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Make Every Week Customer Service Week

by John Tschohl, Founder and President, Service Quality Institute, Minneapolis, MN - June 24, 2015

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Yes, there actually is a week set aside as “Customer Service Week”. Most people don’t even know when it is so for those who don’t, it’s the second week of October. Believe it or not, there are even resource centers set up to provide things to do for this week-long celebration. Things like rewarding your team and having a patriotic color day, making a difference by participating in community events and so on and so on and so on. It is recommended that you start with a theme and let it serve as a guideline for decisions you make and coordinating activities for “the week”.

My question to anyone planning on celebrating like this is...why isn’t every week Customer Service Week?

Take the Home Depot for instance. They celebrate Customer Service week 52 times a year. Home Depot is light years ahead of other home improvement stores when it comes to superior service. Home Depot has created a service culture with empowered and service-driven employees. Week after week its employees excel at service.

Home Depot’s four keys to success are:

1. The customer is king. Everything is done for that customer when he needs it done to ensure that he will return
2. Do not believe the B.S. The only way for executives to really know what is going on in the store is to *be in the store* and see what the customers are saying and doing.
3. Run scared. Always be ready to rethink your plans and change to meet the new needs. Do not get complacent when you are doing a good job, because the market is continually evolving.
4. Be an entrepreneur. Everyone within the organization must be empowered to do what is right in a situation, not just what company policy dictates.

2014 fiscal year was a great year for The Home Depot; they had record retail sales, and all three U.S. Divisions, Canada and Mexico had positive comparable store sales. Sales growth in the year was \$4.4 billion, or 5.5 percent, with comparable store sales up 5.3 percent for the Company and 6.1 percent in the U.S. *“What we are passionate about: customer service”.*

Then there’s Apple: If you walk into an Apple store today you will be greeted by a sales staff member and you are not asked, “How can I help you?” Instead they ask, “What would you like to do today?” They go right to the heart of any technology user’s question, a question that’s always related to what they want to do with the technology the user is interested in.

Once you explain your needs, they take care of it ...on the spot in most cases. If you need more hand holding, they turn you over to the Apple Geniuses. By adhering to their basic principles of keeping it simple and by constantly offering great customer service and in-store experiences, Apple will continue to grow and command a large share of the market.

March 28, 2015, Apple reports quarterly results: \$13.6 Billion Profit on \$55 Billion in Revenue. 10 new stores, remodels of 3 stores. 437 stores, 41% of which are outside the U.S. Total of 25 new stores in 2015, three-quarters will be outside the US, plan to remodel 5 stores. Average revenue per store was \$11.9 million vs \$10.9 million year ago. 102 million visitors. 18,000 visitors per store per week....Apple's *customer service* is the company's secret weapon for success.

While Apple's bank account has swelled to nearly \$200 billion on the back of innovative products like the iPod and the iPhone, the company's *incredible customer service* has similarly played an instrumental and pivotal role in that success.

Moral of the story: Companies with incredible customer service steamroll the competition, continuing for years to confound competitors with poor customer service by out-performing them no matter what they do.

Service, I have said, should be part of everyone's job description. Service should be the umbrella over your corporate organization plan. What is needed is a whole-company customer service mentality for every hour, every day, every single week of the year. It's not for just one week in October; it's for 52 weeks of the year.

John Tschohl is an international service strategist and speaker. He is founder and president of the Service Quality Institute in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Described by Time and Entrepreneur magazines as a customer service guru, he has written several books on customer service. In 2014 he released his 10th edition of Achieving Excellence Through Customer Service. The Service Quality Institute (<http://www.customer-service.com>) has developed more than 26 customer service training programs that have been distributed and presented throughout 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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