



Hello! Thank you for the opportunity to share some great information. In this publication you will discover strategies to build business relationships with your customers/clients and employees. These will focus on service and loyalty techniques that are useful to individuals at virtually every level

of a business organization; sales, service, management, finance, IT, operations, etc.

Some of these articles are new while others are favorites from past *Shepard Letters*. In addition, there are a number of other business tips, motivational quotes, humorous articles and much more.

There are also some great products for you to consider. Whether it is personal growth or business expertise, I am sure the books and videos seen throughout this *Special Report* will help you build and enhance your professional career and personal life.

Finally, if you would like to use these articles for your own company or industry publication, let us know. Some of our clients e-mail the articles to their employees once a week as a training tool. And, there are additional articles on our website. We can provide the articles as a hard copy, e-mail or disk - whatever works best for you. We usually grant permission as long as you include our bio/contact information and send us a copy. Just give us a call or e-mail.

Sincerely,

Shep Hyken, CSP
Shepard Presentations

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"If a man empties his purse into his head, no one can take it away from him. An investment in knowledge always pays the best interest."
Benjamin Franklin

Shep Hyken is a professional speaker. His main topics focus on customer loyalty and service, internal service and a motivational presentation called "You Are The Magic!" This special report is dedicated to giving the reader good ideas and information on a number of different subjects. For more information on Shep Hyken and his programs, phone (314) 692-2200, e-mail: shep@hyken.com. (www.hyken.com)
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Six Customer Focused Strategies That Will Make Customers Want To Do Business With You! by Shep Hyken

Here are six simple strategies to deliver an even higher level of service. It all goes back to managing your *Moments of Truth* - each and every contact you have with a customer - and creating *Moments of Magic*.

1. Benchmark with the competition. You must know how you stack up against the competition. Find out what the competition does well, even better than you. Use this as the minimum standard. Do not copy! Simply use this as a starting point. If the competition is doing something you are not already doing, then figure out how to do it even better. The benchmark is not to set a standard or a goal. It is to become the eventual starting point on which to build.

2. Benchmark outside your industry. At a recent seminar I had eight groups share the best and worst customer service experiences they ever had outside of their own industry. There were some great stories. What amazed me was that 90% of them had to do with going to a restaurant. Then it hit me. If we think back to the best service we ever had, and it takes us to a restaurant, then why not try and emulate what this outstanding restaurant does for its customers? Look at what other industries do to create legendary service and simply bring their ideas to your own company.

3. Discover what you do best and exploit it. In the process of benchmarking with the competition,

you may find out you do something different or better than they do. Make sure your customers know this. It is one of the reasons to do business with you.

4. Know your customers. This sounds so simple, but so many companies miss the mark. I have an exercise I do at some of my seminars. I ask the audience to break into small groups and list what they think the top five customer expectations are. Once the answers are shared, the audience gets a reality check. Guess what? Almost always what the audience thinks their customers expect is not actually what their customers really expect. Getting to know your customers is not that difficult. You can hold focus groups, informal surveys, etc.

5. Know the value of your customer, specifically the dollar value. It may put a lot in perspective for you. Knowing the dollar value of a customer will help you make decisions about how you handle complaints, problems, special requests, etc.

6. In this cutting edge world we live in, we must stay up with technology. We can't be left in the dust. Be on the cutting edge which means taking advantage of new software, more powerful computers and even the internet. Faxing used to be the communication rage. Now, it is e-mail. Who knows what is next. Staying on top of technology, inside and outside of your industry, can give you a competitive edge.

So there you have six simple strategies to help you create a successful service, sales and marketing strategy. The customer is the reason we are in business. Implementing the above strategies will help exceed your customers' expectations and make them want to do business with you.

About Shep Hyken

Shep Hyken, CSP is a professional speaker and author who works with companies and organizations who want to build loyal relationships with their customers and employees. Early in his career he was hailed as one of the top entertainer/magicians working the corporate field. In 1983 he made the transition from entertainer to speaker, blending his entertaining talents with topics on service. His presentations focus on customer loyalty/service, internal service and motivation. Shep combines information and entertainment (humor and magic) to create exciting programs for his audiences.

