

Progressions Inc.

Sales Training & Consulting



Empowering Your Employees to Delight the Customer and Build LOYALTY

August 11, 2012, two circumstances happened to me today that compelled me to write this article. The companies that I am writing about absolutely deserve to have recognition for how they empower their employees to go far beyond the norm in delighting their customers in service excellence. Both these circumstances happened to me on the same day!

I recently discovered the online company CafePress. Being a pottery enthusiast I decided to order shirts to demonstrate my love of pottery. I was excited to open my order but found one of the shirts was too small for me. I called their customer service department and explained the circumstance. I laughingly said that my body style was not right for their shirt... LOL.

Their exceptionally trained representative asked if I would like to exchange the shirt or would I prefer a refund? I had ordered several shirts with this first order. I explained that I wanted to exchange one shirt and get a refund for the other. To my amazement their representative offered, with no additional postage, to send me a different size for the shirt I wanted a different size and credit me for the shirt that I did not like the style of.

Here is what further amazed me. I was prepared for instructions on how to send the items to be returned back with some particular postage instructions. Instead she asked, "Do you have a particular charity that you would like to donate the shirts to or a friend who would appreciate them?" No questions asked I was to keep the shirts. They were sending me an exchange shirt in the appropriate size and making a credit to my account for the one I did not care for.

In my opinion this company goes so far above expectations. I was in a state of amazement. I was so taken back that I began to "babble" about how impressed I was with their merchandise, their selection, how quickly I received my orders and the entire way she handled the order. At this



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point (and not before) she cross sold and told me about a special discount they were offering and thanked me for my interest in her company. I assured her I would be ordering immediately from her company as there were several other items I was interested in.

With the very first order this company built lifetime loyalty. Since then I've told at least 5 people about how impressed I am plus this newsletter which is sent to more than 1000 companies. It pays off to be generous. As the Chinese proverb says "spend a little...make a lot!"

This type of service that goes so far beyond a customer's expectation is what builds customer loyalty. Typically when we tell a story about a company it is a negative one not necessarily a positive one. The statistics show that a person with one bad experience tells another and rapidly 55 people hear the bad news.

Interestingly enough my day was not over. I should have bought a lottery ticket!

I continued to do some errands and went to Starbucks. August 9th was my birthday and I had received the Starbucks 1 free drink postcard in the mail and stopped to get my favorite Frappuccino. I thought I had my postcard on my visor, ordered my favorite Frappuccino light and when I got to window was actively scrambling searching both visors looking for my postcard. A delightful and chipper young gal about 18 years of age said "Oh what are you looking for?" I said "I can't seem to find my birthday postcard for my free drink." She could see I was looking on both visors. She said "Well I could just give it to you since it was for your birthday." "You're kidding", I replied. She said "Sure we could do that." So, I thanked her and once again was amazed at not only the gesture but the employee's ability to make the decision on their own to delight the customer on the spot. In the case of Starbucks I'm already theirs! I am a loyal Starbucks customer. I find their service excellent and their product consistent. In this case however it's just one more confirmation of why I am loyal to them. I always receive an enjoyable experience and good product.

So why am I sharing this with my readers? I am doing this because so many times in our industry we worry about procedure or policy and we get hung up on the little things and completely miss the big picture.

As for CafePress this was my first order. I can guarantee you it will not be my last. If I have a gift to buy or I want to send a particular message that acknowledges someone's hobby or personal interest I will go first to CafePress where they have tote bags, coffee cups, t-shirts, water bottles, mouse pads and a whole host of personalized items that I can choose



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from for the simple reason that they treated me fairly ... much more than fairly. They earned my loyalty and they deserve my business. I will tell others and I hope their business grows.

In the case of Starbucks, I simply think they are a well run business with excellent service and a terrific product delivered consistently. I enjoy having a coffee treat and look forward to meeting my clients there or having a refreshing timeout in my day to perk me up.

One other business deserving a quick mention is Kohls. Their "Say Yes!" motto and culture is well ingrained in their culture. Returns are easy, surveys are frequent and prices are excellent. It is no wonder they are growing so rapidly. Once again their representatives are empowered to delight the customer, on the spot, without questioning them or ever making the customer feel anything less than a V.I.P.

In closing I ask these questions:

- What guidelines of empowerment do you have in place to encourage your employees to delight your customers and build customer loyalty?
- How do you celebrate them when they do?
- What are you doing to create stories like mine? I guarantee they are the very best and least expensive form of advertisement you can offer.

Here's wishing you great customer experiences...

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