

# SERVICE... IT CONSISTENTLY PAYS

**A**chieving and maintaining a high level of customer satisfaction is related to everything that anyone in the organization does. This is true because every management and non-management function—from the janitor's job to the CEO's job—affect a customer's buying decision.

I believe that the organization chart for a corporation ought to show the customer, not the CEO, at the top. Service should be part of everyone's job description. Service should be the umbrella over every corporate organization plan.

"Quality of service is more important than price. Price will bring shoppers but not customers... (But), give the customer something worthwhile and she or he will pay what it's worth." —Tom Peters and Nancy Austin, *A Passion for Excellence*

To clarify the value of quality service, I believe that service retains the customers you already have, attracts more customers, and develops a reputation that encourages customers to do business with you in the future.

How do we do that? The best way is to put ourselves in the customer's shoes: Do things for a customer the way that the customer would do them for himself/herself.

## CASE IN POINT... GRAEBEL

Graebel Companies is a more than \$350 million household goods relocation provider. It is the largest privately owned integrated household goods company. It has typically produced annual growth rates exceeding 10 percent for many years. Dave Graebel, CEO, has focused on constantly refreshing his superior service strategy since he founded the company 51 years ago with one truck he drove himself.

In the household goods relocation business, Graebel's production crews (helpers, packers, and drivers) are taught to behave as if they are guests in a home. The company's total care and courtesy is required. A key to the company's success is packing and loading the possessions of their clients without damage.

Graebel has also maximized the use of the Internet with two powerful web applications. First, corporate clients can track and monitor all their employee relocations, expenses, exception requests and service quality. This helps keep them better informed with regard to their global transferees needs and helps define any changes or enhancements to their relocation policy. Second, the individual transferees can check the status of their shipment as it moves through the global supply chain -

regardless of the changes in time zones.

No other household moving firm provides such detailed access to this kind of data. When moving overseas, into different cultures and time zones, the ability to communicate in REAL TIME is critical.

## TREAT CUSTOMERS AS FRIENDS

It is essential for anyone in a service position to have a friendly greeting for each customer, to show sincere interest in the customer as an individual, to thank the customer for any purchases and invite him or her to return. Customer service is treating customers like houseguests or good friends. Make sure things are right and they will remember, tell their friends about your company and more specifically...about you.

## UNFORGETTABLE CUSTOMER SERVICE

On a recent trip to Africa I took my wife and son on safari at Wilderness Safari in Botswana. We experienced the perfect example of treating customers as houseguests. We received a handwritten note with our name on it that welcomed us the day we arrived. We were treated like royalty all during our stay and we had a personalized note on the day we left thanking us for coming, when to have our bags ready for pickup and when we would be departing for the airport. We arrived at Wilderness Safari as customers. We left as "fans".

## IT'S THE LITTLE THINGS THAT COUNT

It's the little details that keep a customer coming back over and over. It's the little details that cause a customer to rationalize paying more because they feel they are getting more. It's the little details that keep people talking about you and recommending everyone they know to you.

Anyone can do the big things; it's the little things that differentiate one business from another and that influence customers. Often, small-business owners cut out the little details when times get tough, and this is a big mistake. It's the little details that customers notice. It's a significant part of the overall customer experience. **RO**

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