Shep has worked with hundreds of companies and associations ranging from "Fortune 100" size corporations to smaller organizations with less than 50 employees. Some of his clients include American Airlines, Anheuser-Busch, ARA, AT&T, AETNA, Abbott Labs, AIG, Avis, Applebee's Restaurants, Arthur Andersen, American Express - and that is just a few of the A's!

(CSP stands for Certified Speaking Professional, and is a designation awarded by the National Speakers Association to individuals for certain achievements and education in the speaking profession.)

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Did you know that... (Useless but interesting information)

Bert and Ernie on Sesame Street were named after Bert the cop and Ernie the taxi driver in Frank Capra's *It's a Wonderful Life*?

Stewardesses is the longest word that is typed with only the left hand?

Al Capone's business card said he was a used furniture dealer?

If you toss a penny 10,000 times, it will not be heads 5,000 times, but more like 4,950? The head picture weighs more than the tail, so it ends up on the bottom.

Every time you lick a stamp, you are consuming one-tenth of a calorie?

The glue on Israeli postage stamps is certified kosher.

Source: These trivial facts were mentioned by Mark Vittert in his weekly column, Reflections, in St. Louis Business Journal.

"Motivate employees, train them, care about them, and make winners of them. At Marriott we know that if we treat our employees correctly, they'll treat the customers right. And if the customers are treated right, they'll come back."

Bill Marriott, Jr.
CEO, Marriott
Hotels

I'm Just Doing My Job

I was recently on a flight from St. Louis to San Diego and met a flight attendant, Susan Alvis, who was "dead heading" on our flight. (That is an airline industry term to describe a flight attendant who is commuting to work versus working the flight.)

Susan was in uniform, so at first I thought she was working. I found it odd that she was sitting in the seat next to me, eating a Cinnabun. (If you haven't ever had a Cinnabun, you are missing one of life's great pleasures. It may be the finest cinnamon sweet roll ever created by mortals.) I jokingly asked her if she brought enough for the entire cabin. She cut the sweet roll in half and told me that she was happy to share because there was no way she could eat the whole thing. We instantly became friends.

We started talking and I found out she wasn't working. But, then a problem arose with one of the other flight attendants. Because of an FAA regulation, they were going to delay the flight because they were one flight attendant short. She immediately jumped up to help, even though she wasn't being paid. And, she offered to work the flight if they couldn't get a replacement before the plane was scheduled to take off.

Well, the late flight attendant made it to the plane and Susan didn't have to work. But, I loved her attitude.

First, this nice woman created some goodwill with her airline when she shared her Cinnabun. Then she exhibited an incredible team attitude when she offered to pitch in and help her fellow flight attendants assure that the flight would get out on time, even though she wasn't officially "on the clock."

When I told her how impressed I was she simply said, "I'm just doing my job."



And, did you know that...

Shep always wanted to be a professional hockey player? The closest he came was when the St. Louis Blues and Chicago Blackhawks Alumni allowed one amateur to play with them in a game this past March. (That's Shep on the left!)



DISCLAIMER! There may be errors in this newsletter!

Any errors or "typo's" that you find were also found by us less than one hour after this newsletter went to print. As far as spelling is concerned, Mark Twain once said, "I feel bad for the man that can't spell a word more than one way." This "disclaimer" appears each issue to remind you that no one (especially us) is perfect.

Some Business Tips

The Wow Factor says to the customer, "Wow, I wasn't expecting that! I am glad to be doing business with you!" Figure out ways to put the *Wow Factor* into your products and services. It could be as simple as a follow up phone call, a thank you note or a small gift of appreciation. It adds value to what you do or sell.

Know your customers. Truly understanding the customer means that you really know what your customers want versus what it is that you think they want. Ask lots of questions. Make no mistakes. And, do it right the first time, every time!

Create a positive first impression. That doesn't always mean the first time you meet someone. It can be the one millionth time you meet someone. Creating a positive first impression simply means setting the tone for the interaction that is to follow.

Meeting the customers expectations is no longer good enough. You must exceed expectations. Everyone claims to have great customer service, and many of them do. The key to success is not only to have great customer service, but better customer service.

