

## The Importance of Service

How many other companies offer what your company offers? If you don't know look in the phone book and browse who is in the yellow pages. Remember these are the companies paying a couple thousand dollars a year to be in the yellow pages. What about the companies offer your same product or service that aren't listed in the phone book. Most towns have something we call the "Area Shopper", a small newspaper that comes out weekly full of ads promoting that one-man show or service. These are other people competing for your customer base. Just a few examples, there are over one million HVAC companies in the United States, millions of restaurants, millions of clothing stores, etc. So what makes the difference?

Think about what you have to offer your customers. Does someone else? Start taking everything away that is the same in the offering. The product, similar pricing, guarantees and warranties, and what is left? YOU!! That's right you, the representative of the company. You make the difference.

Here is an example, a Car Dealership. This is a personal experience. I went shopping for my first new car without my dad but rather with my boyfriend. We were both professionals but in a business that allowed for pretty flexible hours. So it was a weekday afternoon we were in jeans and in our mid-twenties. No one came out to talk with us. So as we looked around and left (fighting because of lack of service and the frustration of car buying) we decided to do a little experiment. Let's go back tomorrow night all dressed in business attire. We did that and were swarmed by sales people. Then to further the test I went the next day by myself. Nothing. So needless to say the buying experience was Horrible!! I married the boyfriend and he bought the next three vehicles on his own and then he got a few company cars so I was out of the car-buying scenario. Fast forward to the first sporty car I wanted. I decided I wanted a two door fast car. I liked the Acura so I started at their dealership alone. When I got there the salesman finally approached me and showed me the one car available, a black two door sporty car that I did test drive. The entire time he was telling me why I should love this car, even though not the color I wanted or even the style. I asked if he had anything else and he again told me why this was the car I wanted. As I waited for them to bring my car back from appraisal I saw a car I really liked pull onto the lot, unfortunately it was a Toyota Solaria. I was hooked. Now I had in mind what I wanted and started looking at some dealerships, alone. What an experience. I was finally so fed up my husband decided that we should just order it online. We spent a couple of hours building my dream car. White exterior, white leather interior, six CD Changer, a 6 cylinder because I like some pick up, and wood grain interior. The price was right, now all I needed was for someone to have one. We get a call from Harry Mack at Preston motors in New Castle he can get this car for me when can we get together to talk. Well we went down and it wasn't on the lot, he could get it for me but let's get to know each other and work out the details. Harry was a pleasant guy and felt it was important I drive a car similar to see if it is what I want. There are no 6 cylinder Solaria's on the lot but a Camry. Okay, we'll give it a try but no the battery is dead and they can't get it to go. I am now believing this is just another experience of a poor car sale. I also ask if the Solara had a governor (for you non

speeders, this is something that cuts the engine so you can't go passed a certain miles per hour, I had this on my previous vehicle at 95 and I swear never to buy a vehicle that has this on it again). Harry doesn't know. At this point things are looking bleak until Harry reappears with news that a guy just bought a Solara from him a couple of weeks ago and he tracked him down on the Golf course and he is at the 18<sup>th</sup> hole and if I wait he'll bring the car by for me to test drive. WHAT?? Someone is bringing his car in for a stranger to test drive and miss the 19<sup>th</sup> hole. When the gentleman got there he informed me the governor was way past 120mph and to go have fun on Rte. 422. What kind of a salesman builds loyalty with a client to let a new customer drive their car? Needless to say it took over a week to get my car but I bought it from Harry. I was also driving at least 40,000 per year and getting a lot of oil changes and my first Harry met me and introduced me to my service advisor and one of the guys in the shop. After the third visit in less than two months they knew me and treated me great. A friend of mine liked my car so I told him about Harry. Harry found him a similar car and he bought it from Harry, did I mention that he was from Cincinnati, Ohio. Well I got about 4 speeding tickets with my sports car and had a minor fender bender when my husband felt it was time for me to get a new vehicle. Guess where we went? Right back to Harry. Harry drove a Toyota 4Runner at the time, guess what I bought? Yeah I love my Forerunner, best SUV I've had.

So could I have bought a Toyota anywhere, right? But I bought it at Preston from Harry Mack. And then I recommended him to a friend. Then I bought another vehicle from him. What was the difference between the Toyota dealer in New Castle and all others? Harry Mack.

People will buy from people they are comfortable with and trust. People buy for the person more than the product. Think of some past experiences you have had and think of the people involved. When you think of the business do you think of the building or the people? Your people make all the difference, are they making the right or wrong difference? How is your company set up? Who is at the top of the chart? The CEO or the Customer? Who is second, the managers or the front line associates? When do managers talk to customers? When things go bad. Do you empower your associates who directly contact the customer? If not you are wasting their talents and frustrating the customer. And believe it or not if your front line associate can resolve the problem it will cost your company less than if it needs to go to the manager. The cost to fix a problem escalates as the number of people involved increases. And do you treat your front line associates well? They are the direct contact with our customers, if they aren't happy the customer won't be happy. Keep these in mind when you think about your business. If we don't make the customers happy they have choices. Only 1 person will complain the other 26 will just go elsewhere. How does your company rate?