

“WOW”

What is Wow? It can be an interjection, a noun, or a verb. As an interjection it's an exclamation of surprise, wonder, pleasure. As a noun it's an extraordinary success. As a verb it's to gain an enthusiastic response from. It also means excitement, interest, great pleasure. 1

But what does Wow mean when you're talking about it in business. Well let's think about Customer Service. What level of service do most of us expect when we are in a service experience? Studies show most of us expect good service. Good service is our expectations are met and the experience was good. The sad news is that even though we expect good, most of the time we receive average. Average means some of our expectations were met but not all. When we receive average we will shop around for another business to perform the service we are looking for. It might be a catchy advertisement or a cheaper price that draws us to the new business. Once we have chosen this new business to experience they must prove themselves. If you received good service you will not become a loyal customer but rather will again be enticed away by price or gimmicks. If you provided good service and your customer returns you must prove yourself again because they were not “sold” on their initial visit.

So how do we keep our customers from shopping around or being enticed by the catchy ad or better price? Well that's where the “WOW” comes into play. What is a “WOW” service experience? Well think back to a situation where you went “WOW”. I live in a small town that has 2 dry cleaners. With traveling being a constant in my world I am gone during the week and only home during the weekend. I have to catch up on all the stuff others have a week to do in 2 days and still try to spend quality time with my family. I don't have a great deal of time to stand in line for my dry cleaning. When we moved to our new home I went to the dry cleaner closest to my home. I went in every week about the same time and every time I brought my clothes in they asked my name, gave me the slip, and really didn't really seem to care if I was there or not. One day on the way to church I noticed that there was another dry cleaner we drove past which was on the other side of town. I had no loyalty to the other Cleaner so I thought I'll give this one a try. This Cleaner required your phone number and your last name. Within four weeks my name was known and they were in the process of memorizing my phone number. After going there for a few months they knew I never had my yellow slip or cared what day the clothes were done just so it was within a week. After about a year of doing business there and not once comparing the prices to the other cleaner, I got my first questionable experience at their business. It started with the woman behind the counter greeting me and then saying “You are so impatient”. At this point I wondered if I'd be looking for a new cleaner, but if you ask those who know me they would just say the clerk was observant. She continued, “Waiting here for me to fill out the ticket, get your clothes, and then tell you the cost for you to write the check drives you a little crazy.” Oh, she was observant and I need to calm down. She continues, “If there's a line go ahead if you'd like to fill out the form and just set it on top of your clothes.” What a great idea that will save time and I don't mind. This was turning around but what was the icing on the cake was when she said, “Why don't you join our billing program?” What a great idea, I

can fill out my own ticket and not pay each time. I was stunned and as I shared with her was that all bills come out of my husband's funds so it will not cost me a cent and now when they find any money in the pockets they save it for me if my husband picks up the dry cleaning.

I haven't once compared the costs of this cleaner to others, my church has moved so there is now no other reason for me to drive across town other than to go to the cleaner (and I am inpatient) but I won't switch and it's been 9 years. That is "WOW" service. They exceeded my expectations and I won't shop around. When you have a "WOW" experience you don't tend to shop around. Price, location, or gimmicks don't entice you to switch business. How much does it take to create a "WOW" experience? Well, let's review my experience: They learned my name in weeks and phone number in weeks, cost 0. They noticed my habits and reduced time, cost 0, maybe even a little savings. Registering a customer for billing, cost if any minimal. So if the "WOW" experience cost minimal and it ensures you customer loyalty, why doesn't all business do it? What is the cost of gaining new customers? Averages show that it costs 7 times more to get a new customer than to maintain a current one. And what about the word of mouth advertising? I have shared this story about my dry cleaner with every class I have taught to show "WOW" experiences and now all of you.

So look at your business are you providing good service or are you "WOWing" those that come in. What can the "WOW" experience effect your bottom line.

1 Dictionary.com Unabridged (v 1.0.1)