Dale Carnegie once said, "Remember that a man's name is, to him, the sweetest and most important sound in any language." Using a person's name, man or woman, is a powerful way to build a more intimate conversation. (Don't overuse it.)

Parable of the Mule

This is a great story. I've read it in a number of publications and heard several speakers use it in their programs. Nobody seems to know where it originated. If you know, let me know and I'll tell the world - or at least the subscribers to The Shepard Letter. Enjoy!

Once there was a farmer who owned an old mule. One day the mule fell into the farmer's well and the farmer heard the mule 'praying' or whatever mules do when they fall into wells.

After carefully assessing the situation, the farmer sympathized with the mule, but decided that neither the mule nor the well was worth the trouble of saving.

Instead, he called his neighbors together, told them what had happened and enlisted them to help haul dirt to bury the old mule in the well and put him out of his misery.

Initially, the old mule was hysterical! But as the farmer and his neighbors continued shoveling and the dirt hit his back, a thought struck him. It dawned on him that every time

a shovel load of dirt landed on his back he could shake it off and step up! This he did, blow after blow. "Shake it off and step up... shake it off and step up... shake it off and step up!" He repeated this to encourage himself. No matter how painful the blows, or how distressing the situation seemed, the old mule fought "panic" and just kept right on shaking it off and stepping up!

It wasn't long before the old mule, battered and exhausted, stepped triumphantly over the wall of that well!

What seemed like it would bury him actually helped him...all because of the manner in which he handled his adversity.

THAT'S LIFE! If we face our problems and respond to them positively, and refuse to give in to panic, bitterness, or self-pity ...

The adversities that come along to bury us may actually have the real potential to benefit us! "Never be afraid to try something new. Remember that amateurs built the ark. Professionals built the Titanic."



MOTIVATION

Another email I received included this great motivational story. Again there was no author mentioned or credit to any source. I've heard this many times from different speakers and have always enjoyed it.

One day, an expert in time management was speaking to a group of business students and, to drive home a point, used an illustration those students will never forget.

As he stood in front of the group of high-powered overachievers, he said, "Okay, time for a quiz."

He then pulled out a one-gallon, wide-mouth mason jar and set it on the table in front of him. Then he produced about a dozen fist-sized rocks and carefully placed them, one by one, into the jar. When the jar was filled to the top and no more rocks would fit inside, he asked, "Is this jar full?" "Everyone in the class said, "Yes." Then he said, "Really?" He reached under the table and pulled out a bucket of gravel. Then he dumped some gravel in and shook the jar,

causing pieces of gravel to work themselves down into the space between the big rock. Then he asked the group once more. "Is this jar full?" By this time, the class was on to him.

"Probably not," someone answered.

"Good!" he replied. He reached under the table and brought out a bucket of sand. He started dumping the sand in the jar and it went into all the spaces left between the rocks and the gravel.

Once more, he asked the question. "Is this jar full?"

"No!" the class shouted.

Once again, he said, "Good!"

Then he grabbed a pitcher of water and began to pour it in until the jar was filled to the brim. Then the expert in time-management looked at the class and asked, "What is the point of this illustration?"

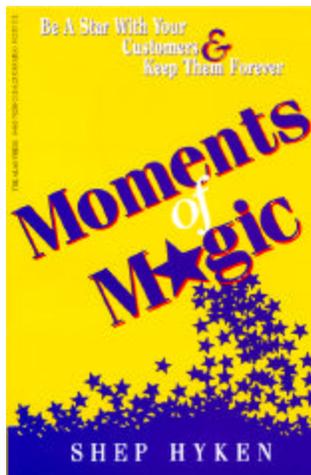
One eager beaver raised his hand and said, "The point is, no matter how full your schedule is, if you try really hard you can always fit some more things in it."

"No," the speaker replied, "that's not the point. The truth this illustration teaches us is this: If you don't put the big rocks in first, you'll never get them in at all.

"What are the big rocks in your life? Your children. Your spouse. Your loved ones. Your friendships. Your education. Your dreams. A worthy cause, reaching or mentoring others. Doing things that you love. Time for yourself. Your health. Remember to put these BIG ROCKS in first, or you'll never get them in at all.

