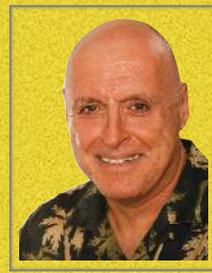


THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



131 When Customer Service Policy is Based on Fear

How many of an organization's customer service decisions are based on providing a better overall experience, and how many are based on fear? I'm Jerry Roberts and let's dig into this topic today, on The Extra Point.

One of the most popular courses offered by Guam Training is called CSI:Guam, CSI standing for Customer Service Initiative. It's not your average off-the-shelf look at the subject. It makes people laugh and it also makes them cry. My intent is that, by the end, people come face to face with the reality of what business they're really in, and how the rules they set up for customers can impact the overall enjoyment in doing business with them.

I'm in the Ross Tamuning store a few days ago with my son. He picks out a pile of clothes and we get to the fitting area. He chooses the maximum number of garments, eight, and walks in. I start to follow him and the young attendant says I'll need a number, too. "But I'm only here to watch my son. I don't have any items and they've never given me a number before." Then she said the words I hate. "That's our policy."

I feel an Extra Point possible so I decline the number and follow my son inside. He likes rules. Not those that apply to him, of course, but that apply to dad. So he pushes me back outside to take the number. The young lady hands me the zero, looking at me and grumbling something under her breath.

When we finished with those items we came back to get more from his pile. These included shorts with a belt. Six items in all. But no, not six. The same attendant says that the belts have to be counted separately. Now, they're not sold separately, but have to be counted separately? Yep, that's their policy.

That's either a new rule or hasn't been enforced by everyone. I said, "Your store's

policies are amazing." More grumbling. So, from six items we suddenly had 11. My kid grabbed eight and my zero was exchanged for a three. Then, while he tried on the clothes I jotted down notes for today's commentary.

So what's happening here? It's that fear. Fear of an obvious shoplifting problem. But with more rules, the possibility of annoying more customers is greater.

Look, I'm not beating up on Ross. In general, we're happy with shopping there. I understand the theft problem and I know that losses in shoplifting are simply passed along to customers. Maybe it's a bigger problem in Guam than elsewhere, and that's the reason for uniformed security personnel in more stores these days. KMart and Cost-U-Less still check receipts on the way out the door. Home Depot has stopped doing that. I do know that theft is a big issue in mainland stores, too, but I've never had anybody check my receipt when shopping there.

I want stores to do well so more come here and we have better buying options. I think businesses need to constantly seek a balance between risk reduction and customer inconvenience. It's a tough call. Maybe anti-shoplifting drones are the answer. Deploy a whole squadron of them to follow everybody around the store. The bottom line. If I come to your store it's because I made a conscious decision to choose you. Now, make me glad I did.

That's The Extra Point. Get out there and make something good happen today. For 93.3 and the Ray Gibson Show, I'm Jerry Roberts.

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