



**SUCCESS  
HANDLER**



2017

with  
David  
Handler

# Fast:Forward

One area leaders can improve is to ensure your actions lead to the impact you desire. [Email me](#) to start taking purposeful steps that resolve blind spots and unleash your personal power.

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## Smooth Landing

So about the tire story... it happened in the late '70s. Seems an old miner bought a set a few years earlier when the location was another retailer. The original business sold tires and told the man that he could return them if needed. When he came into Nordstrom, an empowered 16-

## Ideas For Success | January

Since the '80s that big word 'empowerment' has served as a building block of management theory... a key element of organizational efficiency. Give employees authority to make decisions, trust them to use good judgment and they'll do what's best for your company and customers.

### Great Stories to Tell

The man in Alaska who brought old tires into a Nordstrom and wanted a refund because they didn't work any longer? True. Money-back guarantee fulfilled... even though Nordstrom doesn't sell tires.

The Trader Joe's in Pennsylvania that took a call from a daughter worried about her snowbound elderly father? Indeed. Although the store doesn't deliver, an employee took her order and within 30 minutes drove the groceries and more to the man's home... and didn't charge for anything.

The Ritz-Carlton employee in Toronto who received calls from guests complaining about hockey being played in a hallway? Yep. Instead of telling the young kids to quiet down, he invited them downstairs to play a company All-Star team on the hotel's exclusive indoor hockey rink. Then he hurried to a local sporting goods store to buy two hockey nets, sticks and balls while other employees moved around tables and chairs in a meeting room to create a unique setting that would entertain the energetic boys.

It's not just legend that every Ritz-Carlton employee may spend up to \$2,000 per day per guest to fix or improve the experience. Google 'Ritz Carlton empowerment' and you'll find it verified on their website.

As for the one about the Santa Claus who referred moms to Gimbel's when their kids asked for toys Macy's didn't carry? That one might be anecdotal.

### The More Typical Approach

This month I decided it was time to upgrade our home's 18-year-old security system to a state-of-the-art version that connects to our mobile phones. I called our provider and the kind CSR offered to install a new one for free... and lower our monthly monitoring fees all of two bucks. So I contacted others and ended up choosing a company with a better rate.

The installation was flawless, and we are safely protected for many years to come. Then I called to cancel the existing service. The person politely thanked me for being a loyal customer, asked why we're leaving, and – to my surprise – didn't try to talk me into staying or offer a better deal.

year-old employee called a tire store to find the value and paid the man from the register.

That teenager learned a lot about the servant mentality at Nordstrom – and carried it with him into a three-decade career at Alaska Airlines, which relocated him from the cold of Fairbanks to the warmth of Honolulu.

While you may not have known about Craig Trounce until now, you'll be well-served to follow his philosophy for converting the disgruntled into advocates, as told to the airline's magazine:

"So many companies have the desire and the expectation of delivering good customer service, but standing behind what you say is what makes all the difference."

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It was January 12 and our monitoring fees average out to \$1.45 per day including tax, so I figured we owed them about \$18. "The cancellation won't take place for 30 days, sir," she said. "The amount due is \$70."

Without losing my cool, I asked why it takes so long – especially when their system is gone from our home. "We don't send anyone out to verify," she said. "So legally we're allowed to charge you for 30 days." I asked her to waive that fee since we've been long-time customers. When she said, "I'm not allowed to do that," I asked to speak to a supervisor.

During the five minutes I was on hold, I got out my calculator and determined that since 1991 we paid them \$12,480 to monitor the two homes we've owned. When the gentleman came on the line, I shared this with him, and said: "You have the authority to waive this, right?" Nope.

"I'm not going to haggle with you over \$70," I said. "You know every bad customer experience means that person will eventually share it with nine other people. So surely you want to resolve this, don't you?"

"We appreciate your business," he replied, "and on February 12, you'll receive a final invoice for \$70, which you need to pay." Well, I've named that company to a few people already... and it's been only five days.

Empowerment is a great tool – allowing employees to solve problems and create wonderful customer relationships. However, if those in closest contact with the people who pay for your services aren't granted real authority to resolve things, then all the time, energy and money you spend to build goodwill might not even get you a set of worn-out tires.

Performance:  
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FORWARD TO A FRIEND

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