"If you sweat the little stuff (i.e. the gravel, the sand) then you'll fill your life with little things you worry about that don't really matter, and you'll never have the real quality time you need to spend on the big, important stuff (the big rocks).

"So, tonight, or in the morning, when you are reflecting on this short story, ask yourself this question: What are the "big rocks" in my life? Then put those in your jar first."



"...a clearly written, specific guide to making the best of customer contact situations... this is excellent hands-on advice..."

Michael LeBoef, Author

How to Win Customers and Keep Them for Life

Moments of Magic

Be a Star With Your Customers and Keep Them Forever!

This is Shep's #1 selling book! *Moments of Magic* is a clearly written, easy-to-read, easy to understand guide to customer service, and is for anyone in any job. Filled with information, techniques, and stories that make a point, this book will teach you and everyone in your organization to deliver excellent service to your internal and outside customers.

Chapters in this book cover Moments of Truth/Misery/Magic, how to build stronger relationships, complaining customers, meeting and exceeding expectations and much, much more.

Some people say it is common sense. Some say it is good sense. The information in this book makes sense. Most important, the information is simple, direct and can be implemented immediately.

158 page book.....\$12.95

The Dangerous Customer! by Shep Hyken

What is a dangerous customer? It is not necessarily a customer that is threatening you with a knife or a gun. (That is not just a dangerous customer, but a dangerous person.) What we are discussing in this article is the customer that puts you into the “danger zone” of lost business. We aren’t talking about customers who have a complaint about you and choose to tell everyone they know. We are talking about that potentially very dangerous type of customer, a “satisfied” customer.

But wait! How can we be in danger of losing a *satisfied* customer?

Recently, two professors, Anthony J. Zahorak and Roland T. Rust, from Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee conducted a study on customer satisfaction. What they found was that approximately 25% to 40% of satisfied customers will not come back to a place they do business, even if they are satisfied.

Wait a minute! Why would a satisfied customer not come back? The answer is very simple. Because,

they were simply satisfied.

Everything was satisfactory, nothing great, just okay. For example, you may have gone out to dinner at a restaurant. The next day a friend asks you about your meal and you tell them it was okay. Nothing

...40% of satisfied customers will not come back to a place they do business, even if they are satisfied.

special, simply average. Another way of putting this... *satisfactory*. Will you go back? With all of the choices of places to dine and spend your hard earned dollars, probably not. No, unless you are a glutton for punishment, you will most likely look for the res-

taurant that gives you a great meal, great service and exceeds your expectations.

The types of businesses that the Vanderbilt professors looked at were typical front line, consumer oriented businesses such as restaurants, hotels, movie theaters, retail stores, etc. It is obvious that not all businesses fall into one of these categories, but the principle still holds true. Anybody or any company that has any type of competition needs to understand that having satisfied customers creates vulnerability. Not only do you have to exceed a customer’s expectations, but you also need to constantly be improving on what already may be great.

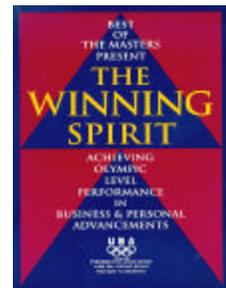
What worked yesterday does not work today. If you are doing something better than your competition you can bet that they will be doing the same thing very soon.

The hotel industry is a good example of this. Many years ago the typical hotel customer didn’t have the expectations or make the demands for great service that they do today. All

The Winning Spirit

The Winning Spirit was published in cooperation with the United States Olympic Committee. It is a collection of short essays by 20 of the country’s finest motivational speakers. Inspired by the determination, spirit and will of Olympic athletes, *The Winning Spirit* considers these same qualities in terms of the non-Olympic athlete’s daily life. People who want to get the most out of their professional and personal lives can tap the same energy that drives Olympic athletes by using the ideas presented in this book.

This book features Shep Hyken, writing on *Business Olympics: Gold Medal Customer Service*. Other essays include Don Hutson (*The Dynamics of Olympic Motivation*), Dr. Tony Alessandra (*Take Aim In Life With Amazing Accuracy*), Jim Tunney (*Mental Biceps*), Frank Maguire (*Winning the Gold Medal For Communications*), Les Brown (*Olympic Dreams*) and many more!



