



Historic Downtown Dahlonega A Georgia Main Street City

BUSINESS TIPS NEWSLETTER

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3 SIMPLE WAYS TO IMPROVE CUSTOMER SATISFACTION TODAY

BY CARON BEESLEY ON FEBRUARY 14, 2013, SBA.GOV

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As business owners, we'd all like to think of ourselves as providers of great customer service. As small business owners in particular, it's quite possibly your biggest differentiator. After all, how often is it that you walk into a national chain restaurant and are greeted by name, handed your favorite drink and made to feel like part of the family? But great customer service is also about knowing how to handle problems, responding to and resolving issues—something at which agile small businesses can often excel. If customer satisfaction is your goal, then great customer service will get you there. Here are three simple things you can do to embed customer service into your business philosophy and day-to-day operations:

Listen and Learn

Listening is key to effective customer service and it can also help boost your profitability. Here are two ways to prove to your customers that you are listening—and tips on how to make it count:

1. Everyday Customer Interaction – Show you are listening to your customers by taking notes or repeating back what your customer has said. Listen to their words and tone. Observe their body language. Provide them clear and concise communication. Ask clarifying questions to gain understanding before you provide a response. If you can't respond immediately, be sure to provide a

timeline for response and make a note in your calendar to do so. Follow up, confirm the resolution and check for customer satisfaction and completion.

2. Facilitating Feedback – If you don't have a reason for face-to-face interaction with a customer, look for ways to stay in touch and show you are listening and eager to keep the lines of communication open. For example, follow up with a customer after a sale to prove to your customers that you want to hear from them. Customer service is, after all, about meeting the needs and expectations of the customer as defined by the customer.

Look For Ways to Treat Customers As You Would Like To Be Treated

Remember, how you and your staff communicate with your customers is just as important as what you communicate. Remember that your customer wants to see the sunny side of you and your business, so have your filter on and put yourself in their shoes. A good way to instill this attitude among your staff is to do some simple role play in which they act out a few scenarios that involve both easy-going and difficult customers. Observe how they handle the situation and coach them on areas to improve.

For example:

1. How are customers being greeted? – Put them at ease and make them feel comfortable! This sets the tone for the rest of the trans-

action.

2. Demonstrate that your customers are valued – Let them know you think they are important.

Your sincerity makes them feel good about you and the organization.

3. Ask how to help your customers – Find out what they want. It is important that each customer encounter makes them feel satisfied.

4. Don't challenge disgruntled customers – Listen, reassure them that you'll escalate or act on their complaint and follow through until resolution.

5. Help customers – Help them get what they want. Make it easy for customers to locate or obtain the information they need. Answer their questions in a timely manner.

Remember to carry through on your customer service goals wherever your business has a presence. This means both online and offline. More than ever, social media is a systematic part of your customer service model, so if you have a presence on sites like Facebook, Twitter, Yelp, and so on, be sure you are actively listening, engaging, monitoring and responding to your customers online. This blog offers some tips that can help: [How to Use Social Media to Do a Better Job of Customer Service.](#)

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5 MORE WAYS TO GET CUSTOMERS

BY BARBARA WOLD, FEBRUARY 21, 2013, [FOLLOW BARBARA](#)

We all want more customers. It doesn't matter who you are — the butcher, baker or candlestick maker. Getting more consumers is an all-consuming part of everything you do. Without customers you find yourself out of work gasping for air.

You wake up way too busy and wondering how all the tweeting and Facebook posting is getting you anything more than arthritis in your fingers.

1. Qualify new customers. Take the time to learn what you're really, really good at. And then start taking on new customers that need that value. Not only will you be happy, your clients will be ecstatic at the outrageous results you'll be getting for them.

2. Deliver way more value than customers expect. There is something simply magical about having your expectations blown away. It's the chocolate mint on your hotel room pillow. It's getting your Amazon.com package a day earlier than you expected. Right? It's hard to describe the delight at getting more than you paid for. Most of us are so focused on profit and loss and "what is fair" that we neglect the opportunity to create raving fans. And these raving fans are the evangelists who will get other people excited about what you do. And that excitement and loyalty isn't something that you can buy or market. It can only happen when you over-deliver on the value you promise.

3. Treat referrals like gold. Referrals aren't just a name and number or email address

on a piece of paper. They are the next generation of buyers for your company or business — treat them special. And you know what that means. That means that you build a relationship with them before pitching your merchandise. Part of that respect and relationship has to do with follow-up. Remember, these are prime opportunities, not just leads.

4. Be something that matters. Have a higher calling than simply making more money and taking bigger vacations. Get obsessed with changing the world around you. Stop going through the motions of calling your products "better" and challenge your team to "be" better. Getting rich is a state of mind. You start by planning to enrich the lives of others.

5. Promote Partnerships. Today's smart businesses understand that the sharing of ideas and resources among like-minded businesses can lead to new-found success. The opportunities for these kinds of partnerships are endless. No matter what kind of business you're in, you share customers with other businesses. Find yourself a business buddy or two and you'll pass those customers around and keep them in your local shopping district.

You can have more. You can grow your business farther and faster than you ever imagined. But it requires you to "be" a better business-person. Are you up for that challenge?

4 WAYS TO TRIM EXPENSES

BY BOB NEGEN, [WHIZ BANG TRAINING](#)

1. Shop your insurance.

Call your insurance agent and ask her to shop around to make sure you are getting the lowest rates possible. Also, make sure that they have accurate and up-to-date information on your business. If the info is not correct, you could be paying more than you have to. If you're not 100% sure your agent is able to (or willing to) get you the best rates, make some phone calls on your own. The money you save could be significant!

2. Get quotes on your credit card processing fees.

For most store owners, credit card fees are the 5th largest expense (wow!) and a major source of frustration. Make sure yours are as LOW as possible by getting some quotes.

3. Change your light bulbs to LED.

LED lighting can save up to 85 percent of the electricity used by incandescent bulbs and up to 50 percent of electricity used by fluorescent bulbs. Less electricity means lower electricity bills. Chaching! Plus, LED bulbs last 50 times longer than incandescent bulbs and 5 times longer than fluorescent bulbs. That saves you money in replacement bulbs.

4. Use Open-to-Buy planning and lower your average inventory levels.

Your inventory is probably the biggest expense in your store - and your biggest asset. The trick is to maintain (or increase!) your sales while you trim your inventory levels... you'll end up with lots more money in the bank.

MARK YOUR
CALENDAR!

March 22 - 24 - Spring on Springer AT Trail Fest, Downtown Dahlonega

March 27 - Dahlonega Downtown Chamber Merchant Coalition Meeting, Chamber of Commerce, 8:30 AM

April 19 - 21 - Bear on the Square Festival

April 20 - 21 - University of North Georgia Parents & Alumni Weekend

April 27 - Dahlonega Appalachian Jam, Gold Museum Lawn, 2 - 5 PM

May 3 - First Friday Night Concert Presents Kurt Thomas, Hancock Park, 6:30 PM

May 4 - Shop the Dahlonega Farmers Market, Hancock Park, 8 AM - 1 PM

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LEARN MORE!

