

## TRAINING

“We’re cutting costs because it’s the fourth quarter and we must make our numbers.” We’ve all experienced this in the business world. What is one of the first things to go? We analyze our accounts and all unnecessary travel is eliminated, don’t buy anything unless it’s absolutely needed, and NO TRAINING. These are normally the first things eliminated in budget cuts. Isn’t it true that eliminating training may actually cost you money rather than save you money? Let’s look at how.

Let’s first examine a Service Business. You sell an intangible entity, normally something that others offer, so why choose your company? What makes your company different from all the others out there? Think about the last time you experienced customer service. How was the experience? In today’s world most of us know that at best we will receive Good Service, that’s what we expect. Unfortunately most times we receive average service and we move on. Average service normally prompts the customer to search for someone else next time they need this service. You have not stood out in their mind. A catchy advertisement or a “new low price” can entice this customer to a new company. Good service constitutes about the same reaction. They may choose you again but you have to reprove yourself and if you make a mistake you drop to the average category, and unfortunately if another company can be “splashy” enough they can move them away from your service. But, if your customer receives a “WOW” service experience they will be compelled to return to you and not look for another company. What is the “WOW” experience? It’s simply the smaller things. Answering a phone with someone on the other end smiling (people can truly hear that smile), greeting a customer in person with a smile and acknowledgement even if you’re with another customer, listening to the customer with no interruptions and truly trying to satisfy their needs, using their name if you have a credit card, or a computer screen you can look it up, or if they’ve been here before (this is huge and what a missed opportunity), making and keeping eye contact when conversing, thanking them for their business and inviting them back, are you getting the idea? Common courtesies we all think are natural but are missed in most service experiences. How much do these “WOW” factors cost? How much does it cost your company if you don’t do them? This takes training, if someone doesn’t know it’s important they won’t focus on it. These skills will make you money. The training involved in providing this to the customer will have a positive Return on Investment for the cost of the training.

Say you work in a business that involves a trade skill such as repair, installation, or technical knowledge, let’s review what not training can do for your company. You stop training in the fourth quarter but looking at third quarter numbers you have a “Call Back” (returning to a call that wasn’t repaired, installed, built, explained correctly the first time) problem. Without training to refine skills you begin losing money in many ways. First the expense of returning to a commercial or residential account and not collecting money because you didn’t do the job correctly the first time so this call is a no charge. Taking a valuable employee out of the field to build new customers because they’re at an existing customers place again fixing a problem. And of course the trust

and confidence of the existing customer who has been inconvenienced by our lack of competence in fulfilling these needs the first time.

Now let's look at the Managers. We've elevated training but we have a situation where turnover is high and morale is low. You're trying to make the numbers this year and moving into next year with the same team of low morale individuals looking for a way out. You had coaching training scheduled but it was cancelled. With no new skills to coach and build a team how is this team going to grow? With the lack of growth of the team how will your customers be affected? Do you think customers know when there is poor morale in an organization? You betcha, our associates tell them directly or indirectly. Directly in conversation they want to share. Indirectly in how they treat the customer. Attitudes of our associates exude to our customers.

These are just a few examples of how cutting training really isn't a cost savings for your company but rather a possible loss of revenue growth. You need to look at the lasting effects of the investment you make and how you can make this investment more impact. That's something we'll address in the future, your role in making sure the training works. Also, we will discuss the "WOW" customer experience in the future.