198 page book.....\$16.95

the customer wanted was a clean room with a television set and a hot shower. Then one day a serious competition for hotel customers began. Rate wars began. Less expensive rooms may have been one way to compete, but not necessarily the best. There had to be more.

One day a sharp hotel owner decided that amenities could create a competitive edge. It worked! It started out to be simple; thicker towels, fancier soaps, etc. Then the competition, the hotel "across the street," figures out what was going on, and not to be outdone, copied. The next wave of amenities were sparked, such as better candy on the pillows and a newspaper in the morning. And not just one paper, but perhaps a choice of different newspapers. At what point did it stop? Eventually, everybody was offering the same thing. It was at that point that the biggest difference between one hotel and another had to do with the people that worked there. The hotel employees became the ultimate amenity.

If what you sell is great, but your

service is mediocre, then the best you can expect is limited success and eventually total failure as competition comes along and takes care of the customers by giving better service. But put a great product in the hands of people willing to go beyond typical levels of customer service and you get beyond being simply satisfactory.

Today's customers expect more than satisfactory experiences with the people and organizations they do business with. Every company has their version of a "hotel's amenities." Just about every business claims to give good or great customer service. Good service has become the norm. An organization has to go beyond satisfactory or just acceptable levels of service. Terms used to describe this higher level of service have been *knock your socks off service*, *delighting the customer*, and many more. Get your customers out of the danger zone. Go beyond simply satisfying your customers and you will create many *Moments of Magic!*

More Business Tips

The Golden Rule says to treat others the way you would want to be treated. That would be great if everyone was just like you. Instead, think of *The Platinum Rule*, developed by Dr. Tony Alessandra. It says to treat others the way *they* want to be treated.

Remember your internal customers. Not everybody has an outside customer, but just about everybody has internal customers. The internal customer is anyone within your own organization that is dependent on you, at any time, for any reason whatsoever.

Most people think that customer loyalty is about having customers for a lifetime. That is the result of customer loyalty - and a very big result it is! However, it can be broken down into much smaller steps. Stop trying to get the customer to buy for a lifetime. Customer loyalty is about getting the customer to buy the *next* time - every time.

Inspiring Others To Win

Inspiring Others To Win is the second in the "Olympic Series" and was also published in cooperation with the United States Olympic Committee. It is a collection of short essays by 20 of the country's finest motivational and business speakers. The most important tool for high achievement is a mentor or coach; a person who is able to help you maintain your larger vision. This book brings together a compendium of mentors who share stories of their own mentoring experiences, and shows readers how finding the the right mentor will help you to gain financial and emotional well-being.

This book features Shep Hyken writing on *Nobody Does It On Their Own*. Other authors include Dr. Tony Alessandra (*Inspiring Through Vision & Ideas*), Jim Cathcart (*Daily Opportunities To Inspire*), Ray Pelletier (*Breaking Out*), Bill Brooks (*The Role of Role Models*) and many more!



186 page book.....\$16.95

Very Funny!

My friend at Enterprise Rent-A-Car, Cindy Wilmert, will occasionally send us some funny jokes, stories, etc. This is one of her recent e-mails. Thanks Cindy!

Occasionally, airline attendants make an effort to make the "in-flight safety lecture" and their other announcements a bit more entertaining. Here are some real examples that have been heard or reported:

1. From a Southwest Airlines employee: "There may be 50 ways to leave your lover, but there are only 4 ways out of this airplane."

2. After landing: "Thank you for flying Delta Business Express. We hope you enjoyed giving us the business as much as we enjoyed taking you for a ride."

3. After a particularly rough landing during thunderstorms in Memphis, a flight attendant on a Northwest flight announced: "Please take care when opening the overhead compartments. After a landing like that, sure as hell everything has shifted."

4. From a Southwest Airlines employee: "Welcome aboard. To operate your seatbelt, insert the metal tab into the buckle, and pull tight. It works just like every other seatbelt and if you don't know how to operate one, you probably shouldn't be out in public unsupervised. In the event of a sudden loss of cabin pressure, oxygen masks will descend from the ceiling. Stop screaming, grab the mask, and pull it over your face. If you have a small child traveling with you, secure your mask before assisting with theirs. If you are traveling with two small children, decide which one you love more."

