



## Customer Service 101

*Great customer doesn't have to be complicated. There are four fundamental concepts that can improve the productivity and effectiveness of your customer service efforts: common sense, flexibility, problem solving and recovery.*

**G**reat customer service isn't rocket science. Customer service isn't a department. It is a simple philosophy that should be practiced by everyone in an organization, regardless of their position and/or title, and it can be broken down into four basic parts. While volumes of books have been written about great service, these four points could be considered the starting point -- the basics. By understanding these very simple concepts, you will be well on your way to creating more moments of magic for your customers.

**Common sense** – This means doing the obvious. It is a little more than treating your customers like you would want to be treated. But, it is not much more. It is simply treating your customers the way they want to be treated. Understand that what you would expect might be different than what your customer might expect. For example, a bellman may work at a very expensive hotel. He will probably never stay at a hotel like the one in which he works. He would never demand the same level of service and attention that the hotel's guests demand, but he still understands what they want and desire, and he delivers it to them.

**Flexibility** – Rules and policies are nothing more than guidelines. Don't let "company policy" stand in the way of making a customer happy. However there is eventually a point where you have to take a stand. In spite of what you may have heard, the customer is not always right. But, they are always the customer. So, if they are wrong, let them be wrong with dignity. Do what you can, within reason, to see that your customer is always happy. I am reminded of the CEO of a major company that called all of his people together and told them, "Do whatever it takes to make the customer happy." Well, they did, and almost put the company into bankruptcy. Along with empowering people to be flexible goes training. If properly trained, the employee can deliver what the customer perceives as a "whatever-it-takes" attitude, and the employees won't put the company out of business.

**Solving Problems** – There are two types of problems to solve -- business and non-business. Business problems include taking care of complaints and meeting a customer's needs. These customers are coming to you to either satisfy a complaint or have you help them with a problem, and you need to be there to help them.

Then there are non-business problems that have nothing to do with what you and your company do on a day-to-day basis. An example of a non-business problem might be a person whose car has a flat tire across the street from our place of business. They come to us for help. How do we react? Do we tell them there is a

pay phone down the street, or do we help them by picking up the phone and calling for a tow truck?

Solving non-business problems are a potential way of generating good public relations. And, you never know, but this person could turn out to be your next customer.

**Recovery** – This is probably one of the most important points. I don't care how good you are. You can have a long-term satisfied customer for years. As soon as something bad happens, you have to recover. It is that recovery that will be that customer's final judgment on just how good you really are.

Remember, studies have proven it is much less expensive to keep an existing a customer than to get a new one. Do what you can not just to recover from a problem, but to give the customer a renewed confidence to continue to do business with you again. Sometimes this means going beyond just fixing a problem. Sometimes you have to get the customer back in the door. For example, a restaurant that had a problem with a guest's meal might not just remake the dinner, but also give a complimentary appetizer the next time the guest comes back. Not only did the restaurant resolve the complaint, but also gave an incentive for the guest to come back.