outside the box, and imagine how you can make the shopping experience better for your customers. High quality customer service will pay off on your bottom line.

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