

Customer Service Is Everyone's Job

It was 6:30 at night and I had to deliver a test sample to the Mayo Clinic. I walked in and saw the front desk was empty. Everyone in any position of authority had gone home. The only person there was the janitor. Fortunately, he found someone who could help me—because he understood he was in the customer service business.

Mayo Clinic is continually ranked among the top companies in the world for customer service. It's easy to see why. They believe that customer service is everyone's job. Every employee is a customer service employee. Does your company have the same attitude? Unfortunately, most companies don't. That attitude can cost them money. That's because they don't realize that customer service affects the bottom line.

Let's prove the point that customer service affects sales and profits by looking at two companies everyone's heard of—Costco and Sam's Club, which is part of WalMart. On the surface, they are both warehouse department stores. But on paper, Costco is worth much more. The numbers don't lie:

- Costco net sales were up 6 percent and they had \$102.9 billion revenue ending September 1, 2013. They are the 7th largest retailer in the world.
- Sam's Club net sales were up only 4.9 percent from 2012 on \$56 billion revenue.

And that's with nearly the same number of stores! The bottom line is that Costco nearly doubled Sam's Club revenue.

What's the difference? After all, both companies sell nearly the same merchandise. But while Sam's Club focuses on price, Costco focuses on service. They

realize that price is not a sustainable weapon but customer service is. Costco has a corporate culture to take care of its members. Because of that attitude, Costco employees give help faster.

That difference in the bottom line starts with the people, like the janitor at the Mayo Clinic. That's because those are the people your customers are most likely to see first. Bank tellers, receptionists and security guards; they all play a vital role in creating the customer service experience. They need to think they are in the customer service business. If I go up to a bank teller and ask him what his job is, he should say, "I'm in the customer service business." When your customer sees that kind of customer service mindset they'll begin to trust the company and will want to spend their dollars with you. Their performance will either kill you or make you look like a hero.

Fortunately, it doesn't cost a lot of money to turn people into customer service heroes. It takes a commitment to on-going training. Here are three steps to begin to incorporate a customer service training program in your organization:

1. Train everyone in customer service.

As I've said before, customer service is everyone's job. Put people from different departments into the same training room. The more you mix people, the better. It helps build relationships. It pulls everyone together.

2. Don't use the same materials over and over.

Use new materials every 4-6 months. If you use same material, people will tune it out. It's like a commercial you see on TV. It is effective for a short



while and then people don't notice it any more. The advertiser creates a new commercial every month. It's the same with training materials. You can't bore people into learning.

3. Give people time to change. People won't change in an instant. Therefore, you need to keep the customer service thought pattern in front of them so the message seeps in every day.

If everyone knows they are involved in customer service, then the impact on the revenue stream is much more dramatic. It doesn't matter where you are now. It matters what you do with this information. If you understand the power of customer service, then money will fall from the sky and you will grow faster than anyone else. **RO**

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