

Bad service nullifies advertising

John Tsohlol ♦ Today's Restaurant Contributor



The American Management Association found that successful companies spend about 20 percent more money on personnel, including on personnel training, than unsuccessful companies do. The finding held true for companies of all sizes in every industry.

All your company's promotion, advertising, marketing, and goodwill can be ruined by one rude or indifferent employee. Money spent on advertising is largely wasted when customers show up or call in response to it and are turned off by employees with a lack of manners, long waits on the phone, or lack of knowledge of the product to name a few.

Richard Israel, retailing consultant, found that much of a huge advertising investment by a major furniture chain evaporated at the moment a customer entered a store and walked smack into salespeople with inexcusable behavior.

"The whole purpose of advertising," says Israel, "is to get the customer to come in the front door. After that, advertising can't do anything more for you. It's up to the people in the store to take over during the last four feet."

No! Employees do not arrive on the job with a full-blown set of service skills. Most companies believe they are awesome at customer service. They tend to assume that employees know from birth

what to do for customers during these last four feet.

I believe that companies should allot a portion of their ad budgets to development of learning programs for employees in order to reinforce advertising with customer service knowledge and skill.

Advertising brings customers in the door, all right; but, bad customer service sends them right back out the door again. When your organization becomes more human, more remarkable, faster on its feet, you are more likely to connect positively with customers,

All businesses have customers and have customer-facing experiences every single day. There are sales people, project managers, cashiers, waitresses and waiters, presidents, vice presidents, every person in the business is dealing with customers in one way or another. All of these people will mean the difference between a company that is perceived positively and a company that appears not to care.

The Key to Customer Satisfaction

- ◆ Listen and solve customer problems fast...dramatically shorten the time it takes to complete any task for customers and co-workers.

- ◆ Give customers your opinion, not one read off a piece of paper...they don't

want to hear scripted words or one-size-fits-all solution, they want to hear from a person empowered to make decisions on their behalf.

- ◆ Be proactive to find the solutions... customers look for people to solve a problem and do it quickly.

- ◆ Be reliable...customers want to feel comfortable dealing with someone they know and can count on to handle a situation.

- ◆ Take charge...customers want professional expertise, someone to give guidance and direction.

- ◆ Ask customers for feedback and let them know it is important...it makes them feel important and that their opinions matter.

- ◆ Be an advocate for the customer... customers are looking for a consultant. They want you to listen to them and provide them with a solution.

- ◆ Have a positive attitude... Focus on customers and on helping them solve their problems.

Employees are proud to work for a company with a president and senior managers who support the need for good service and prove it by providing on-going training. They are proud to work for a company that creates a great working environment and empowers employees to do what's right for customers.

It's about communication. If you are going to have a chance to win customer satisfaction you need to know what the customer thinks—your customer. The American management Association found in a survey that "high-growth companies" stay in touch with their markets and willingly spend the money to do so. They know their customers and they keep their knowledge fresh. They learn things that you cannot learn any other way:

- ◆ They learn whether they're satisfied.
- ◆ They learn what they bought and what they didn't buy and why.
- ◆ They learn what they came in expecting to buy and to pay.
- ◆ They learn preferences and how they are changing over time.
- ◆ They communicate this information to every single employee. 

John Tsohlol is a professional speaker, trainer, and consultant. He is the President and founder of Service Quality Institute (the global leader in customer service) with operations in over 40 countries. John is a self-made millionaire traveling and speaking more than 50 times each year. He is considered to be one of the foremost authorities on service strategy, success, empowerment and customer service in the world. John's monthly strategic newsletter is available online at no charge. He can also be reached on Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter.



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