

The magic of service

By Bob Garner

What gets and keeps customers? It's not price. It's service.

Service is the magical word which makes all of your customers' problems and fears disappear and will make that same customer reappear for other repairs. As Sam Walton, founder of Wal-Mart, said, "The customer is our employer. And he can fire everybody in the company, simply by spending his money somewhere else."



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So, how do you help your employees raise the level of customer service? One way is to set standards and stick to them.

Mike Giarrizzo, owner of JSI Collision Specialists in Cleveland and Bedford, Ohio, said, "Once you get your standards established, it's easy to improve them."

Giarrizzo's shops are spotless from the waiting room to the stalls. He has at least one meeting a month with all his employees and makes motivational cassettes and books available to them. He works with every employee until they know how to answer a phone professionally, shake a hand, and be polite to the customer.

Giarrizzo understands that his customers are more than wallets with people attached. He knows that great profit is the result of great service.

Rod Nedley, owner of G&G Autobody in Cleveland, agrees. In business for 18 years, Nedley believes that service is the deciding factor over whether a customer will stay or magically vanish right before your eyes. At G&G little things do mean a lot, from proper answering of the phones to face-to-face handling of the customer.

Make the employees feel good about their jobs. They will pass that pride on in the form of company

loyalty and service. Statistics prove that employees will treat customers the way they are treated.

Alabama's legendary football coach Bear Bryant said, "I've learned how to hold a team together. You have to lift some men up, bring some men down, until they've got one heartbeat together—a team. There are just three things I'd ever say. If anything goes bad, I did it. If anything goes semi-good, then we did it. Anything goes real good, then you did it. That's all it takes to win football games for you."

As tough as times are and the more competitive the industry is getting, one word will enable your company to succeed and enable you to realize the profits you need and deserve. That one magical word is service.

A great way to remember SERVICE:

S is for smile. When people walk in the door, smile. It is the cheapest form of advertising on earth.

E is for efficient: Do the job the quickest and most efficient way possible. If there is a deadline, meet it.

R is for respect: Respect the customers and their needs. All they may need is guidance and assurance.

V is for vision: Look the customer in the eye. Let them see you want to help.

I is for intelligence: Knowledge is power. Learn as much as you can about your industry, service, and product. If you don't know an answer, find out.

C is for caring: You have to care about your product or service. Make it the best it can be.

E is for enthusiasm: Be enthusiastic about your work. Enthusiasm is catching—if you're excited, your customers will be too.

Bob Garner from Cleveland, Ohio, is a motivational speaker who uses his skill of magic and audience participation to educate and entertain.

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