



Three Ways to Wow Customers With Outstanding Service When Something Goes Wrong – Even When It's Not Your Fault!

According to a survey by Customer Care Alliance (CCA), only 16% of customers felt satisfied by the service received when they had complaints, despite efforts by the company to improve customer relations. Further, 73% were so unhappy with their encounter with a company when they had complaints that they experienced 'customer rage', a term coined by CCA.

In the current business environment it's important to preserve customer relationships if we want our bottom line to thrive. That's why we need to recognize that everyone within an organization has an impact on the customer experience – not just those with customer service in the title – and that we either enhance or hinder that experience.

Here's a case in point. My business travels recently took me to Longview, Texas. To save my client money, my travel route took me from Minneapolis, Minnesota to St. Louis, Missouri; from St. Louis, Missouri to Dallas, Texas; and finally from Dallas, Texas to Longview, Texas. I know. You're tired just reading that, right? To top it off, I was delayed several hours during the last leg of my trip due to a line of thunderstorms that had grounded all flights out of Dallas. Being conscientious, I called ahead to let the shuttle service, Errands for All, know that my flight was delayed and that I would be late. I was told not to worry that they would be waiting for me when my flight landed.

By the time that I arrived in Longview, Texas, I was tired, hungry and feeling out of sorts. As promised, my driver with Errands for All, Jeff, was waiting right outside the door to collect me and my baggage. However, imagine my delight when Jeff said, "*Mrs. Barr. Welcome to Longview.*" Then asked, "*Are you hungry?*" I smiled thinking that I was ready to chew my arm off but said instead that I was starving. Jeff said, "*I'm glad to hear that. I figured you would be hungry and I picked up some Texas barbeque sandwiches for you.*" What could I say? Wow! My flight delay and my hunger certainly weren't Jeff's problems but he sure provided outstanding service above and beyond the call of duty. Do you think that I'll use Jeff's services next time I'm in Longview? You bet. Do you think I'll tell a few friends? Just my entire newsletter subscriber list.

So if you want to stand out for your customers, here are a few tips:

1. **Be there for your customers.** Times are tough and we are all working hard to get by. So, if your customer comes in at a minute past closing time, don't roll your

- eyes and slam the door. Instead, give them a break and deliver the service you provide whether that accepting their dry cleaning or completing a financial transaction for them. At a minimum, they will continue doing business with you. Some may even return the favor in the form of referrals. If nothing else, perhaps one day they will cut you some slack when you need it most.
2. **Make things right for your customer when you do something wrong.** Never play the blame game or point fingers at someone else. When you point fingers, remember that there are three fingers pointing right back at you. Instead, take responsibility and figure out what you can do at a minimum to make things right. Steak served cold? Offer to prepare a new steak and make it a priority in the kitchen. The bank lost a customer's application? Find a way to recreate it with a minimum of inconvenience to the customer. Even better. Ask the customer how you can make it right for them. You might be surprised at how simple the solution might really be.
 3. **Exceed your customers' expectations whenever possible.** I know. You're not in the shuttle business, right? And buying someone a sandwich for lunch or dinner may not be the right approach. However, regardless of where you work, whether you like it or not, you are in the service business. Have a customer that brings their dog in every week? Have some dog treats at your desk. An elderly customer who forgets their glasses every week? Have a pair of inexpensive readers in your desk. Take the time to figure out what you can do to exceed your customers' expectations and then do it. They will love you for it and who knows? Maybe it will make you feel good too.

It's easy to focus on those things that are not within your control. But the reality is that there are many things that are within your control. There are many ways that you can provide outstanding service and not only preserve but enhance the customer experience. I'll bet you can come up with numerous ways to 'wow' your clients with outstanding service when something goes wrong, even when it's not your fault. So, what are you waiting for?

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