

Making a commitment to safety and service in our industry must be at the top of our list. Before we sell our first part or the first hoist, we must have in place the backbone of the company: the service group.

The service group includes the person who answers the phone, the delivery drivers, the billing department, the mechanics and yes, the sales department. After the sale, all of these people service the customer. If this gets overlooked, the customer suffers. When the customer has a poor experience with your company, a barrier to service is placed in their path.

Consider this scenario which takes place with your newest customer. You are the salesman; you have worked very hard for the last year getting your new customer to try out your company. During the last year your new customer has had a major blowout with your competition. He calls you up a few days after the blowup and places a sizable order for most of his next year's budget. You call your shop and get his order moving. You are happy to know that his complete order is in stock and will be shipped to him within the week.

At the end of the week your company truck is loaded and ready to deliver. The driver calls in advance to confirm the delivery location and the customer is pleased to know that his order is ready so quickly. Your driver arrives and discovers that several parts are missing. The driver tells the customer not to worry, he will go back to the shop and search for the other parts. He assures the new customer that the order will be complete by tomorrow.

Tomorrow comes and goes, the customer calls on Monday morning to inquire about his order. Monday morning has become a flurry of activity from the opening of the shop and everyone in your shop is scrambling. Your customer calls for you and the response is short and to the point, "He is not here."

The customer tries to leave a message and it is suggested that he might try back later this afternoon. He decides to call your corporate office, but this has dropped him into a voice mail directory with 700 options. He decides to wait for the afternoon and goes out to view his new equipment.

The customer steps out into his own shop and becomes very proud to learn that his employees are happy with the new purchase. They are already deciding who gets to use it first, when one employee asks to see the remote controls. Your customer realizes that he forgot to order some and decides to call your mechanic.

Your new customer calls back to your hectic shop and is transferred to your newest employee mechanic. Your senior mechanic is on a service call. The new mechanic is very pleasant, eager to please and show his knowledge. He is very green and yet he thinks on his feet, one of the reasons you hired him. He finds a manual on your senior mechanic's bench. Your new employee promptly quotes your company's cost for the remote and volunteers to fax it over to your customer. Your new customer is very pleased and makes plans to call you this afternoon willing to minimize some of his earlier difficulties.

That Afternoon

You arrive in your office late in the afternoon, another successful day has yielded more sales. The phone rings and you begin to discuss with your new customer his purchase. He begins by telling you how pleased he is and how happy his employees are.

Then he begins to fill you in on how his day went and how many people he contacted within your company. As you listen to his story, you are reminded of all the reasons that led to his blowup with your competition. You continue to listen and then you assure him that you will fix it all.

Six Months Later

You and your company have dodged some bullets, but then the phone rings. Your valuable customer, who so confidently expanded his business with his new equipment, has been working 100 miles away in a remote area, is on the phone. It is not the best phone connection but you hear his panic and dispatch a driver to deliver a wire rope immediately to the jobsite.

Three and one half-hours later your driver calls you and informs you that the customer needs a mechanic to do a service call. You ask the driver about the wire rope. He tells you that they needed another wire rope because the customer had forgot one in their own shop and had no one to run one out which is why they called your company.

While the driver was on site, he stayed a little longer to make sure that everything was all right. While he was there they hooked up the hoists to a generator and blew a start capacitor. The driver had the basic knowledge about the equipment and suspected that a capacitor would fix the new problem. However he had no tools or parts to fix the hoist.

Solution

There are many barriers to customer service in the above article. These barriers may be obvious to most readers. Other barriers are not so easily identified. Scenarios like this should not go on and yet it does. The solution for these scenarios is a company's commitment to "Customer Service."

Customer service involves more than a pleasant phone voice or a willingness to take orders from someone outside of your company. Customer service is an attitude that can be developed. More importantly it is an attitude that defines the words "Customer Service."

Customers are all the people that you interact with in the course of your day. Your fellow employees are customers of yours when they need help or service. Great customer service is not turned on for the person on the phone and at the same time turned off for the fellow employee that needs help.

Customer Service needs several things to be successful.:

- Knowledge of the products and services that you offer.
- Knowledge of where to turn when you don't have the answer.
- An attitude that strives to service the customer.
- The tools to do anything that you can, to service the customer.

Did You Know?

- Customer service involves every member of your company, and knowledge is one of the best tools you have for providing excellent service.

Tips and Tricks

- When cleaning debris out of some of the small holes on an Astro 85 Series Hoist brake, a wire brush normally used for cleaning pistols can come in handy.-Jim Wagner, York Suspended Scaffolding

For questions or comments, contact Customer Service at 1-800-560-CLIMB (2546) or customerservice@safeworks.com.