

SELLING POINTS

Why customers don't come back

Several surveys have focused on why customers won't give a company repeat business. Some of the most common reasons cited for not coming back:

Moved: 3%
Other Friendships: 5%
Competition: 9%
Dissatisfaction: 14%
Bad Employee Attitude: 68%

Even a brief glance at these numbers suggests that *all* employees should receive some sort of customer service training in addition to their specific technical or job-related training.

This includes employees not normally thought of as "salespeople": managers, supervisors, secretaries, accounts payable, engineers, accountants, designers, machine operators, security, drivers, loading dock workers, etc.

All of these people play a vital role in helping cultivate loyal customers. If their actions and attitudes aren't helping, they're hurting. Remember that 68% of lost customers are due to bad employee attitudes!

And don't assume that just because your customers aren't complaining to you that they're not complaining to friends, family and coworkers. Data suggests that fewer than 4% of dissatisfied customers ever bother to lodge a formal complaint with the offending company. Most simply take their business elsewhere.

Test this on yourself. The next time you get less than ideal service, what do you do?

Customer service, please!

How little things can make a big impact

by **Connie Brubaker**

I have yet to see a company that doesn't pay lip service to the old mantra, "The Customer is Always Right." So why have I felt so neglected, unappreciated, annoyed and overwhelmed recently?



Connie's Comments

Seriously, these past few weeks have been filled with some of the worst customer service I can remember. In one instance, even quoting the company's own stated guarantee of customer satisfaction back to them failed to elicit a favorable response.

I know I'm not alone. When I ask people about their various customer service experiences, I generally hear a chorus of complaints about lousy service, rude people and frustrating automated answering systems. People constantly say companies just don't care.

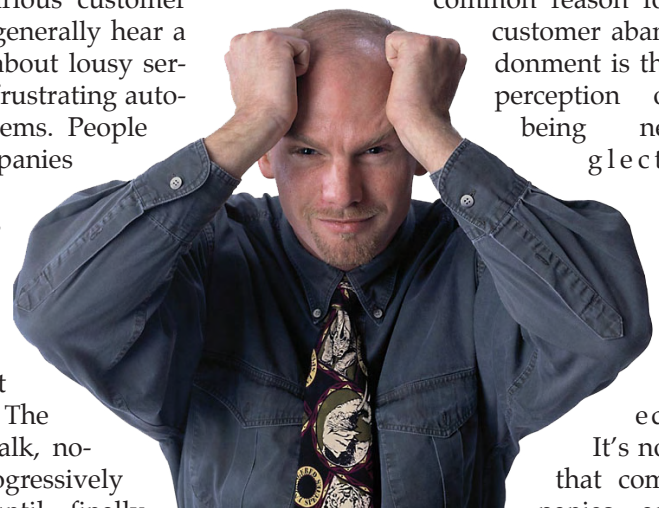
And the truth is that most companies view customer service as an obligation rather than an opportunity to set themselves apart from their competitors. The result is often an all-talk, no-action policy that progressively alienates customers until, finally fed up, they try their luck with another business.

Your brand is more than logos and

slogans. Fundamentally, it's the experience you create for your customers, good or bad. In their recent book, *Best Face Forward*, Jeffrey Rayport and Bernard Jaworski argue, "The quality of interactions with customers – and the customer experiences that result from those interactions – is rapidly becoming the sole remaining basis of competitive advantage."

So why do so many companies neglect this "competitive advantage"? Why don't they back up talk with action? In many cases, the problem stems from company executives who have little if any contact with customers and so don't really know what's important to them.

This knowledge gap leads to apathetic customer service. The most common reason for customer abandonment is the perception of being neglected.



ed. It's not that companies are incapable of intimacy — they simply do not know

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Small gestures can make a major customer service impact

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how to be intimate. "Customer strategies require leadership that sees the business from the customer's view, not through a spreadsheet," says Lior Arussy, author of *Passionate and Profitable*.

And what do you see from the customer's point of view? Examples include the need for one-call complaint resolution, prompt and knowledgeable staff to answer questions, and first and foremost, frontline workers that are enthusiastic and caring.

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Connie Brubaker is a certified Integrity Systems® business consultant and professional speaker who focuses on sales, customer service and leadership.

Earning customer loyalty costs relatively little, but offers tremendous rewards. Simple give your customer more than they expect. Make an emotional connection and leave them feeling great about the experience. In return, they'll give you repeat business, and terrific word-of-mouth publicity.

Companies renowned for their outstanding customer service include Nordstroms and USAA, whose San Antonio headquarters sends every employee through my company's Integrity Systems training. Both companies value their customers and deliver on their promises.

Even small gestures can make a huge impact. After the sale, many customer-oriented companies increase customer satisfaction with a follow-up phone call, a thank you note, a discount

coupon or a small gift. This simple action shows customers that their business is appreciated and helps create a memorable personal connection. In the end, after all, we prefer doing business with people (and companies) we know, trust and like.

Every single one of the clients I provide customer service training for employs a receptionist to answer the phone during business hours. The companies range from a dozen employees to over 500, but each cares enough about making a favorable impact on their customers to invest in someone to give a warm greeting, answer questions and direct customers to the right person. Thanks to that commitment, their customers feel valued and important — and they respond with loyalty, repeat business and great word-of-mouth PR.

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"Here is a simple but powerful rule: always give people more than what they expect to get."

— Nelson Boswell