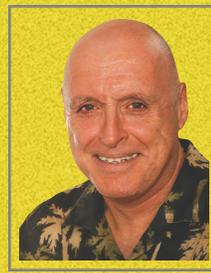


THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



1236 Are You Okay With Your Customer-Facing Workers?

I've got a question for you. Are you comfortable with the people on your team who face off with your customers? Do they uphold your image the way you hope they will? I'm Jerry Roberts, and a couple of experiences this week led me to this topic. It's next on The Extra Point.

Several times each year, I train companies in customer service, starting with fundamentals, then real-world interactions and how to improve them.

The idea is to give workers the tools to deliver great service, and make the organization look great in the process. So, my customer service antenna is always up, waiting to pull in things that people say and do that displays the good and the not-so-good of customer experience.

Wednesday provided such an opportunity. A family member wasn't feeling well and I ran them to the emergency room. We would be there for almost 10 hours.

The first nurse we encountered asked what the problem was and when told, she questioned, "Are you vaccinated?" When told "no" she replied in a sarcastic tone, "If I could bet money," leaving no doubt that she tied the decision not to vax with the current situation.

Well, I believe in freedom of speech. If you want to impose your beliefs on us in the ER, that's a choice. I wonder, though, if sarcasm and the disdain for those who chose against vaccination is part of the customer service policy for the hospital.

There was no need for a debate, especially with a member of my family in a bed, so I let it go.

For the rest of our time in the ER, we received absolutely wonderful treatment. The doctor is from the UK, a congenial fellow with a good bedside manner, and he made us feel that we were in extremely good hands.

A young nurse, guessing now, from Taiwan, had

the most time with us and she is terrific. In all, we were attended to by over a half-dozen members of the staff, and with the exception of the one I mentioned earlier, they get high marks.

Yet, it's always the *one* whose words and actions has the potential to overshadow all the good efforts of the others.

By the way, when the swab tests came back, both the COVID and the flu tests were negative. Whatever money that nurse would have wagered, she'd have lost.

That night, we needed a couple of things and I drove to a grocery outlet that closes at 10pm. I got there as the clock on my phone clicked over to 9:59. I grabbed my reusable bag and walked hurriedly to the entrance. It was still 9:59.

There was a man in front of me who also wanted to get in. Other than that, the parking lot was empty.

An employee yelled out, "Closed!" That was a bit startling, and my time still didn't show 10:00, so I told him. He responded by putting his wrists together in what looked like a visual for "cancel that thought, buddy," and he repeated "we're closed."

Wait, he made a canceling hand gesture to me? I've praised this store in the past for their very good service, and this was unexpected. I looked at my phone and saw the 9:59 turn to 10:00, and I stopped short of the entrance, turning back to my car.

I looked at the guy and said, "You know, you need to work on your customer service." He yelled back, "I am!" My reply was, "You need to try harder." He said something else, but I didn't hear it. I was already planning this commentary.

So, what should have happened? First, at least one cash registers was likely open because the store was still open...at 9:59. They could have handled a couple more transactions. (Con't.)

If it was me, I'd think about the customers who had driven to my store late at night. There were other stores open but they chose us. I'm going to find a way to honor that decision.

If the worry is that letting these two customers in may result in others wanting to storm the doors, then the solution is easy. You let the two people in and close the doors behind them.

Then, you pleasantly remind them of the time, and you could say something like, "I'm happy to squeeze you in at the last minute. Are you just after a few things? That sets the right tone, and makes me mindful that I need to be quick.

My shopping would have taken five minutes, and this young man at the door would have been highlighted for a very different reason.

Vaccination status shouldn't have been a point raised at the ER. Being a roadblock instead of a hero shouldn't happen at the grocery store.

Why are you there? For the comfort and benefit of your customer. Anything said or done that gets in the way of that downgrades the overall experience.

Customer service means that, for that moment in time, I am *in service* to that person who came to us in search of what they needed. That's the mindset.

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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