5. "Your seat cushions can be used for flotation. In the event of an emergency water landing, please take them with our compliments."

On Being Nice...

Recently I was speaking at an association meeting and my meeting room was very dark. There were a number of overhead lights that were burnt out and several flood lights that could have been turned on. After asking three people to help find the guy in charge of room setup, someone finally showed up. He told me that the lights were burnt out and he couldn't get them fixed, and he would charge the association (my client) \$25.00 for each floodlight that was replaced and turned on. I was shocked that he would charge to take care of the burnt out bulbs. The point is that he wasn't being very cooperative.

I know my anger started to show, but I tried to keep my cool. My comments toward him were not as bad as they could have been. But, I did voice my displeasure in his unwillingness to help. I also told him I would let someone else at the convention center know how uncooperative I thought he was.

We had an altercation, confrontation - whatever you want to call it. It wasn't what I call a *Moment of Magic* - more like a *Moment of Misery*!

That's what happened before the speech. Now let's jump to the end of the speech.

Afterward some people came up to the stage to talk to me. I briefly turned away from my briefcase to talk to them, and when I turned back around, my briefcase was gone.

When I reported it to one of the convention center workers, who do you think they called? The same guy that wouldn't help me with the lights!

I asked if there was anyone else that could help, and was told he was the only one. I felt like I was in the middle of a television comedy.

Big lesson learned here: Be nice to *everyone*, even when you know they are wrong and you are right. If they are wrong, let them be wrong with dignity.

This may sound simple, but it is not as easy as it sounds. But, if you let the person be wrong with dignity, you really end up winning on both sides. And, you never know when you are going to run into someone again.

Another reason not to lose your temper: You never know who may be watching. In this particular situation my client had been standing close enough to hear the conversation. She was impressed that I didn't lose my temper. She told me she doubted she would have handled it so diplomatically.

(By the way, I was lucky and the briefcase wasn't stolen. It turns out that someone picked it up by accident, thinking it was their's.)

Many times we are just into winning. Even though we may be right, winning may not always be the best thing. Once again, we go back to letting someone be wrong with dignity.

While this story isn't about a customer confrontation (actually I was the customer in this case), don't think there isn't a lesson to be learned from this incident. The principle ties in perfectly to handling client and customer confrontations. Obviously you don't want to lose your temper with a customer. Sometimes you know the customer is wrong and it is human nature that we feel compelled to let them know. But if you can get to a resolution, who cares about "winning." It isn't about winning an argument. It is all about winning the customer!

Recommended Reading

I could recommend so many books. Some of the great business authors of our time have written about some outstanding concepts. But none is more practical for today's manager than Mel Kleiman's *Hire Tough, Manage Easy*. Mel has written an excellent book on how to attract, select and retain the best employees.

As I go around the world working with all types of businesses, I am hearing that the number-one problem facing companies today is the employment issue. It is extremely difficult to get good employees that will show up, work hard and stay for an extended period of time.

Mel's book has all types of tips for hiring and retaining good employees. In addition there are some excellent interviewing tips, techniques, questions, etc. Mel is truly *the* expert in this area.

To get Mel's book contact Humetrics at (800)627-4473. The book is only \$15.95 U.S. - a bargain at twice the price!

Use the following three phrases if you really want to aggravate your customers!

If you are the customer you don't want anyone to tell you...

1. It is not my department. Okay, now we play the game of put me on hold, transfer me to someone else and disconnect me so I have to call back and start all over!

2. It is against company policy. Do you want to know my policy? I won't do business with a company that says it is against company policy!

3. You need to talk to _____, and he/she is not here today. It might as well be a month. I'm calling today and I'm calling now. I don't want to wait.

So what is the answer to avoiding these deadly customer killing phrases? Just two words: *training* and *empowerment*. Sounds simple? It isn't. It takes time and effort. But it is worth it. Teach people how to respond in all of these and similar situations. Empower them to make the customer happy!

