

Lighter Side

Customer Service - Rest in Peace

The sayings "Things are not like they used to be" or "It is not like the good old days" are often attributed to senior citizens who just do not understand today's modern world. Well, I am a senior citizen and I am here to testify that things are definitely not like they used to be.

For someone that remembers party lines, being able to receive only one channel on your TV and milk delivery men, the fact that you can carry a phone that allows you to be in touch with people around the world is a tremendous change for the good. However, not all the changes we see happening are that beneficial. Let's talk about customer service. If you happen to be asking, "What is customer service?," that is exactly my point. While we accept some seemingly impossible things as normal, we also are being taught to not expect some things that at one time were commonplace, like customer service.

At first, I thought it was just me but the more I talk to people, the more I find poor customer service is becoming commonplace. Take, for example, my experience that occurred when my wife decided to simply eat out for a relaxing Sunday afternoon. We selected what we felt was a quality restaurant and ordered dinner. As the old joke goes, "We ordered steak but we didn't realize they had to go out on the range to catch it first." After an unusually long wait, our dinners arrived. They were not only cold but the medium juicy steaks we ordered looked more like charred hockey pucks left in the sun until every last drop of taste had been extracted. While I was ready to toss in the napkin, so to speak; pay the bill; and walk out with food untouched, my wife thought we should say something. We spoke politely to the waitress, expressing our concerns. She seemed genuinely apologetic and quietly scurried away. After what seemed like an excessively long time, the manager came to the table, looking disheveled, complete with a ball cap and appearing as if we interrupted him from cutting the grass or possibly rounding up the steer that lay prostrate before us. As he leaned on the table with obvious disdain, he said, "I hear you ain't satisfied." I couldn't quite explain it but deep down inside, I began to suspect that customer service in the immediate area was dead.

It is not just restaurants and eating out; the lack of customer service is everywhere and involves everything that touches our lives. The active project list in my home office is filled with phone numbers of contractors and repairmen I have called for specific jobs who never called back or who did call back, made an appointment and never showed up. I have a great suggestion for the contractors out there that want to earn more money: show up. Not only is customer service dying; it seems as if some businesses seem to expect the customer to accept it as today's normalcy.



by John Kasun

Some time ago, I received a promotional call from a communications company trying to get me to switch phone service. I told the representative I was paying 35 dollars per month for unlimited calling service.

"Well, our plan is 40 dollars per month and I can switch you over today for no additional charge," she said.

"That's wonderful," I replied, "but that is more than I am paying now."

"I know," she replied sweetly, "but it is only five dollars more."

I let that sink in for a moment and then said, "You know, you are right; I never thought about it like that. After all, five dollars is not that much money."

"Fine," she replied. "Should I sign you up?"

"No," I said, "but if you want to, you can start sending me five dollars each month; after all, it is not really that much money."

She hung up and never called back. I bet I will never get my five dollars either.

Let me step out from behind the mask of this column for just a moment for an important message. While I hope you have found this column humorous, let me unfortunately assure you that all of these examples are true and I am sure you can match them with some of your own.

Today's archery dealers, manufacturers and distributors are facing an extremely challenging climate, with competition seemingly coming out of every crack and crevice. To not only survive but also prosper, it is important to use all available resources effectively and in my opinion, the greatest tool or weapon, if you would, is customer service.

Pay particular attention to how you are treated as a customer every day and how it makes you feel. Learn to see yourself and your business through your customers' eyes. What did you do right? What could you have done better? Constantly ask, "What am I doing to encourage customer loyalty?"

The world of business in general is changing and the world of retail is being impacted at an even more dramatic rate as people are changing their basic buying habits. However, archery equipment and related gear are not a large T-shirt you can send back in the mail to exchange for an X-large. To get the most bang for their buck, the consumer will learn that the archery professional is the best place to do business. Within the industry, it is the job of all of us to encourage participation in the sport, build future interest among our youth and show true professionalism in the way we all do business, making customer service and satisfaction our number one goal.

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