

# TREAT CUSTOMERS LIKE LIFELONG PARTNERS

by John Tschohl

Over the years, I have had some real “wow” experiences with businesses—people and employees who have treated me like a VIP every single time I have come in contact with them. Sad to say, the opposite is also true.

It seems that every time I have a great experience, there are numerous bad ones that make me wonder why some companies are still in business. Why would anyone ever consider going back to make another purchase? No courtesy, no warmth, no one cares, no speed, no follow-up, and no respect.

My book, *Achieving Excellence Through Customer Service*, focuses on customers and your relationship. It's a blueprint for a quality service program that increases profit by developing customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Why is loyalty so important? According to global management consulting firm Bain and Co., repeat customers spend 67% more than new customers. This is due to both larger transactions and more frequent shopping. Even a 5% increase in retention can lead to a rise in profits of as much as 25–100%. You need to ensure that you continuously offer value to your customers to keep them coming back for more.



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“WE SEE OUR CUSTOMERS AS INVITED GUESTS TO A PARTY, AND WE ARE THE HOSTS. IT’S OUR JOB EVERY DAY TO MAKE EVERY IMPORTANT ASPECT OF THE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE A LITTLE BIT BETTER.”

—JEFF BEZOS, AMAZON

Here are my five “Great Truths” about quality service:

## 1. Treat customers like lifelong partners.

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“A CUSTOMER IS THE MOST IMPORTANT VISITOR ON OUR PREMISES. WE ARE NOT DOING HIM A FAVOR BY SERVING HIM. HE IS DOING US A FAVOR BY GIVING US AN OPPORTUNITY TO DO SO.”

—MAHATMA GANDHI

Do it by listening to customers' expressions of needs and wants. Then help them obtain the service or product that serves those needs and wants best, whether they're in your inventory or not. This is the proper procedure when you expect customers to return again and again over a long period.

## 2. Do not disappoint or anger customers.

“DEALING WITH PEOPLE IS PROBABLY THE BIGGEST PROBLEM YOU FACE, ESPECIALLY IF YOU ARE IN BUSINESS. YES, AND THAT IS ALSO TRUE IF YOU ARE A HOUSEWIFE, ARCHITECT OR ENGINEER.”

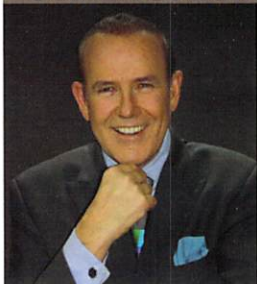
—DALE CARNEGIE

## 3. See the business through customer eyes.

Call it “empathy.” T.G.I. Friday restaurants, an American restaurant chain focusing on casual dining, familiarizes employees with customer perceptions with reports from mystery shoppers who routinely check out store image, merchandise and service from the customer point of view. Empathy is an

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### JOHN TSCHOHL



John Tschohl 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 more than 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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CUSTOMER LOYALTY

important ingredient in the service business. How one handles a service problem is as important to customers as the solution of the problem itself.

"MAKE YOUR PRODUCT EASIER TO BUY THAN YOUR COMPETITION, OR YOU WILL FIND YOUR CUSTOMERS BUYING FROM THEM, NOT YOU."

—MARK CUBAN

#### 4. Deliver more service than you promise or than customers expect.

This is a wonderful way to build customer loyalty upon their feeling that they got a "good deal." Practice the "and then some" principle. Your products do all you say they will...and then some. Service is

prompt, reliable and courteous...and then some. If a customer needs help once a sale is complete, help the customer...and then some. Delivering more service than customers expect is a subtle competitive tactic that competitors usually do not notice. In the process of building volume, you can confuse your competitors. They will not understand how you are doing it.

"HERE IS A SIMPLE BUT POWERFUL RULE: ALWAYS GIVE PEOPLE MORE THAN WHAT THEY EXPECT TO GET."

—NELSON BOSWELL

#### 5. Try to get better.

Imagine a mental fluorescent sign that flashes the questions: "How are we doing?"

(Fine, but we can improve.) And: "How can we get better?" (Apply the answers as if they were an action agenda.)

"PEOPLE RESPOND IN ACCORDANCE TO HOW YOU TREAT THEM."

—NELSON MANDELA

The newsletter Quality Assurance Report states that only when a company knows exactly what kind of service its customers expect, delivers on those expectations 100 percent of the time, at a price that customers are willing to pay, while still getting an acceptable return, can the company claim to excel in customer service. ■

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