Perception Is Reality

"The opinion of management doesn't matter. The only thing that matters is what the customer is doing and thinking."

I recently read this very bold, but true quote in the Piggly Wiggly Super Market monthly newsletter. The quote was aimed at the grocery store business, but it applies to every business. The perception of our business may be entirely different than our customers' perceptions.

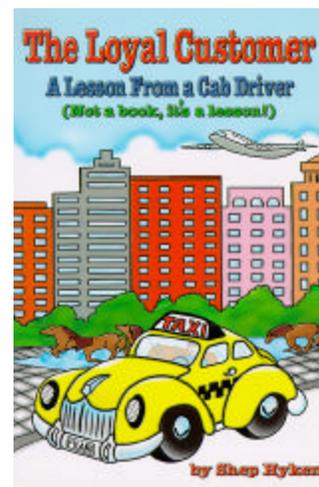
We think we have a certain type of business, while our customers perceive that we have an entirely different type of business. And, it is their opinion that counts!

This goes back to what I have written a number of times in past issues of *The Shepard Letter*; Think like the buyer, not like the supplier! In other words, know your customers and what *they* want, not what *you* think they want.

The Loyal Customer A Lesson From a Cab Driver

This may look like a book, feel like a book and cost like a book. But, it is not a book. **It's a lesson!**

If you have heard Shep Hyken's speech, you will remember his story about the cab driver. Shep has put the spoken word into print and summarized what made this man's ordinary business an extraordinary success. The story is very focused. There is only one point - creating customer loyalty. Most important, you will learn how to apply these techniques to your business.



64 page book.....\$8.95

Flying Paint



Here is a short article/story compliments of the Internet. While I found this to be very funny, unfortunately I found it to be true. There is a moral to this story. It is actually a question to ask of yourself and your business:

How easy are you to do business with?

99% of the people who get this newsletter are business people who travel once in a while. For those who do not travel, it is still funny. So, let's take a lesson from the airlines.

Buying paint from a hardware store...

Customer: Hi. How much is your paint?

Clerk: We have regular quality for \$12 a gallon and premium for \$18. How many gallons would you like?

Customer: Five gallons of regular quality, please.

Clerk: Great. That will be \$60 plus tax.

Now, just try buying paint from an Airline...

Customer: Hi. How much is your paint?

Clerk: Well, Sir, that all depends.

Customer: Depends on what?

Clerk: Actually, a lot of things.

Customer: How about giving me an average price?

Clerk: Wow. That's too hard of a question. The lowest price is \$9 a gallon, and we have 150 different prices up to \$200 a gallon.

Customer: What's the difference in the paint?

Clerk: Oh, there isn't any difference. It's all the same paint.

Customer: Well, then, I'd like some of that \$9 paint.

Clerk: Well, first I need to ask you a few questions. When do you intend to use it?

Customer: I want to paint tomorrow, on my day off.

Clerk: Sir, the paint for tomorrow is \$200 paint.

Customer: What? When would I have to paint in order to get \$9 paint?

Clerk: That would be in three weeks, but you will also have to agree to start painting before Friday of that week and continue painting until at least Sunday.

Customer: You've got to be kidding!

Clerk: Sir, we don't kid around here. Of course, I'll have to check to see if we have any of that paint available before I can sell it to you.

Customer: What do you mean check to see if you can sell it to me? You have shelves full of that stuff. I can see it right there.

Clerk: Just because you can see it doesn't mean that we have it. It may be the same paint, but we sell only a certain number of gallons on any given weekend. Oh, and by the way, the price just went up to \$12.

Customer: You mean the price went up while we were talking?

Clerk: Yes, sir. You see, we change prices and rules thousands of times a day, and since you haven't actually walked out of the store with your paint yet, we just decided to change prices. Unless you want the same thing to happen again, I would suggest you get on with your purchase. How many gallons do you want?

Customer: I don't know ex-

actly... maybe five gallons. Maybe I should buy six gallons just to make sure I have enough.

Clerk: Oh, no sir, you can't do that. If you buy the paint and then don't use it, you will be liable for penalties and possible confiscation of the paint you already have.

Customer: What?

