

## FEATURES

# WOULD YOU DO BUSINESS WITH YOUR COMPANY?

By RANDI BUSSE

When was the last time, if ever, that you experienced what your customer or prospective customer experiences when they attempt to do business with your company? If you don't know what kind of experience they are having, now would be a great time to find out!

**What happens when they call you on the phone?** Are they greeted by a live person with a friendly voice who is happy to help them? Or are they greeted with, "Your call is very important to us; your approximate hold time to speak with a representative is 45 minutes?" Is the call answered on the first or second ring or on the eighth ring by someone who sounds like they're annoyed that you're even calling? Or do they have to press 7 for the customer service department, and then accidentally get transferred to the accounts payable department where they are then put on hold for 10 minutes, before they ultimately get disconnected waiting for someone to answer their call.

**Do the people who work for you greet customers with a smile and "how can I help you," or is it with more of an "I don't care attitude?"** Do your customers have to search for 10 minutes to find someone to help them? And once they do find someone, do they help them, or do tell them that it's not their department?

**What happens when your customer has a problem?** Is your customer told that it's not your company's fault? Or does your company take ownership and responsibility for the problem? How quickly is the problem resolved? Does the customer have to keep calling back to check on the status? When the problem does get resolved, is your company following up to ensure that the customer is happy with the outcome?

Did you know that studies show customers are actually more loyal to a company that "rights a wrong" when they do it quickly and without blame. Imagine that, you make a mistake, and they like you better!

**Do you and your employees know your customer's names?** If so, are they using them? Or are they addressing them as "Sir" and "Ma'am?" Dale Carnegie once said, "There is nothing sweeter than

the sound of thine own name." Are your employees giving their name to your customers? Personalizing the experience will make customers want to do business with your company.

Customers want to be loyal to us. They don't want to have to go through the time and trouble of looking for new providers of products and services. They want to feel that they are dealing with a company that cares about them, and not just their money. They want to know that the company offers quality service at competitive rates. Customers want the security of feeling that they are dealing with an expert and that they can count on them to steer them in the right direction. And customers want to feel respected and appreciated.

I don't have to tell you that there are many companies that provide the same products and services that you do. If you make it hard for customers to do business with you, will they? Or will they find someone else who will value them and their business and treat them well?

Customer service is not a department. It is the responsibility of every employee, from the CEO down to the janitor, and it must be practiced every day, in every customer interaction. Customers have a choice where they spend their money and who they do business with, and that choice could be strengthened or challenged with every interaction. How are YOUR actions and those of your employees affecting that decision?

So the question is, "Would you do business with your company?" If the answer is yes, keep up the good work. If the answer is no, before it's too late, put a game plan together to make it better, today!

Remember, if you don't take care of your customers, someone else will!

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