

THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



786 Customer Service: Jenny's Bad Salon Experience

When I deliver customer service training, the stories I hear about bad experiences are often what you might expect and include stores, restaurants, sometimes government agencies. This last week was different. I heard a customer story the likes of which I had never heard before. I'm Jerry Roberts, and that's coming next on The Extra Point.

In the past three years in this space, I've talked about several angles on customer service, and how to get it right. When a company calls me in to train their team, part of what we talk about are the personal experiences each individual has had as a consumer.

I often get a number of stories about things that happen in restaurants, which usually boils down to poorly trained or indifferent servers, and/or bad food.

Retail stores are discussed. People complain about employees who don't know much — if anything — about the products they sell, or tell them something is in stock when it isn't, or who judge them by their appearance, ignoring them because they don't look like they can afford an item, or who follow them around the store because they fit the profile of someone who would likely steal something.

The purpose of the exercise is to highlight what people have experienced, whether good or bad, so they know what they like, don't like, and how they feel about their own customer service moments. This leads to empathy, the understanding of what others are going through.

In short, if you like the treatment you've received as a customer, others will probably like it, too. If you don't like how you've been treated, it's a pretty fair guess that your customers won't like it, either. It's about awareness, self-awareness, which is a key to high performance.

So here I am in this group, with stories being shared and while good, I've heard the basic premise in almost all of them. Then, came one that was different. I was startled at what took place, but more surprised at how clueless the people were who delivered the service.

Picture a woman in a nail salon. We'll call her Jenny. She's been a customer there for about three years, visiting once a month, with each manicure and pedicure combination pricing out at almost \$100. Up until now, the service has been good and Jenny would have no reason to seek another provider.

During her treatment, one of the attendants became engrossed in a conversation with another one. Entering into a discussion like this is inadvisable on two counts. One, if you're talking to someone else, you lose any connection you have with your customer. Second, in this specific situation, you could be distracted while working on the customer with sharp instruments.

Jenny didn't care so much about the customer connection, but the second concern about distraction turned out to be critical. Within minutes, the attendant cut one of her fingers. Jenny showed obvious concern. You don't expect to get cut during a manicure. Well, that surely ended the attendant's conversation, and she was jolted back to the reality that she had a customer to take care of. Right?

No. It turned out to be just the beginning. This same attendant went back to the conversation, and ended up cutting Jenny on not one finger, not two fingers, not three fingers — but, unbelievably, four of her fingers.

With the assault on that fourth finger, Jenny had felt enough. She terminated the session and left, and she said she's never going back there.

(Con't.)

In a few seconds of distraction and neglect, a solid customer relationship and a pile of steady revenue had been trashed.

Perhaps you're familiar with the term CLTV. It stands for customer lifetime value. Simply, what is a customer worth to a company over time. Jenny had already spent between three and four thousand dollars in that salon, and had no intent to change.

The lifetime value in this case could have soared to \$10,000, \$20,000 or more. In addition, Jenny might tell friends about the place and bring them additional business. When she tells friends about the salon now, people will avoid it.

Customer service isn't hard, but it starts with what we call "being there." That is focusing our attention on the customer, until the transaction is complete, showing them they are worthy of our attention.

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

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