Clerk: That's right. We can sell you enough paint to do your kitchen, bathroom, hall and north bedroom, but if you stop painting before you do the other bedroom, you will be in violation of our tariffs.

Customer: But what does it matter to you whether I use all of the paint? I already paid you for it!

Clerk: Sir, there's no point in getting upset; that's just the way it is. We make plans based upon the idea that you will use all of the paint, and when you don't, it just causes us all sorts of problems.

Customer: This is crazy! I suppose something terrible will happen if I don't keep painting until Sunday night?

Clerk: Yes, sir, it will.

Customer: Well, that does it! I am going somewhere else to buy paint!

Clerk: That won't do you any good, sir. We all have the same rules. You might as well just buy it here, while the price is still \$13.50. And, thanks for flying -- I mean painting - - with our airline.



Credibility - Things To Always and Never Do or Say

Credibility is very important - not just in business, but in every aspect of our lives. It is about trust and confidence levels others have in you. Here are four things to *always do* and four things to *never do* that will help build higher credibility with the people you work and do business with.

Always show up on time. Punctuality is about respect. If you say you will be somewhere at a certain time, be there. Not being on time for any type of appointment or commitment shows a lack of respect for other people.

Always say "Please" and "Thank you." This not only shows respect, but also shows appreciation. Thank you notes should not only be sent to customers, but also employees.

Always follow through to the end. Projects that are incomplete show one of two things: a lack of commitment or that a person has reached a level of incompetence. In either situation, confidence in a person's abilities drop dramatically.

Always do what you say you will do. This also ties in with finishing what you set out to do. It is this simple: If you say you will do something, then do it.

Never blame someone else who said "they would take care of it." Like Harry S. Truman said, "The buck stops here!" You need to have a mindset that not only are you responsible for what you say you will do, but you are also accountable. If you have

delegated a task to someone else, you may no longer be directly responsible for making it happen, but that doesn't let you off of the hook. You are still accountable.

Never use the excuse that someone didn't get back to you. This ties in with blaming someone else for not taking care of something. If you are waiting for someone to call you back and they don't, then be proactive about making another call.

Never tell people you didn't have time. If you don't have time to do something, then don't accept the responsibility. Be honest about your commitment. If you say you can do it, but it won't be done until a week from today, that is far better than not doing it when someone thought it would be done immediately. This is also a great way to manage a person's expectations. One of my favorite things to preach is to under promise and over deliver.

Never use the excuse that you didn't know or no one ever told you. This blows credibility. It shows a lack of expertise and/or knowledge. We live in a world where knowledge is available to us simply for the asking. If you aren't sure of something, you can ask someone, research on the internet, go to the library, etc. Ignorance in business is not acceptable.

There are probably dozens of other examples that I could write about. These are just a few that come to mind. They are simple and easy to do. You just have to do them.

Those who do more than is asked of them are never depleted. Only those who fear to give are weakened by giving. The art of giving is entirely a spiritual affair. In this sense, to give one's all is meaningless for there is no bottom where true giving is concerned.

Henry Miller

Have a Complaint? The Secret To Effective Complaint Letters

One of the most effective ways to get satisfaction when you have a complaint about a product or service is to write a letter. However, it takes time to write an effective letter. But, if you take the time, you stand the best chance of getting the satisfaction you want and probably deserve. It should go without saying that the "satisfaction" you think you deserve is realistic.

Don't write the letter immediately. This is when you are most upset or angry. At the most, take a few notes, and sleep on it. Your letter can criticize, but an underlying tone of anger diminishes the effectiveness of a letter.

The letter should be sent to the person in charge. This is usually the CEO or president of the company. If you feel the appropriate person is not the CEO, then at least copy him/her.

Be very detailed and specific. Use names, dates and times. Do your best to describe exactly what made you upset. Be sure to include copies of receipts or other documents that may be relevant to the problem.

Ask for help. This is one of my favorite techniques. Your opening sentence can read something like this: *I have encountered a problem, and maybe you can help me.*

While your letter may express your discontent with the company, find a place to put a positive spin on it. Effective complaint letters are not just expressions of dissatisfaction. They can also be constructive and helpful. While most people dislike hearing bad news, they appreciate the opportunity to improve.



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