

Company's Coming!

By Dee Dee Raap

We all have them. A black streak on the wall left by a teenager's shoe. A room that needs touch-up painting or a chip mark on furniture. Something that we know needs to be fixed, but we just don't get around to it. It takes time. It takes effort. And somehow, doing nothing is easier than doing something. Overlooking the flaws is easier than fixing them.

We put up with things being like that until company comes, or a daughter graduates, or the holiday season arrives. And often times it's company coming that makes us see the flaws in our home and we act. We paint, we mend, we fix.

Putting up with flaws at home doesn't cost us much. But putting up with customer service flaws at work can cost dearly. Customers are like company coming. They see your business with fresh eyes every day. But you—being there in the midst of the situation day in and day out—may not be able to see as well. We get accustomed to the flaws. We don't see them.

Customer service flaws are risky and can hurt your business. Take the following customer service test and see how you and your employees measure up.

1. Is every customer warmly greeted by a smiling person? Do all of your employees believe it's THEIR job to greet customers and serve them, and not just your front office staff?
2. Are customers escorted to the place they need to be? Does your staff believe that it's up to them to ensure customers get to the right part of the business, and do they see that as an opportunity to inform the customers about a product or service?
3. Does every employee speak plain, simple English to customers? Or do they speak in technical jargon common place in your industry but unfamiliar to the customer?
4. Do your employees view customer objections, concerns and negative comments as feedback? Do they see that criticism is a way to learn what the customer really wants?
5. Do your employees view each other as "internal customers" deserving the same courtesy and respect as "external customers?"
6. Do your employees do what they say they're going to do for a customer, when they say they're going to do it? And if they can't keep that commitment, do they contact the customer or wait for the customer to discover the delay?
7. Do all employees believe keeping your business looking neat and clean at all times is THEIR responsibility? If they see trash, do they pick it up? Are they proud of the facility? Or is clutter evident?
8. Do your employees serve angry customers by listening, empathizing and apologizing, then solving the problem?
9. Does your business operate under a philosophy that all of the details of great service are everyone's responsibility? Do you have a customer service philosophy as well as a customer service department?
10. Do your managers actively reinforce positive customer service behaviors when used by your staff? Do they look for ways to point out what a great job someone did in dealing with a difficult customer? Do they reward teamwork that leads to great service?

If you answered no to many of these questions, you don't understand that customer service is a marketing tool that cements relationships and sells. You don't get it, and your customers don't get the level of service they need and deserve.

If you answered yes to most of the questions you get it. Congratulations! You understand that customers are like company. And you want them to be customers for life.

Look carefully at your organization. See the flaws. You can bet your customers do. Don't tolerate poor customer service. Make the changes necessary to give your customers the service they need and deserve. Company's coming, and you want them to keep coming back!

Interested in scheduling a motivational speech? Looking for a great meeting facilitator? Call or email Dee Dee and let's get started on this great journey together!

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